

Central Spine

January, 2011

*Newsletter of the Central Arizona
Cactus & Succulent Society*

An Affiliate of the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

On the Web at www.centralarizonacactus.org

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Photo by Tom Gatz A rock fig, known in Mexico as the tescalama, growing over a rock in a large pot in Tom's backyard. See his rock fig article on page 3

February Newsletter Deadline: Feb.5, 2011

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-----DUES ARE DUE-----

The 2011 membership dues for the CACSS are \$20 for individuals and \$25 for households. The monthly newsletter is emailed to members as part of their dues; the additional charge for post-office delivery is \$5.

Please send your dues-checks along with any changes in mailing addresses, phone numbers and email addresses to CACSS, P.O. Box 63572, Phoenix, AZ 85082-3572

Plants of the Month

Cactus: Turbinicarpus

Succulent: Crassula or Dudleya

....Or any fabulous plant

Programs

January 30, 2011

Now, time for something a little bit different! Our speaker for January is going to be Ted Green, one of the world's foremost authorities on the plants known as Hoyas. He is also an expert on Orchids. The plants Ted will be describing are polar opposites to the plants we collect. They grow in the wettest of environments - tropical jungles - many have the most amazing flowers. To get a preview of these plants, visit his website at www.rare-hoyas.com/Catalog.htm.

February 20, 2011

The CACSS Annual Show and Sale will be just around the corner and everyone should be thinking about the plants they intend to show. Our speaker for February, Michael Buckner, will teach the art of plant presentation. He will show you how to make a plant more attractive, how to highlight its features. Michael and his wife, Joyce, own The Plant Man shop in Old Town San Diego and they have been showing plants in California for years. They will be bringing plants to sell.

President's Letter by Steve Martinez

Well a Happy New Year to all of you! I hope your plants made it through the freeze of the first couple of days of the year. I was checking temperatures with a laser instrument and the surface temperature of some granite rocks was 17 degrees! The air temperature was about 27 degrees at that time. Just a few things that I didn't cover froze and I am amazed at some of the plants that just took it on the chin. I am more and more fascinated by these wonderful plants all the time. Speaking of wonderful plants: our annual Show and Sale is approaching. Our goal this year is to have more members participating than in past years. We have a very enthusiastic show committee. Please think strongly about entering even just one or as one or as many plants as you like. If you need help transporting your plants to the Show please ask me or one of the committee members and if possible we will help you. We will also have a presentation on preparing your plants. We want to make this easy for you. If you have questions, ask! No fear! We'll have more workshops this year as well--topics to be determined. A bus trip is not on the schedule this year because of the biennial CSSA convention in San Diego in April. If there is enough demand anything is possible. We can also do another caravan trip to Tucson along the way. If you have ideas or suggestions to make this Club better for you, as always, please let me know. We are organizing several new committees as well as revamping existing ones and are looking for members who want to become involved.. We will make the list of these activities available soon. I am looking forward to another great year for the CACSS!

See you at the meeting,Steve M.

Rock Figs – Creating a Living Sculpture

By Tom Gatz

Here's how you can create a living sculpture with a rock fig perched on top of a rock with its semi-succulent roots "flowing" down the sides of the rock into the soil, just like they do in nature as the soil gradually erodes, exposing more and more of their thick, sculptural roots.

All you will need is a deep, wide pot, a big, dark rock with lots of character, a roll of plastic garden tape, a rock fig (a few of which are usually available at the DBG plant sales if you get there early), and someone to help you. You can also sometimes find rock figs at nurseries, especially those that specialize in succulents such as at Baker's. They are sold under the botanical names of *Ficus palmeri* or *Ficus petiolaris* (the current name). *Ficus abutilifolia* from South Africa also works well.

Anytime during the warm growing season, and ideally during the monsoon, gently remove the soil from the root ball, using spray from a hose to avoid breaking too many roots. While one person is supporting the plant on the top or against the side of the rock, arrange the roots down along the natural curves of the rock, and then tightly wrap the green plastic gardening tape around the roots and the rock to hold everything in place. Place the whole thing into a pot with the rock below the lip of the pot and cover the rock by filling the pot up to the base of the rock fig trunk with a well-draining soil mix (I use 50% Supersoil and 50% pumice). Water it frequently during the warm months and sparingly in the winter, protecting it from frost and

the afternoon summer sun. Leave it buried for at least one full year; two or more years may result in even better root development. Un-pot it once a year to see if new roots need to be secured against the rock with more tape and remove all of the tape once the roots have sculpted themselves over the rock.

Gradually elevate the rock a few inches each year, exposing more and more of the thickening roots. I trim off the smaller feeder roots that are exposed above ground for a cleaner look. If the trunk of your fig gets too long and uninteresting, cut it way back and it will sprout back quickly during the growing season. You might even be able to root the cutting. Figs are amazingly resilient to all of this abuse.

For inspiration, visit the two huge rock figs growing together in the Garden's new Succulent Gallery. They are the only plants still in their original place from the original succulent shade house where they were planted as 3-foot tall specimens in 1989. There are also great specimens draped over large rocks at Boyce Thompson Arboretum and the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum. Thanks to Cathy Babcock and Starr Urbatsch for helping me with this article.

This article is modified and reprinted from The Gatherings, the volunteer publication at the Desert Botanical Garden.

Great Christmas Potluck By Jo Davis

What a great turnout of members and guests for our annual potluck on December 12th. The food, appetizers and desserts were delicious. And of course, the punch is always GREAT along with the coffee. Thank you, Loren and Gard.

Dana and I thought the Mountain View Park Community Center facility gave us a lot of room to move around and mingle among the members. I'd like to say thanks to all of you who attended to make the potluck a success. A big thanks to Doug for taking pictures and making us smile.

Looking forward to the next potluck in December, 2011.



Jo and Dana photo by Doug Dawson

MEET SUE TYRREL

By Sue Hakala

Growing up on Staten Island, New York, Sue Tyrrel didn't have a yard to garden in or parents interested in gardening. Sue really didn't get into plants until after earning a fine arts degree in photography from Arizona State University. "After college I went back to New York to work in my dad's printing company, and then moved back to Arizona to work for another printing company. I joined the Orchid Society and gave that a try," Sue said. "I discovered that I really did like plants and wanted to work with them."

Sue bravely walked into a Tip Top Nursery and asked for a job. She has parlayed that into working with plants all the time. She works as a salesperson for three different plant companies: 2 in California and 1 in Tucson. "I spend my whole day talking to people about plants. It doesn't get better than that for me," Sue said.

Sue currently serves on CACSS's Board of Directors, and on the annual show and sale committee. "I really enjoy the members and the openness of the group to help me and to answer my questions. It's a great group of people," she said.

What do you like about growing cactus and succulents? I like cactus and succulent plants as they don't die as often or quickly as other plants I've grown in Arizona. They offer a whole other palette of plants to learn about and to grow. The more that I've learned about them, the more I've learned I don't know. So I get to keep learning all the time.

Where do you get growing tips? I refer to Miles Anderson's book, *The Ultimate Book of Cactus and Succulents* most often for help, and like books with lots of color pictures to help identify plants. The club newsletter also provides a lot of good growing information.

What's your favorite plant? My favorites change all the time as some plants don't grow into what I expected. I like a pretty form and lots of flowers. A plant has to have something going for it to interest me.

What's your most challenging plant to grow? It has to be lithops. I've tried many times, but they always die. (Hint: see Doug Dawson for advice.) I was lucky to have club member Bob Torrest come to my yard and give me some growing tips which really helped. If something dies, I may try again or choose something new. I can go to the Desert Botanical Garden any time and see plants I'd like to grow.



Sue Tyrrel in her garden Photo by Sue Hakala

Do you have any growing tips for beginners? Start with small plants and a small financial investment and enjoy watching them grow. I've been growing aloes, saguaros, mammillarias and ocotillos from seed and am amazed how easy it is. Beginners should try it too. When Sue isn't around plants, she spends her time with her husband of 18 years, and 2 sons ages 13 and 15. "They leave me alone in the yard which I like," she said.



Some of the cacti that I most enjoy observing during our long growing season are those that bloom at odd times, and those that bloom repeatedly during our harsh summers. Perhaps that's because these are so few plants that use their energy to produce a bloom then, and the sight of a single plant's floral display is such a delightful surprise. Since most Echinocerei produce a bloom burst once during a season (I think of E. englemannii with its gorgeous magenta blooms), I especially treasure my specimen of Echinocereus maritimus.

E. Maritimus marches to its own drummer, sending out large, yellow flowers with brownish sepals at

odd times during summer and fall. Unlike many hedgehogs, the flowers arise from the stem tips and do not erupt from the plant body.

This echinocereus is native to Northwest Mexico, Baja and nearby islands, so I've always been concerned about subjecting it to cold. In my years of owning it, however, I've had no difficulties with damage from heat or cold, and I believe it enjoys the summer rains. If you have the space to dedicate to it, I believe you'll find it a worthwhile addition to your cactus collection.

Sources: Taylor, Nigel P. The Genus Echinocereus
Anderson, Edward F. The Cactus Family

MISSING CACSS LIBRARY BOOKS by Paul Schueneman

I am filling in as CACSS Librarian after Erik Anderson's untimely death. We have lost track of forty-three CACSS library books and would like your help in determining where they are. If you have any of the following books checked out (or any others besides these) could you please let me know: Email: Schue888@wbhsi.net or Cell: (602) 327-5751. Thank you

Author	Title (Year Published, Number of Pages)
Bayer, M.B.	Haworthia Handbook
Blamey, M.	Flowers of the Countryside (1980, 224 pp)
Borg, J.	Cacti (1956, 487 pp)
Britton, N.L. & J.N. Rose.	Cactaceae. Vol. I & II (1963, 447 pp)
Chahinian, Juan	Splendid Sansevieria (2005, 178 pp)
Charles, Graham	Copiapoa. Cactus File Handbook #4 (80 pp)
Cutak, L.	Cactus Guide (1976, 144 pp)
Dawson, E. Yale	Cacti of California (1995, 64 pp)
de Vosjoli, P.	Pachycaul and Caudiciform Plants, A Guide to Growing (2004, 319 pp)

Dimmitt, Mark	Adenium
Ericksenn, Leif & Sincebaugh, Els	Adventures in Close-Up Photography (1985, 144 pp)
Fleming and Valiente-Banuet	Columnar Cacti and Their Mutualists: Evolution, Ecology, and Conservation (2002, 371 pp)
Gibson, A. & P. S. Nobel.	Cactus Primer (1986, 286 pp)
Harland, W. & S.	Growing Cacti & Succulents in Australia & New Zealand (1981, 80 pp)
Higgins, E. B.	Our Native Cacti (1990, 170 pp)
Irish, Mary	Agaves, Yuccas, and Related Plants
Jeppe, B.	Aloes, Pride of South Africa
Kapitany, Attila	Australian Succulents (2007, 240 pp)
Lamb, Edgar & Lamb, Brian	Illustrated Reference on Cacti & Other Succulents. Vol. 1 (1955-78, 300 pp)
Lamb, Edgar & Lamb, Brian	Illustrated Reference on Cacti & Other Succulents. Vol. 2 (1955-78, 300 pp)
Lamb, Edgar & Lamb, Brian	Illustrated Reference on Cacti & Other Succulents. Vol. 3 (1955-78, 300 pp)
Marsden, C.	Grow Cacti, A Practical Handbook (1958 178 pp)
Mauseuth, , Kiesling & Ostolaza.	Cactus Odyssey: Journeys in the Wilds of Bolivia, Peru, and Argentina (2002, 306 pp)
Mays, Harry	Expeditions in Madagascar
Mielke, J.	Native Plants for Southwestern Landscapes (1993, 310 pp)
Pilbeam, John	Cacti for the Connoisseur (1987, 167 pp)
Pilbeam, John	Rebutia. Cactus File Handbook #2 (1997, 160 pp)
Preston-Mafham, K.	Cacti and Succulents in Habitat (1994, 159 pp).
Preston-Mafham, R. & K.	Cacti, The Illustrated Dictionary (1991, 224 pp)
Reynolds, G. W.	Aloes of Nyasaland. Nyasa Society (1954, 53 pp)
Roberts, Norman	Baja California Plant Field Guide (1989, 256 pp)
Rowley, Gordon D.	Teratopia (2006, 288 pp)
Sajava, M. & M. Costanzo.	Illustrated Dictionary of Succulents (1994, 164 pp)
Schulz, Rudolf & Powys, Anne	Pinguone, Kenya: Succulents and Their Environment (1998, 160 pp)
Singh, Meena	Succulent Plants of Africa
Slaba, R.	Illustrated Guide to Cacti (1992, 224 pp)
Treshow, M.	Environment & Plant Response (1970, 422 pp)
Unknown	Asclepiad 1
Unknown	Asclepiad 2
Unknown	Succulents (1998, 63 pp)
Valenzuela-Zapata & Nabhan	Tequila! (2003, 113 pp)
van Jaarsveld, E.	Genus Gasteria Synoptic Review (1992, 30 pp)
van Wyck, A. E. [Braam] & G. Smith.	Guide to the Aloes of South Africa (1996, 302 pp)

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.

BOB TORREST

480-994-3868

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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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