

# ESPINAS Y FLORES



## Program

**Cacti and Conquistadores by, Rob Skillin**

## Topic of the Month

**Growing and Staging Cactus and Succulents  
by, Don Hunt**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN DIEGO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY INC.  
AFFILIATED WITH THE CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY OF AMERICA

VOLUME 40 NUMBER 3

SATURDAY MARCH 11 2006, 1:00 PM  
ROOM 101 CASA DEL PRADO, BALBOA PARK

# PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

February 20th, 2006

**G**reetings!

Finally we're seeing some typical signs that it might actually be winter around here after an unusually warm and dry December and January. The rains dropped anywhere from 1/2 an inch near downtown to 3/4 of an inch up in the north-county, and the freezing level's dropped far enough that the local mountains actually saw a little frost. A little white-washing in the hills seems apropos for the month in which we traditionally hold our annual winter show and sale.

Our winter show was well attended, and we had a great turn-out among exhibitors. While there were a few small glitches in our planned informal judging, everyone who exhibited sounded little more than praise for the opportunity, and the audience was overheard to say all sorts of complimentary things about so many beautiful specimens on display. Kudos to everyone who entered plants, arranged plants, or judged plants! Special kudos to Phil Kent and Terry Parr, who went to great lengths to make sure the foundation of a tradition is being firmly placed.

The sales area and cashier placement went a long way to helping

smooth the flow of folks entering and exiting Room 101. I was not alone in assuming our sales must have been really 'off' judging by the lack of grid-locked lines trying to check out, but my assumption was way off base! We again broke last year's sales level, so apparently our strategy to ease the strain of exiting plant-purchasers worked. Super kudos to Chris Miller and Joe Kraatz for managing the sales areas, planning and deploying everything so well.

All of you make the San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society what it is today. There are so many hands that go into a special event like our annual Winter Show and Sale, that it would take me most of an EYF issue to name everyone who plays an important role for the health and well-being of our society. The SDCSS is truly an entirely volunteer effort, and it consistently amazes me to see the fortitude and dedication our membership demonstrates in the many varied activities we engage in. The Baja Garden at the San Diego Wild Animal Park is but one of a number of endeavors that are ongoing and that some of our dedicated members have made a real difference in the community enhancing and building a legacy of the SDCSS's achievements.

There are always going to be

Cover Photo: *Euphorbia piscidermis*, shown by Jurgen Menzel  
Photo Credit: Tim Nomer

new opportunities for us to branch out and offer the community our expertise and help in raising awareness about the functionality and importance of these particular plants. Hopefully in the coming weeks we will have some more information about opportunities at the Balboa Park Cactus and Succulent Gardens, the San Diego Zoo, Cuyumaca College, and other places that need our help.

Internally, the SDCSS needs a few little jolts to help solidify some of our infrastructure. We need an assistant for our greeting crew during regular monthly meetings, someone to simply help set up the information table and answer questions from passers-by from around 9:00am until our normal dedicated crew arrives. We \*always\* welcome additional regalement and refreshments, and no one is going to object to a helping hand or two in making coffee or cleaning up afterwards!

As a number of people (both members and non-members) have been mentioning over the past year or so, our web-page is in dire need of being revamped and maintained. The SDCSS board would like to see someone take this on as a more than simply designing a web page, but as someone who would channel and chart the flow of content, through Espinas Y Flores, to the monthly meeting programs, to the Yahoo! SDCSS group, to the SDCSS web-page, as our official SDCSS content

manager. It's a high-order, but certainly everything from programs to publicity would benefit from having a consistent, coherent message. Please don't hesitate to contact me, or any other board member, if you would like to discuss the opportunities and challenges inherent with this sort of a concept. Perhaps an individual with this sort of a position might help the SDCSS reach out to other CSSA affiliated groups and we might be able to assist one another with larger-scale endeavors like foreign-soil field-trips, conventions, or what have you.

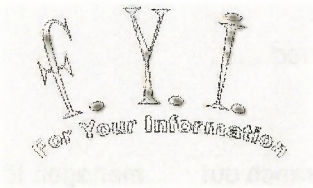
Thanks again to everyone for making the SDCSS the success it is today!

Mark Fryer



*Euphorbia misera*

From "Plants" 1988



## Long Time Espinas Y Flores Editor Dies

Mary Aubuchon, with help from her husband Bud, edited our newsletter for ten years, ending in 1991. At that time, she worked for Instant Printing, which published Espinas Y Flores. Mary and Bud were part of the team that gathered plants in the early '70's for Baja Hill at the Wild Animal Park. You could tell they had been down in Baja by the mature Boojum trees (*Fouquieria columnaris*) in their backyard. These elegant specimens are destined for the succulent garden in Balboa Park. After Bud passed away, Mary volunteered at the Olympic Training Center and was a RSVP volunteer. Mary liked to bike and ran most of her errands on bike, as evidenced by her 1997 Honda, which had only 7000 miles on the clock. She was diagnosed with colon cancer about a year ago, and chose to not fight it. Mary was 75 at the time of her death. She will be missed.

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## Anza Borrego Update

Every year the wondrous wildflowers of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park grace the desert floor with their natural beauty. The colorful bloom is dependent on a few factors to flourish, such as rainfall, temperatures and wind. For instance, if there is too little rain, seed germination is not going to happen. If there is too much rain, seeds get washed away. You get the picture.

Generally the season begins in February, peaks in March and usually fizzles out by April. For the most part, the flowers blossom into fields of color, including sand-hugging verbena, which in some places can cover acres of the desert. Although the late bloomers of the desert wildflower family -- cactus, succulents and other flowers at higher elevations -- can keep blooming after March. Make sure to visit the State Park's Visitor's Center before venturing out for the best spots to see these annual beauties. The center is located on the west end of Palm Canyon Drive in Borrego Springs. Call the park's wildflower hotline at (760) 767-4684 or visit their web site for wildflower alerts.

**The due date for submission of articles (Plants of the Month) & Information on the Program/ Speaker will be the meeting preceding the intended issue (approximately one month ahead of time). The due date for letters, regular columns "brag table" winners and the Presidents Message will be one week later. All submissions are to be made to the Editor.**

# THE LIBRARY CORNER



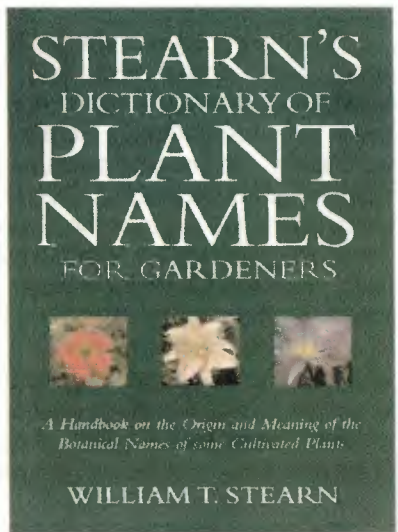
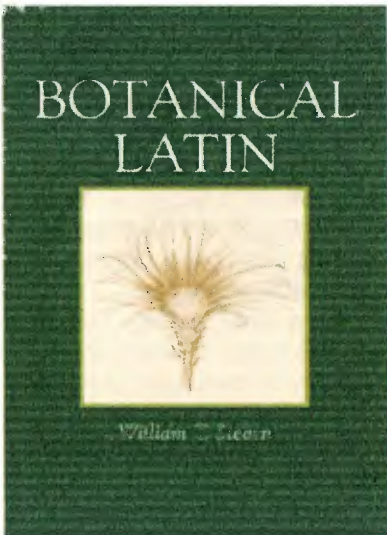
**H**ello to all our fine feathered friends. This is Janis Kent and I'm Philip Kent, and we'd like to wish you all a bright and shiny San Diego morning. You know darling, I was in the garden yesterday and while looking at the plant name tags I thought my tongue was just about to fall off trying to pronounce some of the scientific names. Oh yes dear I know, they certainly are tongue twisters. And how in the world would you live without a tongue? Heavens, you couldn't enjoy chocolate, or cigarettes, or ice cream, or whiskey, or cheese, or steak! Maybe there's a book in the Library that will help explain those wonderful words. Uh, well, here this one may help, Botanical Latin by William T. Stearn. Is that the Bill Stearn from the San Diego Opera? No, I think it might be the Bill Stearn from the Old Globe Theatre. Oh I just love the Old Globe. Yes, me too! But what would he be doing writing a book on botanical Latin? Well, let's see what we have here.

(Sound of pages flipping.) It looks like Mr. Stearn covers history, grammar, syntax, terminology, and vocabulary. He first starts out explaining how to use his book. And then reviews the development of botanical Latin terminology. He then describes the Latin alphabet and pronunciation. Oh I'm glad because it's all Greek to me. Funny you should mention that dear because in Chapter XIX (19) he identifies Greek words in botanical Latin. He reviews the Greek alphabet and Greek word elements, too! He then goes into the formation of (plant) names and their prefixes and suffixes. He also includes a chapter on vocabulary, a bibliography . . . How nice. And an index. Well darling it sounds like a terrific book. Yes dear I couldn't agree more. Knowing more about this surely will increase our enjoyment of the plants around us and our garden in particular. And now I'll know how to pronounce the genus and species and what they mean. I can just picture you at the next garden party, showing off your new knowledge. You'll be positively incorrigible. At the very least. LOL.

So where shall we go for lunch? How about staying in? LOL. Oh

you, good idea, we can order a pizza. By the way dear, did you happen to see the Wood Ducks across the street? You mean the "Aix sponsa." Aix sponsa?? Yes, Aix sponsa. Aix from Greek meaning 'water bird' and sponsa from Latin meaning 'a betrothed,' in reference to its exquisite plumage. Yes, yes I did. Dear, you are a fast learner. You know they nest in boxes that the Park Rangers attach to trees. Four boxes within 200 feet of each other creating a little Wood Duck community. How fun.

Well, until nest time, your lovely Librarians :) :)



# Growing and Staging Cactus and Succulents

By, Don Hunt

**A**s a novice grower of cactus and succulents, I am frequently surprised by my discoveries. I find myself thinking, "Hey, this isn't a rare or particularly unusual plant, but look how well it's growing." Sometimes, unfortunately, it's, "Bummer, why did that die?" The expert growers are always encouraging or consoling, as conditions require. Their advice will always be, "This is the way I do it". While I appreciate and seek out their advice, I believe some of their premises are based on economic choices that don't necessarily pertain to a rookie with 100 plants. Part of the fun is looking at all of the variables and deciding what suits your personal situation.

The most obvious variable is the plants themselves. Although it's a given that no one can resist a challenge and everyone has losses, doing a little research before attacking a plant sale like a starving dog will result in less carnage and more satisfaction. A while ago I was interested in growing *Aloe polyphylla*, so I found a weather chart for South Africa and discovered the mountains where it lives gets 300 inches of rain a year. Hooking it up to the outfall of a reverse osmosis system meant that every time I made a cup of coffee it got 3-4 cups of water. This worked pretty well until I went on vaca-

tion in August and it didn't get watered for a week in 100 degree heat; a variable I hadn't considered. Although one of the great things about the plants we grow is that generally they are low maintenance, time to care for your collection is definitely a variable to be considered.

Researching the plants in the club's library is part of the fun. I especially like the books available and the travel presentations our club holds because it allows us to see how the plants grow in their native habitat. Experts with field experience frequently strive to grow their plants true to the natural appearance. Personally, I like the pumped up, exploding out of the bowl look of a huge clump of *Mammillaria plumosa* over the cryptic "don't look at me" in nature. It was an epiphany for me to realize that some expert growers choose that natural variable as a goal.

San Diego is famous for its horticultural microclimates. I'm sure growers from the deserts or Midwest (not to mention Europe) probably laugh and think it's all "banana belt". A landscape garden in Pacific Beach or Clairemont could grow great aloes without additional watering, but the cactus spination in El Cajon is going to be superior. A collection in the coastal area is going to have difficulty with

plants that like really hot conditions. I am still trying to decide which cactus to grow hard and which to grow under shade cloth. This will probably take a while!

The variable that doesn't seem to be highly controversial is the potting mix. It appears standard that a mix approaching 50% pumice will prevent water from standing in a pot which will surely drown most zeriphytes. I have also seen variations in the other ingredients, but adding extra pumice to commercial cactus mix seems satisfactory. Many articles have been written describing the nature of plant root water absorption. It seems that only the finest, most fragile root hairs absorb water. These delicate hairs desiccate and are lost quickly in totally dry soil. If a plant loses these root hairs and is flooded it will not be able to absorb water and may rot. The problem then is not over-watering but under-watering.

The area where I live is exclusively granite in varying degrees of decomposition. One thing I have noticed is that for weeks after any amount of rain the DG under boulders will still be noticeably darker than the surface, which dries out quickly. Any landscape watering is a slow trickle, deep watering that lasts even fruit trees for weeks. It has occurred to me that many pictures of cactus and succulents in nature show an affinity for growing in cracks and wedges between rocks. This would provide a longer cycle of time between wet to dry.

One variable that affects the evaporation rate is the pot. Commercial growers are concerned with how many pots will fit in a flat. It may be

that with proper care, all growth objectives can be met in a standard commercial pot. My experiments with 2 inch, 3 inch and 3.5 inch standard square pots confirmed what I expected. With my computer controlled electric kiln on 120 degrees, a saturated 2 inch pot was basically dry in 24 hours. A 3 inch pot lost about 62% of its moisture and a 3.5 inch pot lost about 55%. My shade house with a plastic cover for winter easily hits 120 on an 80 degree day. A thorough watering probably isn't a good idea as the night temperatures are in the 40's. One proposal is to use pots at least 3 to 4 inches in size, and water sparingly but regularly. I also think the pot might be better if it was much deeper, perhaps 2 or 3 times the width. This would leach the water away from the base of the plant but maintain a slightly moist condition longer. I want to water about once a week, and vary the amount I water from summer to winter.

Stoneware provides better insulation from heat than much thinner plastic, and I have found that for warm climates, terra cotta is definitely not advisable. I was surprised at how much better my cactus grew when moved from water absorbing pots to stoneware.

The art of growing and staging cactus and succulents is relatively new compared to bonsai. The aesthetic that causes a perception of nature and a sense of drama can be achieved by careful accompaniment of the best possible container. This is a fine goal when the basics of good horticulture are met.



# Cacti and Conquistadores

by Rob Skillin

## Abstract:

*This slide program features a broad cross section of the cacti of the Chihuahuan Desert of central Mexico, particularly the more exotic genera such as Ariocarpus, Geohintonia, Aztekium, Pelecyphora, and Encephalocarpus, etc. The slides are all habitat shots taken on a series of explorations spanning 10 years. The program also depicts several of the picturesque colonial-era cities from the same area. This makes it an enjoyable show for both cactiphiles and travel buffs.*

I have been growing cacti and succulents for approximately 25 years. My first, and continuing interest is plants of the Chihuahuan desert, especially Ariocarpus, as well as others such as Aztekium, Strombocactus, Obregonia, etc. I also have a diverse collection of Mesembs, Haworthias, and other succulents, particularly caudiciforms. I am an avid grower of plants from seed, and now have a number of specimens in my collection dating back to 1982.

Since moving to San Luis Obispo County, I found huge interest in the cactus and succulent world, and have become President of the newly formed Central Coast Cactus and Succulent Society. Also, I am past president of the Bakersfield Cactus and Succulent Society, and past Show and Sales Chairman of the Santa Barbara Cactus and Succulent Society. I am a past member of, and got my start with, the

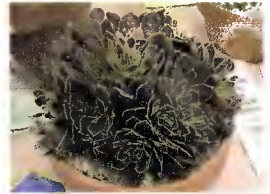
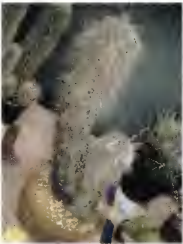
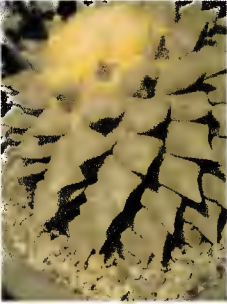
San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society. I have judged numerous shows, including the CSSA Show, Intercity Show, NORCAL Show, and the San Diego Show.

Along with my interest in cacti and succulents, I also enjoy photography and travel. As a result, I have made extensive explorations of the western US and Mexico, and portions of South America and Africa, from which I have put together a number of slide presentations. Several of my photographs have been published on the cover of the journal of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America, as well as Haseltonia.

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# 2006 SDCSS Winter Show

## Just the Pix Please



Thanks to Tim Nomer  
for the Photos



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## 2006

**April 8 & 9th**: South Coast CSS Show & Sale, at So. Coast BG, 26300 Crenshaw, PV; 310-832-2262

**April 22 & 23rd**: South Bay Epiphyllum Society Show & Sale; same addr; info call: 310-831-1209

**May 6 & 7th**: Sunset CSS Show & Sale, Veterans Mem. Ctr, 4117 Overland, Culver City 310-822-1783

**May 21st**: Huntington Plant Sale, 10-5pm, Huntington BG, 1151 Oxford Rd, San Marino; 626-405-2160

**May 21st**: Epiphyllum Society Show & Sale; Los Angeles County Arboretum; 310-831-1209

**June 3 & 4th**: San Diego CSS Summer Show & Sale; Room 101, Casa Del Prado, SD; 619-477-4779

**June 10th**: Gates CSS 29th Show & Sale; Sale: Sat, Sun 9-4; Show opens 1pm Sat. after judging; Jurupa Mountain Cultural Center; 7621 Granite Hill; Glen Avon; CA 909-360-8802

**June 30**: July 2nd: CSSA Annual Show & Sale – Huntington Gardens, Plant sale June 30, July 1st, 2nd; Show July 1st, 2nd; Huntington BG, 1151 Oxford Rd, San Marino; 626-405-2160 or 2277

**June or July?** LACSS Show & Sale at Sepulveda Garden Center, 16633 Magnolia Blvd, Encino, CA info: 818-363-3432; Set in lovely community garden, just off 101 freeway a couple exits west of 405. Will probably be combined with bromeliad society show.

**Aug 19 & 20th**: 21st Annual Intercity Show & Sale at the LA County Arboretum; Largest Cactus & Succulent show in world; Long Beach, LA CSS and SG CSS clubs work together on this show. Info 818-998-9306

**Sept 2nd**: Huntington Botanical Gardens Succulent Symposium, all day at HBG; These have been going on for years; There is a fee for this, they include tours of special areas, meal and plant auction. Renowned speakers from all over the world give talks.

**Sept 24th**: Long Beach CSS club annual auction at Dominguez Adobe, 18127 So. Alameda St, Compton, CA (Dominguez Hills)

**Oct 14 & 15th**: San Gabriel CSS Annual Show & Sale, at LA County Arboretum, exit Baldwin off 210, Arcadia, CA. And be sure to leave time to tour the grounds, it will have cooled down this time of year.

# Espinas Y Flores

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## Standing Committees & Sub Committees

Conservation: Kelly Griffin  
Education & Exhibits  
Brag Table: Kay Quijada  
Plants of the Month:  
Mark Fryer  
Summer Show: TBA  
Winter Show: TBA  
History: Terry Parr  
Liaison  
Balboa Park Desert Garden: Susan Hopkins  
CSSA Affiliate Rep: Kelly Griffin  
Quail Botanical Gardens: Phyllis Flechsig

San Diego Botanical Garden Foundation:  
George Plaisted  
San Diego Floral Association:  
Elizabeth Glover  
San Diego Wild Animal Park Baja California  
Garden & Succulent Collections:  
Chris Miller  
Library: Phil Bunch, Phil & Jan Kent,  
Allen Clark & Chris Miller  
Membership: Collette Parr  
Mailing: Pam Badger & Jeff Harris  
Plant & Seed Exchange  
Plants: Michelle Heckathorn & Sara Schell  
Seeds: Kelly Griffin  
Plant Sales & Supplies  
Annual Sales: Joe Kratz and Terry Parr  
Auction & Holiday Plants:  
Lee Badger & Tom DeMerritt  
Benefit Table: Lee Badger  
Monthly Plant Sales:  
Jeff Harris & Joe Kraatz  
Monthly Supply Sales:  
George & Jerry Plaisted  
Publicity: Tom DeMerritt & Stan Yalof  
Programs: Kelly Griffin  
Reception: Ethel Standish  
Regaleant  
Monthly: Allen Clark, Rudy Lime &  
Suzie White  
Picnic: Laura & Tom DeMerritt