

ESPINAS Y FLORES



Copiapoa sp.
Photo: Joe & Kay Quijada

**The Newsletter of the San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society Inc.
Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America**

**Volume 39 Number 1
1:00
Saturday January 10th 1994
Room 101 Casa Del Prado, Balboa Park**



Presidents Message

December 26, 2003

Happy New Year! Hope you all had a safe and peaceful Holiday Season. It was so nice to see the rain on Christmas Day, I could hear all the plants breathing a sigh of relief after all the hot, dry, dusty winds of the Fall...

What a great Holiday Party we had on the 13th. There were over a hundred people in attendance and it looked to me that all were having a wonderful time. You once again out did yourselves in the dessert department - what a yummy selection! Many thanks to Laura DeMerritt who did so much to make this a special day for everyone. Thanks are also due to Herb and Anna Stern for setting up a great selection of libations for our enjoyment. Thanks also for all who had a hand in putting together an amazing selection of gift plants - Mark Fryer from C&J generously added extra plants to our order so there were plenty left over for the lively auction. Woody Minnich, Rudy Lime also provided beautiful plants - thanks to Lee Badger and Tom DeMerritt for getting them all together. I hope everyone got a plant they were happy with. It was great to see our oldest founding member, Bob Taylor, in attendance - looking good for his 99 years! Bob was the first real "Cactus Farmer" I ever met when we first got into cactus in the early 70's. I will never forget his nimble scurrying up and down the slopes of his El Cajon cactus gardens while us youngsters scrambled to keep up with him!

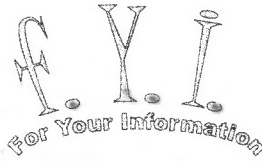
It was a great pleasure for me to be able to honor two of our members with "Special Service Awards" for their volunteer efforts with our Society. Carol Jean Wolcott and Joe Kraatz are indeed special people who have done so much to make this Society successful. Thanks again to them both. The hardest part of giving out these awards is deciding who to give them to - there are so many of you who help out in so many ways, month after month in so many different ways --- THANKS to all of you!

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Our January meeting is going to be a little different. We are having the first ever "Chile Fest" featuring several different members who have made recent trips to Chile, South America. There will not be regular "plant of the month" talks but rather mini programs on Chile. I would also encourage people to bring in Chilean (or S. American) plants for the Brag Table as well. To compliment this special day we are asking those of you who fancy yourselves good chile cooks to bring in a sample pot of your best chile to share at the break. So dust off your aprons and wooden spoons and participate in the first ever CACTUS CLUB CHILE FEST. Bring your recipe as well - we will publish the favorite recipes in the February Newsletter.

I look forward to seeing all for this special day, January 10th!

Pam Badger
pambadge@earthlink.net



The idea for this month's program came to me after experiencing the nicest trip you could hope for along with the knowledge that a few other people in our group had also made the trip or had plans to. I have always been amazed at how different the experience is for each individual even when they visit the very same areas.

So what is this month's program? - You ask! Well, the topic is CHILE with a loosely assembled panel of speakers consisting of Tom Knapik; Bromeliad grower extraordinaire, educator and all around good guy! The Quijada's - Joe and Kay; consummate growers, world travelers and just plain fun people! And little old Me, Kelly G! In no particular order. There will be essentially three mini programs and since this is a new venture, I have no particular expectations other than to say let's have some fun with it!

Some come to hear about the Copiapoas, the Neochilenias and see the beautiful beaches that Chile is known for. If you are a cook, bring something to the table with a "Chili" theme and Thank You!

Kelly Griffin



CACTUS CLUB CHILE FEST

We are asking those of you who fancy yourselves good Chile cooks to bring in a sample pot of your best Chile to share at the break. So dust off your aprons and wooden spoons and participate in the first ever **CACTUS CLUB CHILE FEST**. I will have two awesome neat prize plants, one for the best chili and of course one for the best vegetarian chili. BTW the vegetarian prize will be the better one!

Bring your recipe as well - we will publish the favorite recipes in the February Newsletter.

Spring in Northern Chile: Andes to Atacama Desert

By Kay Quijada

Traveling with 6 other "plant people" from the San Francisco area, we flew to the northern coastal city of Arica, Chile, and immediately headed east towards Lauca National Park in the Andes. We stayed in the village of Putre, elevation 11,500 feet, to help acclimatize quicker to the higher altitude of the andes. From Putre, we took day trips up to the thin air of the altiplano (highlands) of Lauca. Spectacular views were everywhere. There were snow-covered volcanos, wild herds of vicunas, rock-dwelling vizcachas, a lake with pink flamingos, colorful

hills, and the bluest sky we'd ever seen



Browningia candularis

We were amazed to see the green cushion-like plant called *Azorella compacta*, (syn. *Laretia compacta*) growing in the high desert altitudes of 14,000 to 15,000+ feet.



Eulychnia sp.

Traveling around in the high elevations we saw a few cactus; *Eulychnia*, *Maihueiniopsis*, and *Oreocereus* species. On the way back to Arica we traveled through an area of enormous sand dunes where a number of stately *Browningia candularis* grew.



Lago Chungara Chile

We then flew south to the coastal city of Antofagasta and drove into the beautiful Atacama Desert south to Copiapo. One of the interesting sights seen in the Atacama Desert is the process of natural plant death. The Atacama is almost barren of bacteria. This fact became apparent to us as we realized the piles of white ash found around dead plants was not from burning, but



Looking for *Copiapoa Laui*

from the very slow process of plant material disintegration due to low populations of bacteria. Since then, I've read that the plant disintegration process in the Atacama may take decades.



Joe photographing *Copiapoa*

As we made our way around the coastal and desert canyons from Taltal to Caldera, we managed to see a number Copiapoa and Eulychnia species (some blooming), a Cistanthe species with red pompom flowers, *Deutercohnia chrysantha*, *Oxalis gigantea*, beautiful scenery, and braying wild Guanacos. Chile is a spectacular place, indeed.



Joe & Kay wave goodbye from the Atacama Desert

CHILE

By Woody Minnich

CHILE: the Andes, the Atacama, the Humboldt Current, the Garua Fog and the genus Copiapoa. Nowhere in the world is there a desert like the Atacama of Chile. Similar atmospherically to the Namib Desert of South West Africa, the Atacama is primarily given its life supporting moisture from dense fogs known as the Garua. These persistent fogs are trapped in a thin belt almost the entire length of the coast of Chile as well as northwards into southern Peru. The Andean barrier being only a short distance from the coastline has created an environment where plants and animals have developed a need for the Garua's life giving moisture. There are regions, of this linear desert, that have never received measurable rain and are considered by many to be some of the driest places in the world. In spite of the Atacama's inhospitable environment there is a wide selection of amazingly adapted plants and animals suited to survive in this unique setting.

Living in a place of little or no available water requires very specialized mechanisms for survival. The cacti of the Atacama are well adapted to their rainless situ and have developed special characteristics enabling them to compete and survive where few other organisms find it possible. The granitic soils, descending down from the Andes,

are very porous, highly reflective and very deplete in nutrients. The solar intensity is extreme, the shade is sparse and the rain is seldom, if not at all. Thus, only the creatures that have learned how to capitalize on the regular evening occurrence of the Garua fog, are able to survive in the Atacama. The reptiles, mammals, birds and insects have all developed a close-knit relationship with the life cycles of the plants (cacti and other succulents) and the ecosystem's rarity of water.

Over the 33 years I have traveled and explored the desert areas of the Americas, never have I found a place as pristine and undisturbed as the coastal cactus lands of the Atacama. The genus Copiapoa fits this rocky textured landscape perfectly with its bumpy ashy-grey to mahogany-brown colored bodies that are often covered by fierce rich black to glowing golden-yellow colored spines. The Copiapoas demonstrate many of the desert's unique plant characteristics, ranging from pebbled, moisture-absorbing skins to huge tuberous-root water reservoirs. The bright white, almost monolithic Copiapoa columna-alba is probably the most sculptural of the genus, as it stands in small groups that seem to represent migrating creatures, marching across the granitic alluvial fans. Copiapoa solaris with its bright golden-yellow spines and numerous

heads is a magnificent sight as clusters reach six feet across and four feet in height. These beautiful specimens often appear as giant mounds of formidable spines. One of the small species, an inch to two inches in diameter, *Copiapoa hypogaea*, is a wonderful little cryptic jewel. With its lizard skin-like epidermis, it lays flat to the ground, looking like decomposed granite, thus hiding, so as to not become potential Guanaco food. All the Copiapoas seem to be very beautiful and desiring, each with its own special characteristics. Due to their slow growth, CITES status and their outstanding features, they often demand very high prices.

There are a number of other genera that also command a great deal of respect, *Noechilenia*, *Neoporteria* (*Eriosyce*), *Eulychnia*, *Trichocereus* and *Deuterocohnia*. Many of the species from these taxa have similar characteristics to the Copiapoas. My favorites include; *Neochilenia occulta* with its beautiful purple-black body color, *Neochilenia napina* with its black spider-like spines pressed against a grey epidermis, and *Eulychnia saint-pieana* that has copious amounts of white wool and long black needle like spines that adorn each stem. It is not unusual for this taxon to form a handsome candleabra shaped cluster that commonly reaches to eight feet in height. Other plants, including succulents, also offer some of the specialized features necessary for survival in this parched landscape. *Deuterocohnia crisantha* with its bronze-red epidermis is just another spectacular species that highlights the Atacama's rugged terrain. Needless to say, one could find many favorites among the wonderful array of plants and animals that are so well adapted to this fascinating place known as "the

desert by the sea.

There is only one thing that makes this magical place even better, and that is the company of good friends and fellow naturalists like Kelly Griffin, Tom Knapik and Rudolf Schultz. With these people, the excitement never ends and virtually everything we find poses a new question.

Wendell S. (Woody) Minnich
December, 2003



Holiday



Photos



The Best Columnar Cactus

(In my opinion)

By Tom Knapik

The Atacama desert in Chile has botanical riches beyond compare. To pick a favorite is as difficult a task as picking one favorite movie. So, I decided to focus on one particular form, the columnar cactus, and write about my experience with the best... *Eulychnia saint-pieana*.



Eulychnia saint-pieana

In 1984, I worked for David Grigsby for one summer. At his nursery I learned so much about the fantastic cacti one could grow. In one of his greenhouses he had 10 or so columnar cacti that caught my attention. They were about 2 -3 feet tall at that time and had long spines surrounded at the base by wool. They looked like white columns with spines sticking out. I learned the name of the magnificent species was *Eulychnia saint-pieana*. None were available for purchase and there were no offsets. But, I made a

mental note and knew someday I would grow the species. Fifteen years later, I was in Chile exploring the fantastic flora of the Atacama. North of the town of Channaral on a ridge that took an hour to hike up, I found the plant in habitat. The species grows to a massive size with 50 or more stems. Many had lichens growing on their spines giving them a dingy appearance, in other words, they were impressive in size only. Looking at the tips of new growth though, I saw those wonderful woolly areoles that I fell in love with so many years ago. I searched for fresh seed pods to collect and found 2 large fruit. They were the size of golf balls and fuzzy. Inside the fruit looked like green jam with small dark seeds scattered though-out. Over the course of the next few days, I mashed them up, suspended them in water, and poured off the pulp leaving the tiny black seeds behind. I dried them in a Frisbee I had brought along and packaged well over one thousand seed.

I sent some to Mesa Garden in New Mexico, gave some to C & J Cactus Nursery, and gave the rest to friends. Now after five years, these slow growing plants are reaching market size. Grown in greenhouse conditions, they are spectacular columns of white and it gives me great satisfaction to have helped reintroduce this great species.

Upcoming Events

2004

January 17 : CSSA Board Meeting at Huntington Botanical Gardens (Ahmanson Classroom)

January 25 (Sunday) Great Rosarians of the World Annual Lecture Series, Number IV, at the Huntington Library, San Marino CA. Plant collectors, Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix will be there. More details from Clair Martin, Curator of Rose and Perennial Gardens, HBG. Tel: 626-405-3507 or e-mail: cmartin@huntington.org This is announced in case some spouses prefer roses to cacti!

February 14: SDC&SS Winter Show and Sale - Feb. 14, 2004 -- 10 am-4pm -- Casa del Prado, room 101, Balboa Park, San Diego.

March 27 - 29 Colorado C&SS Show and Sale, Denver Botanic Gardens, 1005 York Street. Contact Helen Norton, 970-353-9581 or e-mail at Ripsmom@aol.com

April 9 - 12 : Australasian Cactus Convention, Quality Hotel, Steeple Conference Centre, Fitzherbert Ave, Palmerston North, New Zealand. Hosted by Manawatu and Tararua Branches. This event will incorporate the AGM of the C&SS of NZ. Air New Zealand, Origin Pacific or Freedom Air can fly you into Milson Airport. Registrants who make prior arrangements can be met on arrival. Keynote speakers included Paul Forster (paulforster@uq.net.au) on Succulents of South Africa Cape Provinces and Haworthia; Rudolf Schultz (copiapoa@iaccess.com.au) on some of his South American experiences in "Out of Brazil" and about "Succulents of the Canary Islands;" and Attila Kapitany (gecko@connexus.net.au) will present his research on "Succulents in the Garden" and will talk about his experiences in Argentina. More info from Frances Verrity at verrity@actrix.gen.nz Updated info at May 1 - 2 Houston C&SS Spring Sale at the Houston Arboretum and Nature www.cactus2004.freesevers.com/

April 17 : CSSA Board Meeting 9am at Scottsdale Plaza Resort, Scottsdale, Arizona (site of 2005 Convention)

Center, 4501 Woodway Dr, Houston TX Open from 10am to 5pm each day. Rare and unusual Cacti and Succulents for sale. Contact Hank Andresen for more details. Tel: 713-436-1734 or e-mail Hank at hand1609@hotmail.com

May 3 - 5 : Sonoran V Conference at Inn Suites Hotel (formerly the Ramada Inn) Theme will be BAJA. Speakers and workshops. Tentative plans include Friday night pre-conference dinner, speaker and opening of the plant sales area for all members and conference participants. Conference opening will be on Saturday morning for registrants. Show and Sale open to public. Silent auction, raffle and a special dinner on Saturday night featuring recipes utilizing cacti, succulents and other desert plants. Number of registrants will be limited to 100. Contact Dick Wiedhorf at wiedhopf@pharmacy.arizona.edu

June 5 Celebrate Lotusland's new cactus garden, featuring the spectacular Dunlap Collection. Enjoy wine, hors d'oeuvres, and informative tours of this dramatic new venue. For information, call 805-969-3767, ext. 107

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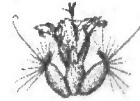
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