



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

STEVE PLATH

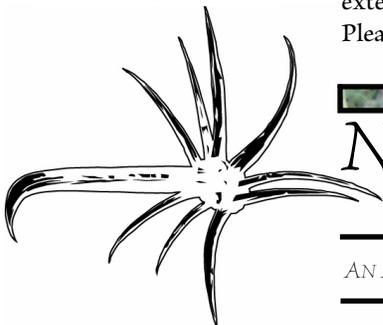
Well guess what time of year it is? Yep, it's *Show Time!* Within a week of our March General Meeting we'll be taking our manicured plants to Dorrance Hall at the Desert Botanical Garden to show them off to the world. And let's not forget the plant sale. Who knows what succulent treasure awaits us in the outdoor sales area. It feels almost like Christmas, doesn't it? Or at least I hope it does for everyone.

This year's show is particularly special because of the Grand Opening of the new Sybil B. Harrington Cactus and Succulent Galleries opening to the public the same weekend of our show. If you haven't been to the Garden lately, the plantings are impressive to say the least. And the new displays of succulent plants will be within view of our sales area. This is going to be like some sort of cactus and succulent lover's Shangri-La! Plus, to commemorate the opening of the Galleries, the Horticulture Department of the DBG is honoring us with a new trophy, "Best of Show". The trophy will be bestowed upon a plant or display encompassing all the categories with an eye towards artistic presentation. The trophy will be presented to the grower at the Grand Opening of the Galleries. How incredible is that?

As many know, the past couple of years have seen the numbers of plants on display at our show reduced to around 400 each year. In 2005 the number was nearly 800. I don't know what may have influenced the downturn, but if there was ever a year for us to rally and show the DBG what we as a club can do, this would be the year. At February's meeting I had one of our novice members come up to me and say that she wasn't sure exactly how to fill out the entry card. I assured her that if she brought her plants to the show either I or someone from the Show Committee will help get her plants where they need to be on the tables. I'd like to extend that offer to any of our members, especially new or novices, who may be a little daunted by the process. Please bring your plants to the show and we will be happy to assist in getting them properly displayed.

Continued on Page 3...

NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL ARIZONA CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY



2008 CACSS OFFICERS

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2008 CACSS COMMITTEES

<u>COMMITTEE:</u>	<u>CONTACT:</u>
Programs & Workshops.....	Lee Brownson
Newsletter/ Publications/Publicity.....	Cynthia Robinson
Membership.....	Doug Dawson or Jo Davis 480-839-3792
Finance.....	Wayne Whipple
Plant Rescue	Chairperson Needed!
Library.....	Erik Anderson 480-967-3984 woodcraftman@ earthlink.net
2008 Show.....	Steve Martinez
2008 Sale.....	Mike Cone 623-215-7692 imakepots@hotmail.com
2008 Show & Sale Volunteers.....	Ingrid Swenson
Refreshments.....	Gard Roper
Field Trips.....	Daniel Sumberg or Lois Schneberger
By-Laws.....	Lois Schneberger
Web-site.....	Lee Brownson

To participate in any of the committees, contact the chairperson listed or any Officer or Board member listed above.

LOCAL CALENDAR

March 30th, 2008, Sunday, 2 pm

Regular Club Meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden
Guest speaker, **Dr. John Alcock**, Regents Professor at ASU's School of Life Sciences, will give a presentation about *Interactions Between Desert Plants and Insects*.

April 2nd - 6th, 2008, Wednesday - Sunday, All Day

2008 Show & Sale
Dorrance Hall & Boppart Courtyard, Desert Botanical Garden
April 2nd, Wednesday, Noon - 9 pm: Show setup
April 3rd, Thursday, 8 am - 10 am: Show setup
April 3rd, Thursday, Noon - 5 pm: Show judging; Vendor setup
April 4th - 5th, Friday - Saturday, 8 am - 5 pm: Show & Sale open to the public
April 6th, Sunday, 8 am - 4 pm: Show & Sale open to the public

April 27th, 2008, Sunday, 2 pm

Regular Club Meeting
Webster Auditorium
Desert Botanical Garden

May 18th, 2008, Sunday, 2 pm

Regular Club Meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden
Guest speaker will be Woody Minnich.

June 29th, 2008, Sunday, 2 pm

Regular Club Meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden

July 27th, 2008, Sunday, 2 pm

Regular Club Meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden

August 24th, 2008, Sunday, 2 pm

Regular Club Meeting
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden



REGIONAL CALENDAR

May 9th - 11th, Friday - Sunday, All Day

Sonoran VII Cactus & Succulent Conference
Tucson, AZ
Visit <http://www.tucsoncactus.org> for more information.

June 12th - 15th, 2008, Thursday - Sunday, All Day

12th Biennial Mid-States Cactus & Succulent Conference
Grand Junction, CO
Visit <http://www.midstatesconference.org> for more information.

June 26th - 29th, 2008, Thursday - Sunday, All Day

CSSA Annual Show & Sale
Huntington Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA
Visit <http://www.cssainc.org> for more information.

August 30th, 2008, Saturday, All Day

25th Annual Huntington Succulent Symposium
Huntington Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA
Visit <http://www.huntington.org> for more information.

April 10th - 15th, 2009, Friday - Wednesday, All Day

33rd Biennial CSSA Convention
Westin La Paloma Resort, Tucson, AZ
Visit <http://www.cssainc.org> for more information.

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MARCH SPEAKER

Our speaker for the March meeting will be Dr. John Alcock, Regents Professor at ASU's School of Life Sciences. He will talk to us about *Interactions Between Desert Plants and Insects*, a very different way to look at life in the desert.

John Alcock is an American behavioral ecologist and author. He is currently the Regents' Professor in the School of Life Sciences at Arizona State University. His research interests include the evolution of diversity in insect populations, studying the adaptive value of different ways in which males find mating partners. He has authored several books, including *The Kookaburras' Song: Exploring Animal Behavior in Australia* (1988), *Sonoran Desert Summer* (1990), *The Triumph of Sociobiology* (2003), and *Animal Behavior: An Evolutionary Approach* (2005). He also co-authored *Sonoran Desert Spring* (1994) with Marilyn Hoff Stewart, and *In a Desert Garden: Love and Death Among the Insects* (1999) with Turid Forsyth.

A reviewer in the *New Times* said this about his book, *Sonoran Desert Summer*: "Alcock is an ecologist with a patient eye, a broad curiosity and a head full of well-honed questions, and this is his rumination about the way the world works."

You will not want to miss this presentation.

Lee Brownson

THE COVER PHOTO

What a surprise! Several friends & myself were searching for the elusive *Bursera microphylla* in South Mountain Park when this 10" diameter *Dudleya saxosa* ssp. *collomiae* with numerous emerging inflorescences just happened to cross our trail. I hope to be able to go back in a couple of weeks to capture it in flower. Photo taken by the editor 03/16/08.

DUES ARE (PAST) DUE!

It is now almost April, & for those who have not renewed their membership, this will be your last newsletter.

The membership renewal form is again enclosed for those members who have not already renewed. Please review the form & questionnaire; it is important that you take the time to answer a few short questions so that the Board can ensure that the CACSS is meeting your needs.

Once you have filled out the form, you can either mail the form with your dues (\$20 individual, \$25 family) to PO Box 63572, Phoenix, AZ 85082-3572, or better yet, bring it with you to the next meeting or to the Show & Sale!

PRESIDENT'S LETTER ...Continued from page 1

I know it is not the case, but I like to think that the new Galleries that have been constructed at the DBG have been built for us, the members of the CACSS. As such, I'd like our more experienced and seasoned growers to reach down a little deeper this year and come up with some extra pride in showing off more of your plants. Those who may not have shown their plants for a couple of years should consider coming and participating once again. It would be a great honor if we could show the Gardens just how proud we are to participate with them in the Grand Opening of the Cactus and Succulent Galleries and put on the best show ever!

In parting I'd like to thank the people who helped out at the DBG's *Flower Power Festival*, March 8th and 9th: Cynthia Robinson, Lin Leivian, Steve Martinez, Kathy Butler, Lois Ripley, Janet Hazlett and Peter Gibson. Volunteers like you make this job fun!

See you at the meeting!

Steve Plath

2007 FINANCIAL REPORT

INCOME SOURCES

Dues/Donations	\$ 3,600.30
Silent Auctions	2,048.78
Show/Plant Sale	4,608.40
Misc.	<u>129.20</u>
	\$10,386.68

OPERATING EXPENSES

Total	\$ 7,653.31
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NON-OPERATING EXPENSES

Desert Botanical Garden	\$ 1,000.00
Library Books	<u>508.14</u>
Total	\$ 1,508.14

Net	<u>\$ 1,225.23</u>
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BALANCE SHEET DECEMBER 31, 2007

ASSETS

Checking Account	\$13,673.24
Petty Cash	<u>40.00</u>
	\$13,713.24
Cactus Rescue Fund	<u>\$ 2,689.04</u>
Net Free Cash	<u>\$11,024.20</u>

Submitted by Wayne Whipple, Treasurer

SHOWING CACTUS & SUCCULENTS FOR THE NOVICE

A Judge's Perspective

STEVE PLATH

IN THE BEGINNING

I attended my first cactus and succulent show back in the mid-70's which was in a little community hall north of Los Angeles. Since most of the plants then were field collected, they were a pretty beat-up lot with the scars and battle wounds attesting to their wild origins. Many of the exotic species of succulent plants that are somewhat common today (*Adeniums* for example) were unheard of then. The most decorative containers you saw were either the ordinary terra cotta clay pot or some garish colored, high-gloss ceramic donkey (with the obligatory peanut cactus growing out its back). The most common container you saw was the tin can, which was the typical nursery container of the day. No one used top dressing then and most plants were potted up in soil dug up either with the plant or from the garden. Wow, have we come a long way!

In this article I'll go over what I consider are some of the basic fundamentals for novices to exhibit plants in the shows of today.

EXHIBITING PLANTS

Showing your plants for the first time can be intimidating. I know, because I was very tentative the first time I showed any of my plants. Heck, I wasn't even sure what half their names were. I think one of the fundamental rules for showing off your plants, especially for the beginner or novice is to keep it simple. Most judges are not looking for lavishly displayed plants in the Novice category. That doesn't mean you couldn't show some creativity if you're so inclined but don't stress out thinking all the plants you exhibit need to be displayed as some grandiose works of living art. Let the natural beauty of the plant do the work for you. All you need to do is present it.

Sometimes the novice is concerned not just about preparing the plant for the show but actually getting to the show and knowing how to fill out the entry cards, where to put the plants on the table or if they've got the plant names right. The simple answer is: Ask! Now, the advanced grower with a bazillion plants scattered on the floor in front of him as he's trying to fill out all his entry cards the day of set-up wouldn't be my first choice as the person to ask for help! Nevertheless, there will always be some knowledgeable person at any show willing to give a beginner a hand.

THE PLANTS

Obviously the whole idea behind showing off your plants is the plants themselves. Again, as a beginner, a judge isn't expecting you to have exceedingly rare, exotic or huge plants in the show. That doesn't mean you shouldn't show them if you have them, but it's not a prerequisite. I would rather see a well grown common plant in a show than a poorly grown rare one. In all honesty, I've judged shows where many of the beginner plants were in better shape than some of the advanced growers.

One of the first things a judge will look for is whether the plant is clean. Old spent flowers, spider webs, leaves and other debris should be cleaned off the plant. Pests and insect infestations will get your plant disqualified so avoid bringing plants with them. Is the plant actively growing? A plant that is vibrant and healthy looking will always look great and catch a person's attention. When I'm judging and looking over the category of plants, the first thing I look for is the plants that are "smiling" at me, or the ones that show some vigor. Has the plant been growing in adequate light? Plants that are etiolated, or pin-headed trying to stretch for more light, show that the cultivation hasn't been quite up to par for that specimen. Is there a marked difference in other growth habits since the individual has owned the plant? Sometimes plants we buy at nurseries are mass produced and so their culture is basically a one-size-fits-all process for the nurseryman. This means it may not be optimal for all the plants they grow. When we take them home, provide them with good light, fertilizer, etc. all of a sudden the spine density and color improve and the plant body bulks up. It's not uncommon to see this different growth habit on show plants. As a judge, if I see that trait on a beginner's plant I know that person is providing better culture for that plant than it had before, which is great. If the plant is young enough, I know that eventually, under that same care, the plant will outgrow the inferior habit. But most importantly, it shows me the novice is doing the right thing for the plant.

POTS

I know for some novices this can be a very touchy subject. They look over in the Advanced or Master categories and see these huge plants in these obviously expensive pots and think, why in the heck would anyone even look at their plants. My suggestion: don't worry about the advanced growers and their fancy pots...they've got their own demons to deal with! Focus on your plants, the ones that you enjoy. Think of the plant as the artwork and the pot as the frame. The frame should never outshine the artwork. With that philosophy in mind, the straight forward approach of keeping it simple is best. Again, as a beginner, you're not expected to have the exotic bonsai pot or gazillion



2005 Best Novice Cactus. Photo taken by Lee Brownson.

dollar ceramics. If you've got a few flaunt them, but don't 'not' show because you don't have any.

You can display your plants in plain plastic or clay pots just fine. Like the plants, make sure the pots are clean. If you have plants in clay pots and there's some calcium build-up, clean it off. If it won't come clean, repot the plant into a cleaner pot. Taking some mineral oil and wiping it on an older clay pot can give it new life. Make sure you wipe off excess oil. Plastic pots can solarize in our desert sun, so if your show plant is in a plastic pot that's starting to deteriorate, repot it. If you're bound and determined to use a more decorative ceramic pot, make sure it's got a drainage hole! Please do not pick a ceramic pot that has some hideous colors thinking that it'll draw the judge's attention. Actually it will, but not for the right reasons! The color of the pots should be fairly neutral or earth-toned. Remember, you don't want the frame to outshine the artwork...keep it simple! The only time I've really ever considered the pot in judging is if it's so bad it detracts from the plant or if the category of plants displayed are so wonderfully beautiful and equal that I then have to look for faults or points to choose one plant over the others.

One other point is to properly match the size of the pot to the size of the plant. Try to achieve a balance, where the pot size compliments the plant. An over potted plant, where what you see is mostly pot and soil surface, looks lost. An under-potted plant (too big for the pot) is a little better than an over potted plant but not by much. When in doubt, repot to an appropriate sized pot.

TOP DRESSING

Top dressing the soil surface is a way to finish off that space between the plant and the pot and is an extension of "the frame". Like the pot, the top-dressing should be simple, neutral and not detract from the plant. Natural gravels, whether collected or purchased work best. Some people like the natural aquarium gravel you can buy at pet stores. The uniformity in size of store-bought gravel can lend a certain formality to the display, where different sized gravel gives it a more informal effect. If I'm planting in a formal bonsai pot I might want to maintain a certain formality with uniform sized gravel. The other advantage with natural gravels is they will tend to not conflict with the color of the pot, though there are exceptions once in a while.

I generally don't suggest artificially colored or epoxy coated gravels for most plants. The artificial colors tend to clash with the plant, the pot or both. Avoid something as stark as white gravel as it almost always outshines the plant. The one exception to the use of colored gravel is in the case of black, but then only in careful applications. I've seen some very artistic uses of black colored gravel but it has been rare. My personal approach to the use of it is if the plant I'm displaying has very light colored spines and the body of the plant nearly fills the pot and I just want the ground surface to fade away then black gravel can be useful. However, if there's a lot of soil surface and it's covered in black it can be fairly distracting.

IT'S BEEN KNOWN TO HAPPEN

I remember judging the Inter-City Cactus and Succulent Show held in Los Angeles a number of years ago. Can you imagine most of the premier hobbyists and growers of southern California displaying their choicest plants in one setting? The category was Mammillaria clusters, over 12" pots. Between Novice, Advanced and Master there had to be 18 or 20 absolutely perfect, stunningly presented specimens, any one of which would be desirable to have. Some of these clustered masterpieces were enormous, old and rare. The other judges and I were looking for Best Mammillaria in Show and had determined that the 12" and over group was where we needed to choose from.

The species of blue ribbon winners in the Advanced and Master categories I don't recall, but I do remember the Novice one. In a very simple round bonsai pot, brown in color, was a drop-dead gorgeous specimen of *Mammillaria bombycina*. Not many years ago that was probably one of the most common Mammillarias you could find. Nevertheless, this plant was absolutely at its peak and fit perfectly in what was probably a 14" pot. It not only smiled, the darned thing was grinning! Looking over all the magnificent plants that particular one kept drawing my attention. Finally I broke the silence by saying, "you know what guys (it was an all-male judging panel), that plant there (pointing to the *M. bombycina*) does it for me. The other judges scrutinized the plant further, one even commented how "common" it was. But, I pointed out that if I was going to take any one of the prospective winners home that would be the individual. And guess what, one by one they agreed! Imagine, a Novice grower winning Best Mammillaria in Show at the Inter-City Cactus and Succulent Show with a common plant like *Mammillaria bombycina*! It's been known to happen!

Good luck, and see you at the show!



2005 Best Succulent of Show: Rich Zeh's *Cyphostemma betiformis*. Photo taken by Lee Brownson.

2008 CACSS SHOW & SALE VENDORS

PLANTS

Cactus Data Plants

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Steve Holmes
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Cynthia Eddy

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Skoolgirl Antiques

Tom & Beth Steuber
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theskoolgirl@aol.com

ADENIUM FEVER - CATCH IT!

When the night time temperatures warm up to over 50 degrees, usually sometime in March, it is a good time to bring your adeniums back outside. Limited watering is best until it really warms up and new foliage is observed. In the heat of the summer they appreciate lots of water as well as fertilizer that is high in the middle number (phosphate) to encourage blooming all summer and fall. Two varieties that are often available at the Desert Botanical Garden plant sale that bloom really well and maintain a less floppy, more upright growth are Crimson Star and Little Ruby. Get there early! You can elevate them over time when re-potting to gradually expose their interesting thick, twisted roots. Pot them up in the spring; bigger pots result in bigger plants more quickly. If you want one that will develop a really thick base (caudex) get an *Adenium arabicum*; it produces pink flowers mainly in the spring. Bigger plants can take almost full sun; smaller ones appreciate filtered sun. Enjoy them outside until early November when the night time temperatures begin to drop; then bring them inside by a sunny window where they will maintain some foliage with minimum monthly water or keep them dry in a cool garage where they will go dormant until spring. Never let them get wet and cold in the winter; they will rot. Spring is also a good time to remove any crossing or floppy branches. Old wood (not new growth) cuttings can sometimes be rooted in pumice with lots of summer water. See "Good Growing Guides" under "Gardening Help" on the Desert Botanical Garden website (www.dbg.org) for more information on caring for adeniums.

TOM GATZ



Adenium 'Crimson Star'. Photo taken by Tom Gatz.



Photo Page 6: Wildflower paradise.

Photo Bottom Page 7: *Echinocereus bonkeriae* surrounded by California Poppies.

Both photos taken by the editor near Globe, Arizona on 3/22/08.



CENTRAL ARIZONA
CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY
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ARTICLE SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR NEXT CENTRAL SPINE
ISSUE IS: APRIL 7TH, 2008. EMAIL TO: CROBIN500@MSN.COM

PLANT QUESTIONS???

WHOM TO CONTACT!!!

Many CACSS members have experience with different kinds of succulent plants. I hope they will add their names to the following list (just call or e-mail Bob Torrest). For now, the list is simply alphabetical with principle interests. When more members add their information, the list will be cross-referenced by topic.

DOUG DAWSON
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Specialization includes Flora of Namibia, Growing from Seed, Lithops, other Mesembs & Melocactus.

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Specialization includes Aloes, Haworthias, Columnar Cacti & Turbinicarpus.

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Specialization includes Flora of Madagascar, Growing from Seed, Caudiciform & Pachycaul Succulents, Aloes, Apocynaceae, Burseraceae, Euphorbiaceae, Fouquieriaceae, & Succulent Bonsai.

BOB TORREST
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Specialization includes Desert Landscaping, Unusual (including Rare Fruit) Trees & Shrubs, Aloes, Agaves, Columnar Cacti, Trichocereus & Opuntia.