

Central Arizona Cactus and Succulent Society
February, 1994

This Month

This month's meeting is on February 27 at 2pm in Webster Auditorium. We have a:

FANTASTIC SPEAKER: Dr. John Alcock from ASU's Botany Department has just returned from a full year's visit "down under" with lots of new slides and experiences from western Australia. His presentation for us is titled Hakeas, Grevilleas and Banksias; the wonderfully diversified world of plant species in western Australia. Dr. Alcock is the author of Sonoran Desert Spring (1985), The Kookaburra's Song: Exploring Animal Behavior in Australia (1988), and Sonoran Desert Summer (1990). He gave us a wonderful program in June of 1990 showing some fascinating relationships between insects and our desert plants.

Those of you who were fortunate enough to be there will remember the spirited interaction with this speaker. That was one of the best programs in several years, and now we have him back again! Don't miss this meeting, or you will be kicking yourself. You will never see the desert in quite the same way after one of John's programs.

A board meeting will be held at 1pm in Archer house before our general meeting.

Remember, DUES ARE DUE! Send them to Joan Skirvin, Treasurer, 11415 N. 68th Pl., Scottsdale, AZ 85251. Remember that dues go toward postage production of newsletter, the Spine, other general operating expenses.

Last Month

The slide show from CSSA National on cacti of the Big Bend National Park was quite interesting. Thanks to Jim Elliott for narrating!

Other stuff:

Please bring in show trophies to this month's meeting. Bob Welsh needs them to account for all of them and to get engraving done.

The address to join the CSSA is: CSSA, c/o Mindy Fusaro P.O. Box 35034, Des Moines, IA 50315-0301. Everyone at the meeting got a sample CSSA Journal.

HAS ANYONE SEEN THE SOCIETY'S BANNER? Last time we saw it was at the Floriade. Let any board member know if you have seen it.

ALSO, HAS ANYONE SEEN THE ILLUSTRATED REFERENCE ON CACTI & OTHER SUCCULENTS, VOL 3 by Edgar and Brian Lamb? This is missing as well. Let us know.

Martha Passwater graciously donated several books to the library. They include: Cacti, Wildflowers and Desert Plants of Arizona; Cactus and Succulents; Desert Gardening; Flowers of the Countryside. Thanks, Martha.

Check out a message from our President, and On the Dry Side.

According to the Herbalgram, Journal of the American Botanical Council and Herb Research Foundation, Euphorbia antisyphilitica has been used variously for floor wax, chewing gum (ick), early phonograph records, shoe polish, car wax, mascara, lipstick, water proofing and, during WWI, to help shells be extracted from gun chambers. Gee, I thought it looked good in my yard.

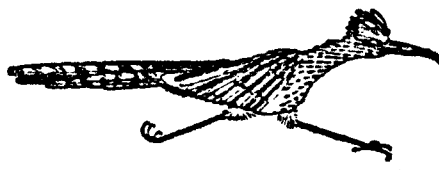
Frank Hennessey's new address:

2092 SW Augusta Terrace
Palm City, FL 34990

Phone number is the same, 407-286-4938. He will be in his new home by the end of February. He would love to hear from his cactus friends, so don't be a stranger!

Hope to see you at the meeting!

Laurine



Meeting Date Reminders: March 24-27 Cactus Show; April 24 Regular Meeting

Jim and Electra, 732-0307. Laurine, 831-2477. Joan, 948-2515. Ken, 860-2427. Call one of us with your questions.

President's Message

President's message - does that sound self-important or what? Hopefully, it is more what than pretentious. I feel that the president is probably the least important member of a club. What?

I'll explain. After being part of several organizations and holding every title from go-fer to the president, I know that the only thing that really makes a worthwhile memory is friendship. We all have a common interest in desert plants and all hope to gain knowledge, growing skills, possibly even competitive success. Where do you get all of these things? Not from the president, he or she will be too busy seeing to the business meeting, budget, programs, etc.

You will gain what you want from each other. That is really why you are here. You will bounce your ideas off people with similar interests and learn in the process. You are the most important part of any club--the membership. If you are a veteran, take a newcomer under your wing and experience the joy of learning all over again. Keep in touch with club members during the year. Visit each other and see what the other guy is doing. You will learn far more than you ever thought possible and in the process gain some lifelong friends.

When you come to a club activity please go out of your way to get to know each other. Many times we have visitors or prospective new members with us. Your welcome and a few minutes spent with them could be the one thing that keeps them coming back. You are the most important part of this club as everyone is looking for the personal touch. These new people could get the cold facts from a library. They are here for something more: the human interaction that is the basis for real understanding. We can't all be presidents.

(nearly all of you are too smart for that don't even have the time to hold an office can give of ourselves and give...

the real message...
the leaves next to them, resulting in...
and subtle tonal variations. Except for...
conquistadores who happened to get thrown off their horses...
agaves are probably best known for their huge flower spikes...
which occur only once in a hundred years. Which is a lie, of course, but a romantic one, so agaves get to be called century plants. So much of the plant's reserves go into the production of this mammoth reproductive structure that after flowering,

ON THE DRY SIDE
by Timothy Chapman

You know, there was a time in my life when I collected shells the way I now collect succulents. I was crazy about them. In fact, I still have a lot of shells, and shell books too. But since my cactus library has been slowly but certainly expanding, I decided to sell off my volumes of mollusk lore before the former split and shattered my bookcase like roots squeezing into rock. So, through my old friends at the Southwestern Malacological Society, I made contact with an interested book buyer and invited her over.

When she arrived, I had my shell books spread out on the living room table. Bookish music was playing on the stereo (songs from 15th century Cyprus). As she gazed at the shameless display, I could see her hands begin to tremble, ever so slightly. A small tic started its staccato jig near her eye. Her breathing became shallow, and I thought I could see that glistening in the corner of her mouth that meant the impending onset of uncontrollable drooling. I knew the signs. They were unmistakable; I've felt them countless times myself whenever I've seen a new euphorbia or unfamiliar adenia. She was weak. She was putty in my hands, ripe for suggestion. A roguish thought had taken root in my mind, and I spoke: "Before we get started," I asked, "would you like to see my plants?"

In the feverish space of a half hour we did it all: haworthias, stapeliads, mammilliaris, mesemb, I pulled out all the stops. Oh, sure, she made all the right "oohs" and "aahs", but nothing really tripped her trigger until we stepped back out into the yard where she looked down and saw -- an agave. "Wow," she said. "This is really beautiful!"

Agaves are one group of plants that I never really gave much thought to one way or another. At least that's what I assumed. But the other day I made a count of agaves in my yard and discovered no less than fifteen different varieties. Further investigation, in the form of deep hypnotherapy, revealed that I do indeed have a strong, if subconscious, admiration for these plants. No one was more surprised than I.

The Agavaceae has existed as a taxonomic group only since 1934. (Before then, members of the clan were placed in either the amaryllis or lily families.) It includes over 100 species of the genus Agave, as well as plants in Calibanus, Sansevieria, Yucca, and others. The fibrous, succulent leaves (up to 2 meters long in some species) of Agave grow in handsome rosettes. Each leaf usually terminates in a formidable spine. The teeth on

when present, leave their impressions on the
in beautiful abstract patterns

the plant dies. One particularly nice side benefit of rather priapic floral display is the production of a sugary juice in the leaf rosette which, when fermented, becomes that nectar of the gods, tequila.

Agaves are, strictly speaking, new world plants, although some species have become very accepting of the climate around the Mediterranean. Who wouldn't? I haven't had any luck growing them in pots (though many growers do), so I stick them in the ground where they do quite well. Many species will tolerate a few degrees of frost, while others are more tender and need protection from cold, wet winters. They can be propagated from seed, but most will offset. Some, like A. vilmoriniana, the octopus agave, will produce little adventitious buds at the inflorescence. Not only do they make great gifts, but they're easy to steal. A word of caution, though -- when moving large specimens (or pocketing little ones, for that matter) it is wise to wear some kind of eye protection. Those nasty terminal spines could poke your eye out and your mother would never let you hear the end of it.

So, the shell lady liked agaves. What could I do but give her an offset? I took a drag on my cigarette and watched her walk away with her shell books and her new plant, one satisfied customer. She'll be back, I thought to myself. They always come back.