

CENTRAL SPINE

Newsletter of the Central Arizona
Cactus & Succulent Society

An Affiliate of the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

On the Web at www.centralarizonacactus.org

August 2010



Islaya islayensis in fruit by Cliff Fielding

August Speaker

“Oaxaca and Then Some - A Plant Nerd's View of Mexico”
Speaker: Greg Starr

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August Presentation: "Oaxaca and Then Some - A Plant Nerd's View of Mexico"

Speaker: Greg Starr

When: Sunday, August 29, 2 pm

Where: Webster Auditorium, Desert Botanical Garden

Come travel with plant geek extraordinaire, **Greg Starr**, as he entices and cajoles you to sign up for the CSSA tour of Oaxaca, Mexico this November. Greg recently experienced a trip led by Oaxacan travel expert Jeff Chemnick in order to see this beautiful state from a non-agave oriented perspective. Although agaves were not the focal point of the trip, Jeff did manage to route the group through areas rich in agaves, cacti, cycads, palms and a whole bunch of other very cool plants. You will want to stay until the end as Greg will take you on a detour to see some of his other favorite plants not found in Oaxaca. Greg's "secret" motivation for drumming up passengers for the CSSA tour is strictly selfish. If there are enough people, the CSSA will schedule a second tour and Greg will get to go along as a plant guide. That means a FREE trip to Oaxaca. He will be bringing plants that you can buy.

September Presentation:

"Explorations of the Northern Cape in South Africa - Part II", by Doug Dawson, CACSS member, Sept. 26, 2010

Central Arizona Cactus & Succulent Society Plant-of-the-Month Selection - a.k.a. Mini Show

Cacti: Weingartia, Rebutia
Succulents: Agave

OR ... Please bring your favorite plant in the genera listed above. In fact, if you have any plant that is looking especially fantastic right now and would like to show it off, please bring it in.

"Know Your Desert Garden," the Arizona Republic column by Cathy Babcock, DBG's Director of Horticulture, appears every Saturday in the Home section and includes valuable information for desert gardeners. If you don't get the paper edition, you can find the article online later in the week.

President's Letter from Steve Martinez

Hi Everyone

Well here I am savoring (not!) the triple digit temperatures in Phoenix, just having returned from our 2010 Bus Trip to southern California. As I think back on the many things (so many in just 3 days!) that we did and places we went, I am sure that I would rather be on the bus with the LA traffic, Solana Beach waiting for me at the other end, than back to the routine here. I think we all had a great time, and we got some pretty special treatment at all of the places we went. The retail nurseries would stay open late for us, one vendor sold out of his backyard as well as at shows, and we had subs, pizza, cookies and soda in his house as we leisurely shopped, the Huntington let us through a special gate, gave us lunch, a tour by the Director, a tour by the Curator, and a shopping opportunity in their sale area where they provide chips, salsa, water, beer and champagne! How special is that? I know some of our members made it down to the ocean either Saturday night or Sunday morning for a walk or swim in the cool San Diego air, and had a chance to relax after so much activity the first two days. What I would like to make note of here is that as we left every stop, I was told what a nice group of people all of you were.

This reflects well on our Club, and I am proud to be a part of it. As I said before, the plan is to do a trip every two years, but if enough people are interested next year, we may also plan a caravan tour of Tucson nurseries later in this year. If you have interest, questions, comments, please let me know.

We are going to have our Christmas pot-luck dinner in a location other than the DBG this year, and we have found a great venue in Scottsdale right near the 101 Freeway. We will have a little more time than at Webster Hall as the Garden always has to start preparing for Luminaria at 3PM. We will be having our party from about 1PM till 4PM or so. We have the space till 5PM, giving time for clean-up afterwards. It holds 75 people so be sure to RSVP quickly when we ask who will attend. It will be held on December 12, 2010.

This month is when we have to think about elections, so if anyone wants to be on the nominating committee, or is interested in becoming an Officer or a Director, please come forward and let one of the Board members know.

See you at the meeting, Steve M.

October Seminar: Winter-Rainfall Bulb Sprouting

Bulbs from southwestern Africa's winter-rainfall region grow and bloom beautifully in metro Phoenix all winter, when our succulents are sleeping in the cold. Some sport bright flowers, others beautiful fragrances, and a few have intricate miniature blooms best seen with a magnifying glass. Some of the easiest genera for us are *Albuca*, *Babiana*, *Ferraria*, *Freesia*, *Daubenya*, *Gladiolus*, *Lachenalia*, *Massonia* and *Oxalis*. These bulbs are dormant in the summer so they can be packed into boxes and stored until late fall. At our meetings, members Cliff Fielding, Celeste Gornick and Leo Martin have displayed a number of these plants in bloom, and now you, too, can learn how to grow and bloom these wonderful plants.

Leo is offering a seminar showing you how to sprout these plants from seed or bulbs and grow them to bloom. The seminar is limited to 20 people and will be held at a location to be determined on Saturday, October 2, at 2 pm, the best time to plant the seeds. There will be a \$20 materials fee which pays for containers, growing medium, seed and bulbs, and printing a syllabus. If the cost is less than \$20, the extra will be refunded to you. Each participant will take home at least 10 containers, a different species in each. We will have seed from Silverhill Seed in Cape Town, South Africa. The website is www.silverhillseeds.co.za (yes, this is spelled correctly). We will also have *Oxalis* bulbs from Telos Rare Bulbs in Oregon, www.telosrarebulbs.com. If you want to order some of your own seed or bulbs to plant at the seminar, you are welcome to do so. Be advised that importing seed from other countries requires a US Department of Agriculture permit. Contact Steve Martinez to reserve a spot.



Haemanthus crispus
by Cliff Fielding

Growing Succulents in the Desert *Cochemiea* – *The Red-Flowered Pincushions*

by Mark Dimmitt

(This article first appeared in the July *Desert Breeze*, the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society newsletter and is included here with permission from the author.)

What would you get if a *Mammillaria* adapted to hummingbird pollination? You would get a *Cochemiea*. A typical pincushion flower is a small pink funnel. Imagine elongating that funnel, making it narrowly tubular, and changing the color to bright red. Now you have a *Cochemiea* (Figure 1).



Figure 1 - *Cochemiea*



Figure 2 - *Cochemiea setispina*

Cochemiea is a small genus of only five species, all endemic to Baja California. The plants vary from tight clusters of stout stems like a hedgehog cactus (e.g., *C. setispina*, Figure 2), to long, thin, creeping stems (e.g., *C. poselgeri*, Figure 3). All five species have clusters of tubular red flowers that are borne at the stem tips following summer rains.



Figure 3 - *Cochemiea poselgeri*

Culture

Cochemieas are as easy to grow as most Mammillarias. *Cochemiea setispina* tolerates desert heat and nearly to completely full sun. It is also hardy to at least the mid teens F. *Cochemiea poselgeri* is very heat tolerant, but its creeping stems require filtered sun. This tropical species is also frost tender. The other species grow along the Pacific Coast of Baja California, and are less heat tolerant than the first two.

In habitat these cacti experience a long winter dry season, which does not seem to be critical in cultivation. However, if they are kept dry for several months, a good watering during the hot season will trigger a big flush of bloom that lasts about two weeks. (Figures 4, 5). With regular watering they tend to flower sporadically and sparsely over a longer period.

Unfortunately, this beautiful genus is difficult to find in nurseries.



Figure 4 - *Cochemiea setispina*



Figure 4 - *Cochemiea poselgeri*



Figure 6 - *Cochemiea pondii*
is endemic to Cedros Island off the Pacific coast of Baja California.

Mark Dimmitt, Ph.D. has been the Director of Natural History at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum since 1997. He earned his Ph.D. in biology from the University of California at Riverside, and then spent four years as a vertebrate ecologist in the California Desert District of the Bureau of Land Management. He moved to Tucson in 1979 to become Curator of Botany at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. In his current position, he has conducted field research and shared oversight of the scientific aspects of the museum's operations. An avid plant hybridizer, Mark has published numerous popular articles on horticulture and several articles on desert ecology. He is also the creator of the 'Desert Museum' hybrid palo verde. He is well known for his hybrids, especially his study of the adenium and various cacti. In 1999, he received the Friend Award from The Cactus and Succulent Society of America for his outstanding accomplishments with cacti and succulents. He has also co-authored a new book, *Adenium: Sculptural Elegance, Floral Extravagance*. (Adapted from the April 2010 *Desert Breeze*)

Editor's note: We have photographs! Special thanks to Cheryl Brown and her son Jason for helping with the design of the newsletter. Also thanks to Tom Gatz and Doug Dawson, to Karen Keller, *Desert Breeze* editor, and to all of our contributors.

Next months newsletter will have photos and information about the wonderful CACSS trip to L/A California area nurseries. Huntington and arboretum show and sale.

When reading Mark Dimmets article in this months issue, those of you who went on the trip may remember the comments from the director, Jim, he mentioned how helpful mark has been to the Huntington.

Photo submission guidelines

- resize to 600 x 800
- save the photo with the correct botanical name
- verify spelling
- do not submit zip files



Lobivia sp
Bolivian Cactus

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—480-994-3868; robertst9114@msn.com). For now the list is simply alphabetical with principal interests. When more members add their information, the list will be cross-referenced by topic.

DOUG DAWSON

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Specializations include Flora of Namibia, Growing from Seed, Lithops, other Mesembs, and Melocactus.

MIKE GALLAGHER

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Specializations include Aloes, Haworthias, Columnar Cacti, and *Turbinicarpus*.

STEVE PLATH

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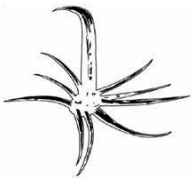
Specializations include *Ariocarpus*, *Astrophytum*, *Cyphostemma*, *Echinocereus*, *Fouquieria*, *Thelocactus*, General Propagation, and Desert Revegetation.

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Specializations include Desert Landscaping, Unusual (including Rare Fruit) Trees and Shrubs, Aloes, Agaves, Columnar Cacti, *Trichocereus*, and *Opuntia*.



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