

# Around My Desert Garden

By Bob Torrest

September 2005

September 30—Still too hot but I won't dwell on it. Instead, pick your pomegranates before the birds get them all. The interior color may not be there yet but there is some flavor. *Zizyphus jujuba* has fruit from green to partially dried (Chinese dates). Mexican limes and limequats are also on the trees.

Trees and shrubs flowering include *acacia aneura* and *tecoma stans* (yellow bells). *Caesalpinia mexicana* continues to flower as does Coulter's hibiscus and San Marcos hibiscus. The screw bean mesquite still has a few flowers and lots of green tornillos. *Ficus palmeri* looks surprisingly good after the long summer but a small pereskia tree in full sun looks exhausted.

Some of the cactus flowering include several large cereus and Huntington's cereus. Several barrels are flowering again including the Texas barrel (*Ferocactus hamatacanthus*) one of the best all summer. *Coryphantha elephantidens* has been at it for some time. But the summer was tough on some aloes. *Aloe broomii* that got some afternoon sun finally gave up as did petrophila. Even *Aloe striata*, which made it through last summer in sun, is gone. On the other hand, *Aloe karasbergensis*, which had folded up in some afternoon sun, has opened now that it is back in shade (i.e., the sun not longer hits it). *Aloe divaricata* is flowering. Some losses are inevitable since most of what we all grow are non-native. Everything that has been mentioned in these articles has been outdoors and rarely given special attention. Of course, some things that won't survive our summers, *aloe plicatilis*, for example, will be OK in a garden room with evaporative cooling.

In the last article the 20 year growth of some columnar cacti was summarized. Others include *Stenocereus thurberi* (Arizona organ pipe) which is very slow at first but has now reached nine feet and *Stenocereus schottii* (senita) which is available in a husky and thinner form with both at 11 feet. "Totem poles" also come in a thin and husky form at 10 and 12 feet respectively. *Stenocereus gatesii*, a thinner version of the senita, is up to nine feet. *Stenocereus gummosus* has flowered at five feet and the tallest is about seven feet. *Stenocereus dumortieri* has reached 10 feet in sun but has been slower in part shade. Other columnars that get tall include *escontria chiotilla* at six feet and *stetsonia coryne* up to six feet in mostly sun (it was taller in the shade but did not have the characteristic look). Some of the pilosocereus are up to 10 feet. *Espostoa lanata* has the nice candelabra look with the central column at six feet. Finally a Grenadier's cap (*Backebergia militaris*) is all of three feet after 20 years.