



MAMMILLARIA THORNERI

Espinas y Flores

BULLETIN OF THE SAN DIEGO CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY
Affiliate of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America, Inc.

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PROGRAM:

"A SURPRISE" : Bob Foster and Charles Glass, Co-Editors of the CSSA Journal, members of the I.O.S., Directors of Fabulous Lotus Land in Santa Barbara, creators and former owners of Abbey Gardens in Reseda - their list of accomplishments and involvements is endless. They have not decided on the subject of their program; but whatever it is about, it will be interesting and informative.

February 7th, 1976, 1:30 pm., Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park.

CACTUS OF THE MONTH : Gymnocalycium.

SUCCULENT OF THE MONTH : Asclepiadaceae.

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MEMBERSHIP: The San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society is open to all persons interested in growing cacti, other succulents and exotic plants. Dues: \$ 5.00 annually, due in December of each year. Single copy of E y F : \$ 0.50.

Meetings: 2nd Saturday of each month, 1:30 pm., Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, unless otherwise indicated. Board convenes after the general meeting.

Deadline for March publication is February 16th, 1976.

ASCLEPIADACEAE

As outlandish as the name may sound, this group of plants - also known as the Milkweed Family - encompasses a huge number of genera and species, many of them well-known to the hobbyist. Among the 250 genera and 2000 species are non-succulent types: quite often in the form of common pesty perennial weeds; semi-succulents (or leaf succulents): such as Stephanotis floribunda and the splendid Hoya genus; and true succulents (or stem succulents): the two main tribes being Stapeliads and Ceropegieae. ASCLEPIADACEAE are distributed throughout the entire world although many members can be found in the tropics: the semi-arid regions of India, the Himalayas, the Middle East, Africa and Spain.

Stapeliads: As mentioned, they are stem succulents, consist of 20 genera, varying in size from one or two inches in their adult form to bushes of three feet in height or taller. Once-present primitive leaves have long disappeared, and all that remains are many small protruberances or points along the stems. Blossoms are generally star-shaped and their outstanding characteristics are their striking and yet quaint colors - pink, brown, red - and an extremely distracting and unpleasant odor, at least to the human nose. This may have intrigued you, but Stapeliads have blossoms of a rather complicated structure which can only be pollinated by bowflies. The idea is to simulate rotten meat, in color as well as odor, to attract these creatures. Sometimes, maggots may even hatch but will perish soon because of lack of food.

Best known among the Tribe of Stapeliads is the genus Stapelia, also aptly known as "Starfish Flowers". Almost every collection includes the hardy S. variegata, nicknamed "Toad Cactus"; its crested form, S. variegata var. cristata; S. berlinensis ("Black Starfish"); S. hirsuta ("Hairy Starfish Flower"); S. gigantea, appropriately named after its giant flowers measuring up to 18 inches in diameter.

Cultivation of Stapelia requires sandy, well-draining and rather rich soil. Plants do well in moderate shade - but plenty of light - , warmth and moisture in summer. Long rest periods are beneficial during the winter. However, as with all stem succulents, the Stapeliad Tribe is less resistant to wilting than are other succulents, and it is advisable to keep roots very slightly moist. This is the reason why a certain amount of practical knowledge is required in order to grow Stapeliads successfully: One must find out how many drops of water constitute the right amount of moisture.

Some other interesting members of the Stapeliad Tribe are: Hoodia, Duvalia, Caralluma, Tavaresia and Huernia, to name but a few.

Ceropegieae: This tribe has a number of genera of which only one is found in the average collection: the genus Ceropegia. These attractive plants make fascinating hanging baskets: C. woodi (Rosary Vine); C. sandersonii; with its green fleshy leaves; C. debilis, which has narrow, long and pointed leaves; and C. radicans, also with very long and slender leaves. This genus has many more members which warrant attention.

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Succulent-of-the-Month, cont'd:

There are shrubby Ceropegia which have finger-thick stems and grow up to 3 feet in height: C. dichotoma and C. fusca. Others, such as C. stapiliiformis, lend themselves very well to be trained as climbers.

Cultivation is similar to that of the Stapeliad Tribe and cuttings root easily at any season. Most members of the genus Ceropegia have lovely, delicate flowers resembling fancy umbrellas in varying stages of unfolding. They do not have an unpleasant odor but also depend on flies for pollination. Because of this, blossoms are cleverly constructed by having a long stem covered with hair pointing towards the base of the blossom thus pulling any insect towards the interior. The insect will only be released when the pollen is ripe, at which time the hairs wither, releasing their hold and allowing the prisoner to escape and carry on pollination.

Hoyas: This group consists of many species which are characterized by their waxy, quite often shiny succulent leaves and are known as "Wax Flower" or "Wax Vine". Most species are climbers and look spectacular when espaliered. Flowers resemble tight clusters of little waxy stars, varying from pure white (H. carnosa) to pinkish (H. "Silver Pink") to dark red (H. darwinii). Some plants have extremely attractive leaves as well: H. carnosa compacta has fascinating curlicue leaves, while H. latifolia and H. carnosa exotica display leaves with a green-white pattern.

Hoyas do very well in rich heavy and well-draining soil and bloom best when slightly root-bound. Most species can be grown in tubs outdoors requiring filtered sun. When grown indoors, they prefer a sunny window-sill. Hoyas like thorough watering during the summer and an occasional one during the winter. Shrivelling of leaves is an indication that the plants need water.

The great variety of these plants, each as attractive as the next one, makes the collector's choice a difficult one, indeed.

References:

- Lamb, Edgar and Brian; Cacti & Other Succulents, Vol. III, Blandford Press, London, 1963.
- Lamb, Edgar; Stapeliads, Blandford Press, London, 1957.
- Higgins, Vera; Succulents in Cultivation, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1960
- Chidamian, Claude; Cacti and Other Succulents, Doubleday and Co. Inc., Garden City, New York, 1958.
- Sunset Western Garden Book, Lane Magazine & Book Co., Menlo Park, Ca.
- Brown, White, Sloane & Reynolds; Succulents for the Amateur, Abbey Garden Press, Pasadena, Ca. 1955.

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Thelma O'Reilly

Often we take for granted our members who freely share their time and knowledge which is in great demand by other societies for a substantial fee.

George Radwin and Madelyn Lee deserve a special "vote of thanks" for their 1975 contributions to Espinasy Flores, followed by their presentation of the cactus and succulent of the month at each meeting.

How wonderful that George and Madelyn will return in '76, giving us another year of three outstanding programs at each meeting under the smooth sailing leadership of Martin Mooney.

BOOK REVIEWS

ECHEVERIAS, L. Carruthers & R. Ginns, 1973, Arco Publishing Co. Inc., New York, \$ 7.95. Review by Bill Throop. Repr. from CSIE, April 75.

"Carruthers and Ginns have done an outstanding job in this 110 page book devoted to Echeverias. Certainly anyone growing this group of plants could find no better source of reference from the layman's view. The first part of the book covers such things as the history of the genus, their habitat, and a description of the two main types of inflorescence. Next, good notes on cultivation and propagation are given. The main part of the book is a description of over 100 species and their varieties. Not only do the authors describe each species in full, they also give former names, where plants came from originally (if known) and how best to propagate it. The same treatment is given to some sixty hybrids.

Forty-eight half page color photos are included in the book; of these forty-six are close-up pictures of individual plants. Most of the pictures show excellent detail. The authors are to be congratulated for the fine book they have produced. I find myself wishing that someone would do the same for other groups of succulents. What an addition to our reference libraries if we had comparable books on Lithops, Aloes, Euphorbias, etc."

CACTI AND THEIR CULTIVATION, Martin, Chapman and Auger, Winchester Press, New York City, 205 pages, \$ 10.95, also available paperbound.

If you are a cactus enthusiast, you should give this book some thought. First published in Britain, it is characterized by typical British Thoroughness. Besides general topics such as culture and propagation, it takes up the plants in such special groups as giant cacti, cacti of North America, cacti of South America, rare ones, large-flowered sorts, cristate and monstrous plants, etc. Generously illustrated.

CACTACEOUS PLANTS: THEIR HISTORY & CULTURE, Lewis Castle (London, 1884) 104 pages. New reprint of this old classic now available in quality facsimile edition. Runeskald Press, 1974, Box 612, Annapolis, Maryland, 21404. Hard cover, 15 illustrations, \$ 6.00. Review by Cam Riera, repr. from CSIE May 75.

"First published in 1884, this is an historically interesting little book. It covers structure, distribution, history, culture, etc. There is also a classification based on two Tribes: Echinocactae and Opuntiae. Today's collectors will find it interesting to see which cacti were available and how they were cultivated at that time. Adding to the interest of this book are the many references to even earlier historical works. Naturally, some of the material is dated and sometimes it is unintentionally humorous, but therein lies the historical charm of Castle's book. A welcome addition to the Cactophile's library."

HANDBOOK OF SUCCULENT-PLANTS, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Abbey Garden Press, \$ 1.50. Review by Mrs. Ruth Davis, repr. from CSIE May 75.

"This is such a great help on everything from American native cacti, South African 'Flowering Stones', Epiphytic plants, Xerophytes, Stapeliads or what have you. Soil, culture, propagation, pests and control measures; well illustrated, and an illustrated dictionary section of 4 pages in color."

MY FAVORITE (SUCCULENT)VINE.

Audrey Johnson

Some time ago, I remember remarking that vines rather scare me - they're so intelligent! Well, trying to prove that I'm more intelligent, perhaps, I put one vine to work for me some months ago, and it has certainly repaid me a thousandfold.

Although nursery-bought vines (as we all know) don't always perform as advertised, this particular succulent vine grows exactly the way vines are supposed to grow: both, rapidly and vigorously! It takes off in a flash - in fact, it takes over if planted in the wrong spot in the garden - and, late in the year, produces quantities of showy, yellow umbrellas of flowers which last for months. In point of fact, mine is cascading over the rocky boulders at this very moment, with Christmas not far away.

Upon enquiry, everyone seems to know my vine, but nobody is too sure of its name. (See editor's note).

For those, who like ourselves, have huge rocks and boulders to contend with, I can't imagine anything more effective to cover them. Choosing my spot carefully, I recently planted cuttings at the back of a raised flowerbed which itself is backed by a steep hillside, strewn with huge piles of rock. In a very short time, my pet vine got the right idea and started climbing. It used the poison oak and weeds (which had been annoying us ever since we started our landscaping) as props to assist in steadying itself, which was very clever, we thought. Besides strangling those undesirable invaders (we hope) my vine now cascades delightfully over the boulders and is still making its way up the hillside.

I may say that everyone who has visited my garden recently, has remarked upon, and admired, this plant, and most visitors have requested cuttings. As for me, I have planted them in every nook and cranny of the rocks so that they can get well established during the rainy season this winter.

If this unnamed, but completely charming, vine of mine takes over the whole hillside, we shan't mind at all - in fact, we shall all be perfectly delighted.

Editor's Note: Audrey, after having written her story, brought a piece of this much-discussed vine to the December meeting. Even experts, such as Lee Phelps, could only tell us, that it belonged to the Senecio family, but which Senecio remains shrouded in mystery.

P.S. The following information from the California Academy of Sciences, Dept. of Botany, San Francisco, just arrived before going to press: Audrey's beloved vine appears to be Senecio angulatus and belongs to the genus Scandentes. There are about ten species, all of which are native to the south-eastern region of South Africa, and all have climbing or trailing habits.

CACTUS-OF-THE-MONTH

Dr. George Radwin

GYMNOCALYCIUM

This large group of globular cacti is indigenous to Uruguay and parts of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia. The name of the genus relates to the naked flowerbuds and the white, pink, red, or purple blooms, with two or more tiers of bent-back petals, are certainly among the most beautiful in the family Cactaceae; this is made a more attractive feature by the free-flowering nature of most species, some of which may continue blooming year-round in a greenhouse.

Although most "gymnos" are under 6 inches in diameter, some reach a diameter of over 15 inches (e.g. G. saglione).

Although most cactus fanciers understand that Gymnocalycium species thrive in a regimen of considerable heat, those of us who have achieved this condition coupled with intense light have found out, to our chagrin, about the "gymno" aversion to ultra-violet radiation. In their native habitat these plants live in temperate, rolling grasslands, always at least partially shrouded by grasses or shrubs, thus their adverse reaction to direct sunlight.

Gymnocalycium species can survive moderately low temperatures (to 25°F.) as long as this is not combined with excessive water. These plants are somewhat more tolerant to humus in their potting mixture than are most other cactus genera.

A list of the better known species and also some of the more beautiful newer species include: G. asterium, G. baldianum, G. cardenasianum, G. damsi, G. delaetii, G. denudatum, G. horstii, G. mihanovichii, G. mihanovichii var. friedrichii, G. mihanovichii var. "Red Cap", G. quehlianum, G. saglione, G. spegazzinianum, G. valnickianum, G. vatterii, G. zeggarae.

CEREUS-LY SPEAKING

The Affiliate Reporter was late in reaching the Editor and, therefore, it was a shock to all of us to hear our January guest speaker, Dave Grigsby, give us the sad news that Don B. Skinner, F CSS, Founder of the L.A. CSS, passed away Dec. 12, 1975. Those wishing to remember him in some way may want to make a donation to the Lung Foundation in his name or to the Memorial Fund of CSSA. Contact Virginia Martin, CSSA Secretary, 2631 Fairgreen Ave., Arcadia, Ca. 91006 for the latter.

All of us enjoyed Dave Grigsby's excellent January talk about "Common Sense Conservation". We also appreciated looking at some of the very rare plants he brought with him, such as Aloe ruberoviola and Fockea eduliss, all of which were auctioned off for a total of \$ 72.25, which is to be used towards the purchase of privately owned lands within the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

The Regalement Committee, as usual under the competent management by Jean and Leta Hapeman, has scored again, with the help of: Mildred Anders, Mr. C.L. Benbow, Virginia Buckner, Gloria Cavanaugh, Rose D'Attilio, Wilma Johnson, Sophie Loyland, Pat Mooney and Mary Pratt.

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SAN DIEGO CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY

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2-year term: Mary L. Birchell and Perlso Lewis
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Cereus-ly Speaking, cont'd:

Perlso Lewis has undertaken the difficult job of setting up the Del Mar Fair Exhibition Committee. Urgently needed are interested members to chair the three different categories: Cacti, Succulents and Grafts. Many hours of hard labor performed by many different hands are required to make this event in June of this year as successful as it has been in past years. For donations of manpower and loan of plants, please contact Perlso: 583-9085.

Something new has been added to our regular Saturday meetings: Each month, it is hoped, one member will volunteer to put on display some of his favorite plants for the enjoyment of all of us. Walter Falk brought plants from his collection at the January meeting - and a very nice, showy display it was! Shirley Berry is slated for February. Anyone interested in partaking in this program, please contact our President.

Cont'd on back page

Cereus-ly Speaking, cont'd:

The January Bragging Plant was Gymnocactus beguinii var. senilis; proud owner: Mary Birchell.

The 'Special' of our plant sales table in February will be Pelargonium tetragonium at the bargain of 50 cents per plant.

Open House at Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, by our Society will not be held in May, as usual, but will take place, instead, on the weekend of August 7th & 8th, 1976.

And thanks to Doris Rake who made it possible for you to receive E y F by typing the mastercopy for all mailing addresses which had to be updated for the printers.

Please note: Our next meeting is February 7th., 1976.

Augie Pfeiffer
~~5163 E. Bedford Dr.~~
San Diego, Ca. 92116

Address correction requested

FIRST CLASS