

**Volume 43 Number 9**

**October, 2008**

# *ESPINAS Y FLORES*

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



**Program: Rob Skillen on Namibia**

**Succulent of the Month: Andrew Wilson on Nerines**

**Cactus of the Month: Peter Walkowiak on Ariocarpus**

**Saturday, October 11 1:00pm**

**Casa Del Prado, Room 101**

**Balboa Park**

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Greetings!

If you remember the musical "Carousel" then you have to know the old show tune about "this was a real nice clambake" and that's the tune that goes through my little pea-brain when I think back on last weekend's picnic. Wow, what a nice relaxing time with some of the most awesome folks and excellent food and just overall good times. Mega-thanks to



*Picnic revelers. Photo: Collette Parr*

the Badgers for their stalwart dedication in showing up to secure our little piece of heaven in the wee hours of the morning, everyone for bringing the world's most excellent picnic food, Chris Miller for brandishing control taking charge of all listables and notables, and Peter Walkowiak for bringing in 5 choice nicey-nicey plants for five lucky contestants to walk away with without so much as a silent auction bid! Thanks to everyone who brought silent auction items and everyone who bought them, especially Joan and Pat who managed to buy nearly half of what was available! \*wink wink\* It was great to see everyone, and congrats have to go out to Tom Knapik on his upcoming nuptials!

Thanks to Andrew Wilson and Peter Walkowiak for picking up October's Plant of the Month talks. Remember, anyone wanting to give a short program on any cactus/succulent topic should feel welcome, and we're always happy to have brief talks on a variety of topics. You DO NOT have to be an expert on your topic, you could even stand up and ask questions of the general membership in attendance if you want to! In keeping with the mission statement of the SDCSS, education and outreach are paramount, we don't care too much about the mechanics of it. The plants and what's going on with them are what we're all about, and there's always a lot going on during times of change like we're currently experiencing, so don't be shy- jump in!

The EYF is also looking for articles both short and long about your favorite plants, growing techniques, challenges, and anecdotes. We have also had an ongoing request for stories about volunteerism and examples of historic

*On the cover: Rob Skillen with a Cyphstemma currori.*

happenings in the SDCSS. This club has had a unique and colorful history with some of the most important names in the field of cacti and succulents within our membership. With the 2011 CSSA biennial convention coming right up, we have a brief period of time that we can afford to reflect on the past, but it's rich with stories and well worth it to share with our visitors from all over the globe who will be here envying our climate and gardens! Please consider getting involved with the planning committee(s) and see what you can do to help.

Apparently fall is coming on like a drunken shwarmy wild and crazy guy, forcing things into awkward awakenings and teasing others with a little nap-time before going to sleep for the winter. Some of my fall-growing cacti are acting kind of funny lately, like it's still too early, or it's just a little warmer



*Astrophytum onzuka*

than they to get going, while other things like some South African bulbs are wide-awake and growing at lightning speed. Haworthias are going "Hawg-wild", Conos are waking up and budding up like they're pent up, and my aloes are manufacturing roots like little industrial workhorses! If things can stay sane and constant (yeah, right!), it's gong to be a great winter!



*Gymnocalycium denudatum*  
"Jan Suba"

Well I'm looking forward to our next meeting, the venerable Rob Skillen will be sharing his version of Namimbia with us, which should make a nice, marked contrast to our visit of the same general area with Steven Hammer earlier in the year. Most of you will remember Rob form his previous talks for us on adventures to Socotra and elsewhere, so be sure to mark your calendar and don't miss it!

Happy Halloween,

Mark Fryer

# Travel s with Rob; Namibia

This month's program will feature the wide diversity of succulent plants from Namibia. Possessing both summer and winter growing regions, Namibia has an incredible range of succulent plant forms, stretching from tiny mesembes to giant baobabs. Rob Skillin's program will illustrate these different plant groups, and touch on some of the country's cultural aspects, and as well as the incredible fauna found there.

Rob Skillin is President and founder of the Central Coast Cactus and Succulent Society, past President and founding member of the Bakersfield Cactus and Succulent Society, and former Show and Sale Chair of the Santa Barbara Cactus and Succulent Society. He travels extensively to photograph succulents in the wild, having traveled throughout North and South America, southern Africa, and the Middle East (Yemen/Socotra).

## Fyi (for your information)

**Wanted Dead, Not Alive:** The University of California is asking plant societies to be on the lookout for the Asian Citrus Psyllid. This is a tiny, aphid sized insect that can have catastrophic consequences on California's entire citrus industry. The insect is a carrier of Huanglongbing or Citrus Greening Disease. Symptoms include yellow shoots, leaf mottle, small upright leaves, and lopsided fruit with a bitter flavor. Once infested, the tree must be destroyed as the disease spreads quickly and easily. So Far, the pest has been sighted in Mexico (including 19 sites in Tijuana!), Florida, Texas, and Hawaii, but not yet in California. If you have seen this vile invader please call the California Department of Food and Agriculture Hotline at 1-800-491-1899. For more info please go to [www.californiacitrusthreat.com](http://www.californiacitrusthreat.com).



The culprit aka Asian Citrus Psyllid



Diseased citrus leaves



What to look for



**Aloe theft:** Recently, someone removed an *Aloe pillansii* from the desert garden at Balboa Park. The plant was approximately 3 or 4 feet tall with a good sized base, obviously grown hard. If you should come across something like this in the near future, please notify the San Diego Police (619) 531-2000 and Mike Merika with the City's Parks and Rec Department (619) 525-8613.

**Habitat restoration:** The Del Mar Times recently ran a story about the efforts to save the habitat of the coastal cactus wren and the gnatcatcher. Much of the cactus scrub is home to these threatened birds and unfortunately many acres were lost in last October's wild fires. The Urban Corps of San Diego and volunteers will clear out invasive plants and plant native prickly pear and coastal sage scrub. If you would like to volunteer or want more information go to [sdrp.org](http://sdrp.org).

**Silent auction helps cover picnic expenses:** The Picnic Silent Auction raised \$287.75 toward the picnic expenses. Special thanks for bring auction plants and pots to the Badgers, Ken Blackford, Bev Grant and Art Cooley, the Glovers, Don Hunt, the Lozoyas, Rudy Lime (7 plants), Kaija Marcon, Juergen Menzel, Chris Miller, and Peter Walkowiak. Carol Jean Wolcott donated two plants from Spence Maze's collection, so in a way Spence joined us one more time.

**Snacks for the break:** Members with last names beginning with N through Z, please bring a snack to share at the break.

## Aloe Ferox Poem Nr.1

By "Wizard"

*Aloe ferox* has flowers to give  
And is very determined to live;  
But one mistake  
Will make you ache....  
And your body will leak like a sieve!

By: "The Wizard of Wovenword"  
Bruce D. Edwards, Sept. 11, 2008

Member of San Diego Cactus &  
Succulent Society, with permission  
to print in *Espinas Y Flores*

*Submitted by Tom DeMerritt*



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# Nerines

By Andrew Wilson

Nerines sparkle on the bright days of September and October. They give us an early vision of springtime. When our benches show little color from the cacti and the winter succulents have not started to bloom they burst out with reflected sunshine.



*Nerine sarniensis* hybrid  
open September 13

Nerines are bulbs in the amaryllid family, the one that includes daffodils, crinums, hippeastrums and so many others. There are about 25 species in the nerine genus. Many of these are summer growers that lose their leaves in winter, others are evergreen and some are winter-growers. While we can grow all of them in San Diego, the winter-growers are perhaps the ones most ideally suited to our conditions. Of these the so-called Guernsey Lily, *N. sarniensis*, is best known and possibly the most glamorous. While discussing the genus, we'll spend much of the discussion on it.

After the long summer drought the spathes emerge from bare soil in September. Within a week or so, the flowerheads open. They remain so for several weeks to a month. Then leaves appear and grow over winter, eventually turning brown in March or April. Like so many other amaryllids they are not eaten by squirrels or rabbits. They seem immune in this area from almost all diseases or insects. So, there is no need for all of the protective measures needed for cacti, for instance. In addition, they not only demand little nutrition, they are better without it. In nature, they occur in almost pure, crumbly rock, not unlike decomposed granite, and live without any organic fertilizers.

The sparkling appearance of the flowers in bright sunshine is remarkable. A close examination of the petals shows why this is so. They are covered by thousands of tiny beads. Reflection of light by the red pigment present in the epidermal cell layer of the beads, which overlays several layers of yellow pigment beneath it, causes the surface to appear as though it was covered by a gold dust. (With indoor lights we may not see this). The sparkling seen in bright light on the petals is caused by the reflection of light at the bead surfaces, and by refraction within the beads.

Other winter winter-growers include *N. humilis* and *N. pudica*. As with *N. sarniensis* they should be left alone all summer, preferably out of direct sun if they are in pots. In August a sprinkle, no more than once a week, is all that is needed to encourage them to start in to bloom in September. They can also be planted out, as I'll describe.

# O'DANIELS LANDSCAPE WINS RECOGNITION

Long time and very active SDC&SS members Jean and Bill O'Daniel were recently recognized by the City of Poway as the local winner of San Diego County California-friendly Landscape Contest.

Jean and Bill are completely overhauling the landscape in the front of their house. Drawing on the expertise of Peter Walkowiak in landscape design, they have put in a magnificent selection of cactus, succulents and other water wise vegetation.

Remarkably, the project was still a work in progress when the judges visited, but they were obviously greatly impressed with the direction Jean, Bill and Peter were going. The judges selected based on overall attractiveness, appropriate plant selection, environmental design, appropriate maintenance and efficient irrigation methods.

Each of the 24 water district members of the County Water Authority selects a landscape each year. To learn more about entering your landscape for recognition, or to view more pictures of the O'Daniels yard, visit [www.landscapetest.com](http://www.landscapetest.com). In addition, lots of water-saving tips are available at [www.20gallonchallenge.com](http://www.20gallonchallenge.com). – S.H.

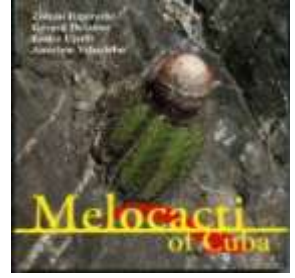


*County Water Authority Photo*

## Book Review: "Melocacti of Cuba"

by Zoltan Rigerszki, Gerard Delanoy, Endre Ujreti, Anselme Vilardebo  
180 pages, 270 color pictures

Melocactus enthusiasts haven't had much to chew on since the past couple of family treatments have teased us with a flurry of new names, mostly attached to Caribbean species and a couple to Cuba itself, until this new overview of this section of an otherwise enormous and unwieldy genus. While Melophiles are well familiar with the stature and enormity of the genus, even experienced cactophiles may not be cognizant of the depth and scope of this genus, not only in its geographic range, but in the nuance and detail of species differences. "Melocacti of Cuba" gives us a great overview of the whys and hows of a section of this wide-ranging genus. Cuba is something of a mystery to most westerners, and this book makes a nice presentation and overview of the flora surrounding the habitats of the Melocacti endemic to this island.



Richly illustrated and nicely laid out, "Melocacti of Cuba" has a nice field-book feel to it, but upon opening it, it seems jarringly commanding. Like a "chef's surprise" buffet, some chapters are worthy of savoring, some have depth, and a couple seem to have no place at all, like pickled herring at a sushi bar. The final chapter on "cultivation" might just as well have been omitted for what cultivation tips it offered. The postulation that "some botanic gardens grow Melocacti from Cuba" is hardly worthy of our attention to the idiosyncrasies of growing these plants from seed, or sustaining them as we might find them at the local nursery. I truly enjoy the illustrations of habitat plants, and find the photos of so many unique specimens utterly enrapturing, yet the verbiage of "granitoide outcrops" instead of simply "granite outcrops" begins to make my eyes a bit sore from rolling up every other page.

The authors give us plenty of information about the geography, evolution, and propose some interesting distribution theories specific to the genus. They accept some 11 species with varieties which is contrary to popular conception of two or three species with some environmental variations. Anyone who's grown field-collected seeds of Melocacti knows there are certain species that will yield a certain amount of variability - or uniformity, as the case may be. One of the more variable that I can recall from even the confinement of cultivation was the Cuban species *Melocactus harlowii*, a trait that makes the plant fascinating to the collector and worthless to the nurseryman since the offspring are sort of unpredictable. At the same time, *Melocactus matanzanus*, which is nearly extinct in the wild, is another Cuban species which is almost ubiquitous in the cactus trade, likely because of its uniformity and ease of culture.

**Continued on page 10**→

The due date for submission of article (Plants of the Month) and 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 President's Message will be one week later. All submissions are to be made to the Editors.



# Santa Maria Tri Tip

## Recipe #185560

Everyone at the picnic who tried Pam Badger's tri tip absolutely raved about it. And lots of people wanted the recipe. Pam graciously sent it along:

Santa Maria is a town in central California, north of Santa Barbara. Grilled tri-tip is a local specialty. It's traditionally served with corn tortillas, Recipe #185563 and Recipe #185562.

by [MaryMc](#)

4¾ hours | 4 hours prep

SERVES 6

2-3 lbs beef [tri-tip roast](#) or top sirloin roast  
1 tablespoon [black pepper](#), fresh-ground  
2 teaspoons granulated garlic  
1 teaspoon granulated onion  
1 1/2 teaspoons [paprika](#)  
1/2 teaspoon [cayenne pepper](#)  
1 teaspoon [rosemary](#)  
1 teaspoon [salt](#)  
1/2 cup [red wine vinegar](#)  
1/2 cup garlic-infused vegetable oil

1. Mix together the black pepper, garlic, onion, paprika, cayenne, rosemary, and salt and rub on the meat. Let stand at 1-4 hours.

2. Prepare the barbecue grill, using water-soaked oak chips (preferred, if you can find them) or mesquite chips on the charcoal to produce smoke.

3. Drizzle the oil slowly into vinegar, whisking rapidly. Brush on the meat as soon as you put it on the grill.

4. Grill the meat over direct heat, medium-high. Turn at least 3 times, basting every time. Grill 30-35 minutes, to 140 degrees F.

5. Slice about 1/8" to 1/4" thick across the grain and serve with corn tortillas and salsa.



From [www.recipezaar.com](http://www.recipezaar.com)

Photo: Collette Parr

Succulents with Patrick Anderson  
San Diego Floral Association  
October 21<sup>st</sup>. at 7:00  
Room 101 Casa del Prado

Join us for an informative and entertaining event!

**Bold and the Beautiful: Succulents**

SDFA October General Meeting guest speaker Patrick Anderson discusses creating gardens with succulents.

Large or small, dramatic or subtle, succulents fit into our San Diego gardens "naturally." They are easy to grow, come with a variety of forms, hues and textures and they can add a dramatic effect to container gardens, small outdoor spaces, even hillsides. October's general meeting celebrates succulents by featuring guest speaker Patrick Anderson, who will present a lecture and slide presentation showing how to use these drought-tolerant plants in inspiring ways.

Anderson is an experienced lecturer and horticulturist, and is well known for his knowledge of succulents and cacti. He has developed his design sense by visiting gardens around the world. Inspired by the Tuscan Hills, he bulldozed a citrus orchard to create a spectacular succulent garden on a Fallbrook hillside.

This gem of a garden developed organically. No design was put to paper and there are no formally planted areas. "The plants told me where they wanted to be," says Patrick. This garden depends on structure and form rather than flowers to be visually exciting. Art and succulents compliment each other throughout the garden. At the top of the hillside sits an elegant pavilion, the perfect spot for relaxing and enjoying the view.

Anderson has served on the board of the Huntington Botanical Garden in Pasadena. He is also a founding board member of the San Diego Horticultural Society. His succulent garden has been profiled in *Horticulture*, *Traditional Homes*, *Sunset* and *San Diego Home & Garden* magazines.

Please join us October 21, 2008 at 7 p.m. in Room 101, Casa Del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego CA for this eye-opening presentation. For more information, call 619-232-5762. – Connie Brown

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## 2008

**Oct 3-5:** San Diego International Orchid Fair at Quail Botanical Gardens, Friday 1:00pm-5:00pm, Saturday 9:00am-5:00pm, Sunday 9:00am-4:00pm. 230 Quail Gardens Drive, Encinitas. Info: 760-436-3036 ext 206 or [www.qbgardens.org](http://www.qbgardens.org).

**Oct 4&5:** Garden Festival at the Wild Animal Park, "Fall Into Bloom", 9:00am-4:00pm Saturday & Sunday.

**Oct 18:** California Native Plant Society San Diego Chapter Plant Sale, 9:00am-4:00pm. Patio B, Casa Del Prado, Balboa Park. Get there early & bring a wagon. The good stuff goes fast. Info: [www.cnpssd.org](http://www.cnpssd.org).

**Oct 25:** Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society meets at the Joslyn Senior Center, 724 N. Broadway, Escondido.

**Nov 8&9:** San Gabriel Valley Cactus and Succulent Society Show and Sale, LA County Arboretum, 301 No. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia.

**Dec 6&7:** Orange County Show & Sale at the Fullerton Arboretum, 1900 Associated Road, Fullerton, 10:00am-4:00pm. Info: 714-870-4887.

## 2009

**Apr 10-15:** The Cactus & Succulent Society of America's convention, Tucson, AZ.

### ***Book Review continued from Page 11***

In my opinion the book doesn't go nearly far enough to satisfy the curiosity of the plant population biologist in confining it's range to Cuba instead of the entirety of the caribbean, although it tries in the chapter "The phytogeography of Cuba" and "the Origin and evolution of the Cuban Melocactus species, and their interrelationships," as somewhat wordy conceptual hypothesis about the plant's origins. Personally, I think it would be neat to conceptualize the putative parent being present during the Chicxulub bolide 65 million years ago and what sort of a distribution process would that be?

This book was published in April of 2007, so it hardly seems timely that we should be reviewing it at this late date over a year after it's "release," and I dare-say the english editor's review in the CSSA journal was much kinder than any words I can render for it here. I will say it is worth checking out and reading, and as a cactus book collector, you'll have to have it. Perhaps my expectations were simply too high, but I would guess the botanical reader would likely find this book wanting, arrogant, and slightly frustrating.

Reviewed by Mark Fryer

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Historian: Terry Parr

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SD Botanical Garden Foundation: George Plaisted

SD Floral Association: Elizabeth Glover

SD Wild Animal Park Baja & Old World Gardens: Chris Miller

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