

## Around My (Or Your) Desert Garden

By Bob Torrest

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November 20—Record high temperatures at 86F continue, but with cool nights at around 50F, lots of plants have recovered from the summer stress. Trees and shrubs mentioned in the September 30 article continued to flower through October and were joined by Mexican bird (*Caesalpinia mexicana*) and red Calliandra, Salvias, Justicias and Cape Honeysuckle (*Tecomaria capensis*) have added their bright colors and, by Mid-October, Cascalotes were filling out with their fragrant bright yellow flower spikes. A medium large *Clorisia speciosa* (floss silk tree) is covered with large pink flowers (Baker's Nursery on 40<sup>th</sup> Street has a large tree with darker flowers). The Pistacia are also colorful with clusters of pale red berries. After about 20 years we have given up on a five foot *Acacia tomentosa* that has looked petrified for some years but managed some small leaves. A Cardon (*Pachycereus pringlei*) will look a lot better in that spot.

Lots of aloes were getting started. *A. ramossissima* flower spikes were appearing by mid-October. A large aloe with abundant red flowers got going...lots of you have taken plants but so far no one has made a positive identification (maybe a hybrid of *A. littoralis*?) *A. jucunda*, grown as a ground cover in a shaded spot continued with its pale rose flowers...an attractive easy to grow plant. By the end of October there were unopened spikes on a two foot *A. pruinosa* and a three foot *A. elegans* as well as *A. cryptopoda*. By mid-November *A. branddraaiensis* started to spike as did an *A. divaricata* hybrid. *Aloe krapohlina* is a very nice blue small plant with a red flower. And *Euphorbia ingens* at eight feet has rows of yellow flowers (grown under high shade cloth).

*Ferocactus peninsulae* continued to flower into October. By mid-November there were buds on *F. latispinus*, although I have seen open flowers elsewhere around the Valley for the last few weeks. The sequence for flowering of other cacti from early October was *Notocactus magnificus* (just a few), Coryphanthas including *C. elephantidens*, *Opuntia johnsonii* with its unique red orange flower ("red buttons"), and several large Cereus varieties, some with fruit worth eating (pick them before they get red and the birds dive in). By mid-October there were Ariocarpus, Borzicactus (red tubular flowers) and *Acanthocalycium glaucum* (egg yolk yellow), followed by *Matucana madisoniurum* (tubular red) and several Thelocacti including bicolor varieties. The Ariocarpus flowering began with an old *A. fissuratus* with two bright pink flowers larger than you would expect. By early November *A. trigonus* had a large white flower tinged with pink and on November 20, a bright pink flower covered the body of a small *A. kotschoubeyanus*.

Even people who don't like prickly pear cacti are attracted to the Purple prickly pear (*Opuntia violacea* var. *santa-rita*) especially in cooler weather as the bluish pads become a reddish purple. But the tendency for this variety to be infested with cochineal (scale insects), white clumps which can grow to cover almost entire pads, keeps some people from growing them. Don't let cochineal stop you...it is always easily removed with crumpled newspaper to just wipe it away (wear disposable gloves) and then hose off the purple stained pads. If you can live with limited infestation through the summer, by the

end of September the clumps are largely removed with water spray and you get the bonus of purplish puddles! Note that there are other similar varieties that aren't much bothered by cochineal. Speaking of prickly pears, remember that some varieties often look terrible in one gallon pots and you probably won't see them in nurseries for that reason. But *O. paraguayensis* and *O. leucotricha* and others will develop into fine specimens so just put the small plants out of sight until you are ready to plant or enlarge the container.

P.S. –Thanks to those members who came by to our sale on October 14<sup>th</sup>. We had a good supply of Aloes including *A. ramosissima*, *A. secundiflora*, *A. elegans*, *A. arborescens* etc., and they went quickly. Since our “Sale” is primarily to find homes for excess large columnar cacti (rooted and freshly cut) and landscape agaves and aloes, and CACSS members are mostly not interested in these, I won't place a notice next time. However, if you are looking for landscape succulent plants, the sale will be at about the same time as the DBG's sale. Feel free to contact me and find out if we will have what you are looking for. If you need large columnar cacti and can't settle for our cuttings or occasional rooted clumps, you need to talk with Jim Elliott of Arizona Cactus Sales. For large and unique cacti he has what you want. If we have excess unusual succulents that might be of interest to members, we may do a separate sale day for those and announce it in the Central Spine.