

CACTUS CHRONICLE

**August 2014
Meeting Time
7:00 pm**

Plant of the Month
Obregonia,
Strombocactus,
Echinomastus
Fockea, Raphionacme,
Brachystelma

**Refreshments
U-Z**

**July
New Members**
Sharon Aisenman
Judy Benedict
Claire Berger
Karen Elmore
Michelle Jackson
Tami McGee
Karen & Martin
Ostler
Cheryl Venger
Marilyn Young

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Visit Us on the web
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OR contact us at
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Mission Statement:

The Los Angeles Cactus and Succulent Society (LACSS) cultivates the study and enjoyment of cacti and succulent plants through educational programs and activities that promote the hobby within a community of fellow enthusiasts and among the greater public.

Program: *Jardines Botánicas del Mundo (Botanical Gardens of the World)*

Presented by Rick Vitelle

Rick has been a member of LACSS for about 15 years, but his interest in cacti and succulents dates back about 35 years when he began buying specimen plants from a vendor at the Orange County Swap Meet. He and his wife Sheila have visited about 20 countries in their travels, including five trips to Spain. Each of their trip itineraries in-



variably manage to include visits to a few gardens. In the past 15 years they have toured dozens of public and private botanical gardens throughout Europe, Morocco, South Africa, South America and Asia. Closer to home, Rick and Sheila are supporters of the Living Desert in Palm Desert, Lotusland in Santa Barbara, The Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens, and Ventura Botanical Gardens. When he's not traveling or working on developing his garden, Rick serves as the Chief Financial Officer of a publicly held company headquartered in Ventura County.

Rick's presentation will include some of the most outstanding botanical gardens of the world, with emphasis on public and private gardens that have great collections of cacti, succulents and cycads. He will also share his passion for using stone and sculptures in the garden, drawing on garden design inspirations gleaned from his travels.

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Meeting Refreshments

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Monthly Drawing

Leah Imamura

Juana Williams

President's Message

August, 2014

Nutmeg, Rose and I are on another road trip. This time we are going to Mt. Rushmore via Salt Lake City. After we reach the usual stop in Iowa, we will return thru Wichita and Santa Fe.

Prior to leaving, our LACSS was busy with two important meetings. The Festival Chair (Artie) and the Co-Chairs (Roxie, Cheryl, David, Kim, Kathleen, Jim, Rose and I) met for a lesson's learned meeting. We were in agreement that this was "the best ever" but still needed some fine tuning. Although we netted \$\$, budget was the main concern.

There is always room for improvement and adjustments to keep us on track for the mission of the Festival. This year we gained 22 new members at the Festival. FANTASTIC!

Our second meeting was the Board of Director's meeting. A summary of the Festival was given by Artie followed by scheduling of the Strategic Planning Committee chaired by Cheryl White. The SPC will focus on budget issues for all the Club's activities among other issues. If any questions, feel free to contact Artie, Cheryl or me.

In my absence, Marquita Elias will lead the August meeting and John Martinez will lead the September meeting.

See you in October

Joyce

Clay and Cactus: The Creative Life of Erika van Auker Part Two

Nils Schirmmacher

The first half of this article traced Erika's beginnings as a student at Pierce College, where she was introduced to ceramics. In part two, her pottery finds its audience with cacti and succulent enthusiasts.

SINGER'S POTTED THINGS



Erika in Studio c. 1980

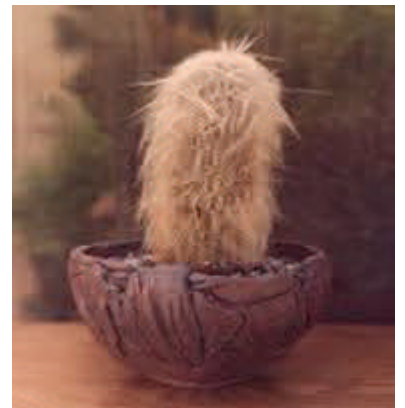
Sometime around 1980, Erika's daughter Holly Ann happened into *Singer's Growing Things*, a rare plant nursery owned by former LACSS president Manny Singer. The nursery was located across the street from Cal State Northridge, where Holly was a student. While perusing the floral oddities, she thought of the vessels her mother had been making at Pierce College. Realizing they might be attractive to the nursery's clientele, she proposed that the nursery host a showing of the pots. Manny agreed, and Erika came close to selling out her entire inventory.

Two exhibitions followed: one at a nursery owned by LACSS member Bill Baker, and another at the L.A. Zoo. Through these early sales, Erika made contacts within cactus and succulent circles. In addition to Manny and Bill, she met CSSA Superior Service Award winner Jim Hanna, and Gene Joseph, owner of Living Stones Nursery in Tucson. Soon, Erika gained access to the circuit of cactus and succulent shows taking place in Southern California. At these exhibitions, she could see how her pots were being used, and speak with her customers about their needs. With this information, Erika refined her vessels, adding larger drainage holes and feet to allow better aeration.

Erika's pots entered the hobby at a time when interest in cacti and succulents was booming. During the early 1980s, the Los Angeles area was dense with specialty nurseries; the annual Inter-City Show at the Los Angeles Arboretum averaged 2000 plants in its display, making it the largest show of cacti and succulents in the world; and nationally, the Southwest Movement revived interest in the desert and its denizens. This surge fostered a new form of presenting desert flora, a method of potting that not only displayed the plant in a manner that was pleasing to the eye, but elevated the combination of pot, plant, and top dressing to a decorative art: cacti were no longer simply potted, they were *staged*.

The traditions of bonsai and ikebana were natural sources of inspiration for this staging. Both stressed the display of plants for their aesthetic appeal, placing artistry above scientific interest. Bonsai's use of dwarf trees to evoke great age and harsh environments was easily translated into the display of cacti and succulents, as the longevity and hardiness of these plants was venerated by cactiphiles.

Many growers did stage cacti and succulents as bonsai—the Inter-City's bonsai category began with the show in 1985 and remains to this day—but Erika's pots offered the hobby something entirely its own. While maintaining bonsai's aesthetic focus, her pots replaced the clean, geometric forms of Japanese containers with the informality of hand-built pottery. Likewise, the neutral finishes on Erika's pots remained within the bonsai tradition of not distracting the eye from the plant, but she pushed the use of texture to endow her vessels with the sandblasted surfaces of desert flotsam. By combining elements of bonsai pottery, the gestural forms of ceramic sculpture, and textures that evoke desert environments, Erika van Auker's pottery consolidated the staging of cacti and succulents into its own unique expression.



One of Erika's first pots

IT TAKES TWO

At the beginning of 2014, past LACSS president Artie Chavez suggested to fellow club member Gerald Richert: "Go see Erika." Artie was concerned that Mrs. van Auker's ceramic production had waned, and thought Gerald's interest in the medium might be of help. For the previous three years, Gerald had been attending ceramics courses at Santa Monica, Palomar, and El Camino Colleges, and had sold

his containers at the annual LACSS show. Responding to Artie's plea, he began helping Erika with the heavy work around her studio: moving bags of clay and loading her kiln. This assistance soon blossomed into a partnership, each serving as a catalyst for the other's creativity.



Erika and Gerald in the Studio

Spend a few minutes with Erika and Gerald and it is clear that humor keeps them a tight knit pair. Joking about their difference in age, Erika wryly stated, "I need to be surrounded by young men." Quick to check her mischievousness, Gerald snapped back, "Get into that shed and make some pots! How many have you made today? What? Only four!" The ribbing they give each other is constant, keeping them on their toes, maintaining the energy required for a potter's labor.

But underneath the jabs are two artists who inspire each other. When asked if she has spent time teaching Gerald, Erika responded with a firm no, adding, "I admire him for trying the wildest things." Indeed, the two have had little time for instruction, working feverishly to complete a new batch of pots for the upcoming spring and summer shows. "We've made

over one hundred pots in the past two weeks," boasted Gerald, "Erika is up to three or four pots a day." Garage shelves loaded with finished pots confirmed his claim.

While touring their studio, Gerald's enthusiasm was expressed in a barrage of ideas for new pots; ideas touted so quickly, I could hardly keep up. The infectious nature of his zeal was confirmed by Erika's joyful statement that the pair "just work," never stopping to consider what they should make next. This flurry has even affected Erika's husband Al, who is also making vessels for the van Auker studio.

Word of the van Auker kiln being restored has generated much interest. Collectors have contacted Erika with special orders, requesting that she remake pots purchased back in the 80s. The new pots are to be of the same design, but larger in size to accommodate several decades of plant growth. Although she is meeting these requests, innovation and experimentation continue to drive her production. "The definitive van Auker pot has yet to be made," stated Gerald, forecasting a bright future. Until that pot leaves the kiln, we'll be lining up for one of our own.



Erika and Al



A small sampling of Erika's pots along with her famous trademark. Almost looks like a Happy Face—which we all have when we own an Erika pot.

Hospitality Table

by Roxie Esterle

The Hospitality Table at the June Festival was buzzing. Not only did club volunteers sell a large number of member-donated plants, but also had some popular innovations this year. The plant holding area was a huge success. There was a constant flow of people taking advantage of our secure storage while they did further shopping. Our other innovation was multiple, short silent auctions. People appreciated the reasonable two-hour duration of each auction. We were able to have two auctions Saturday and two on Sunday, offering about 36 plants and plant-related items in all. Buyers hovered enthusiastically during the last moments of each sale. We appreciated the generous support of several vendors and members for the silent auctions as well.

In all, the hospitality table is a fun and functional social hub where members get a chance to talk about plants with new collectors. It's a great reflection of the friendly spirit of our club.

Membership Table

by Danielle Duboff

The 2014 LACSS Drought Tolerant Festival was even more fantastic than the year before. This year brought more people with such enthusiasm and interest than ever before. The Hospitality Booth greeted most everyone that entered the festival and we handed out information and answered most inquiries about our club and ongoing events. Thanks to all of you who volunteered at our booth and those of you who stopped by just to say hello and lend your support. We signed up 20 new members and another six joined up at the July regular meeting. Thanks to all of you who made the weekend festival fun and delightful! They say a club is only as good as its members and with all the good energy and excitement I experienced, it has proven to me that we are a fabulous club! I can't wait for next year!!!!



Natalie Welsh

KIDS' DAY **by Kathleen Misko**

Artie "asked" me to chair Kids' Day for 2014. I don't know if you've ever had Artie "ask" you to do something. Honestly, kinda scary, I just said yes. Can't explain it, just said yes. I feel that Artie and Kim created Kids' Day and want to see it grow. He would watch from afar. That's a whole other story. Thank heavens, Artie and Kim still create Kids' Day. Have you seen Kids' Day? Wow. Four years ago I saw a baby version and loved it. Through these years it has grown to the magnificent day in the tent and Kim's Korral. What a team these two!!

This year we had Kids Klub pins for the kids. After signing in at the entrance with our volunteers, Mary Chan and Nancy Pyne-Hapke the children start at the learning maze being led by the Boy Scouts. Watching the parents go through with the kids, you see that the parents are the first to grab the magnifying glass. And the first to say LOOK! I know how they feel. I love learning as well. The maze has grown to include a wonderful presentation by Sandy Chase. Good pollinators, bad pollinators. Did you know that some bad pollinators can become good? Yep, I learned that. Thanks, Sandy. The maze leads these little darlings to Ilona Buratti. It really can't be explained what she has created. You have to see it and do it. Which is what everyone did. She prepared wine corks by drilling holes in the top, then gluing magnets on. Then she gathered a table full of the most beautiful and tiny and appropriate bits of plants, moss, twigs and everything tiny and cute. So the idea is to create a glued arrangement in the hole. The kids felt so accomplished by their efforts and talked about the plants. And those that were too small to partake were represented by the parents. It's a wonderful craft. Yes, 150 corks later. Thank you Ilona for the magic you create.

PAINT. GLUE. GLITTER. STICKERS. CUT OUTS. CRAYONS. DAUBERS. STAMPS.

I know I'm leaving something out. The kids sat at tables with their parents and painted wooden cactus cut outs that Artie and Kim designed. They loved them. Some kids painted them twice. Nikki was the champion of crafts. Along with the parents who were at the tables well over an hour. I was once again so happy to see how the parents were interacting with everything on this day.

Turn the corner and there is Roger Cohen on his knees to bring himself to kids height. "Hey, wanna plant something?". Never heard a no. Tiny plants made their way into tiny pots with perfect soil and top dressing. Learning about drainage and creating a life force for their plants to live in. Again, so proud of their work.

Make a pot? There's Gerald the Great. That's how the kids feel after sitting at his table. Such prep to provide these kids with the experience of making a pot and being able to take it home and bake it in the oven. He is tireless. As was everyone.

Look out onto Kim's Korral. An inspired group called BigBrazo graced Kids' Day this year. Musical instruments created with up and re cycled goods, the best part. The children were encouraged to play. And play they did. Natural musicians. Wonderful group. I hope they come back next year. Maybe we can set up a screen so the children can perform.

Speaking of performing. Those little darlings danced and danced doing the water bottle toss. Now, this was not an intended game, but tiny water bottles were put into the bottom of blow up cactus. Being creative, these darlings made a game of removing every one. It replaced the bean bags that were provided. The lawn area resembled a natural disaster. I put myself in the middle and Nikki and I redirected the darlings to toss them back into the cactus. Disaster cleaned up. If only everything was that easy.

Artie and Kim built and staged 2 gardens for the kids in the corners. A beautiful touch garden with fuzzy leaves and signs that said “touch me,” touch garden. Never touched. However, the undersea garden with mermaids and whales and seashells. Tsunami. So that was a learning lesson. The kids enjoyed the experience, and felt “at one” with the plants.

Just outside of the Korral was a table staged with succulent planted pinch pots and a sign invited each child to choose one to keep. Another find of Artie and Kim. It was so cool to watch them look at each one and decide who goes home with them. The children resembled contestants on a game show with all of their swag.

Thank you Richard Roosman for the turtle experience. I’m sure that is the first time for many of them to be that close to your pals. You were a wonderful host. And thank you to all of our volunteers. You made it happen!

There were amazing experiences. Fun Crafts. Music. Learning. What is more subtle is the positive experience of emersion in plants. We love them and we want the children to feel the same. Kids’ Day is such a great day and we have passed on our love.

“LEARN AND HAVE FUN”.....Kids Day motto



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Directions: Exit the 405 Freeway at Nordhoff (go west after exiting for approximately two blocks, turn left on Haskell and then right on Rayen – look for the cactus garden on the left)

Call (818) 482-8795 for additional information

49th Annual CSSA Show & Sale

The 49th Annual CSSA Show & Sale was a terrific success thanks to the many hours of hard work and effort put in by our core of volunteers from many different clubs. The CSSA Board, our wonderful vendors, The CSSA Show & Sale Committee, Gunnar Eisel, Buck & Yvonne Hemenway, Manny Rivera, Doug George, Karen & Martin Ostler, Tim Harvey, Rosalie Gorchoff, Joe Clements, Jim Hanna & Sue Whelan. And our hosts, the HBG Botanical staff, Jim Folsom, Danielle Rudeen & Melanie Thorpe. In the last week, Jim Folsom and his staff transformed the lawn east of the Botanical Center into a comfortable, enclosed, yet accessible area for our plant sale. The traffic thru the vendors, checkout, loading & holding areas flowed well.

Spirits were high as I walked through the Show & Sale areas. Everyone was happy in the new sales area near the entrance to the Botanical building. Attendance was up and sales were brisk due to the new, more visible location and cooler weather compared to last year. Once again, we had Boy Scout Troop 359 helping visitors load their cars. From the compliments and comments I received over the course of three days, I can say that the consensus was positive for the event to be in this same location next year. For those who were disappointed that the Show & Sale were no longer free to the public, I would encourage them to join one of the CSS clubs, the CSSA or the HBG and enjoy the benefits that go with membership.

Our Hospitality Committee, headed up by Kathleen Misko and her crew, Mary Brumbaugh, Marquita Elias, Betty Farfan, June Wong, David Le, Rose Polito and Camille Rutkowski, kept the troops fed and happy throughout the event.

I want to thank all those who helped set up and tear down for the Show both in the Sales area and in the Botanical Center. We did both in record time. The volunteers who in the sales area, cashiering, monitoring traffic flow, watching plants in the holding, assisting the bookseller, monitoring the showrooms, manning the information table and CSSA table, your help was invaluable.

Thank you to our Show judges, Judy Pique (Missouri), Steve Plath (Arizona), David Tufenkian, Karen Ostler, Woody Minnich (New Mexico), Kelly Griffin & Mike Buckner. The clerks, many new for the first time this year, said this was a great learning experience for them. Our tabulators, Tom Vermilion, Jean Mullens, Mary Brumbaugh & Rebecca Mallonee tallied up all the entries. The show rooms were filled with 583 beautifully staged plants, photos, displays and crafts, wowing visitors. Volunteers were kept busy answering questions about the growth and cultivation of these amazing plants. This year's show T-shirts were a hit, thanks to Doug George who has them designed for us every year by artist friend, Piper.

We all enjoyed a delicious BBQ dinner on Saturday night followed by the Rare Plant Auction, the proceeds going to the CSSA Research Fund. Thank you to those who provided plants for the auction. Our auctioneers, Mike Buckner, Woody Minnich and David Tufenkian, not only entertained but also educated us about each item being auctioned. Kudos to our Treasurer, Cliff Meng and assistant Pattie Miller, for managing the bids and payments during the auction, which raised a net of \$1171 for the Research Fund.

The "High Points" winners this year, for Overall, Cacti. & Succulents, was Kim Thorpe followed by Peter Walkowiak. Kim, also, won 10 trophies & Karen & Martin Ostler won 5! Congratulations.

As we begin to plan for next year's event, I encourage your comments and suggestions to continue improving this event with your valuable input.

Thank you to the following members (not previously mentioned) who gave their time to put on this event as a volunteer, exhibitor or vendor: Ken Hanke, Tom Glavich, Donn Muhle, Victor Wong, Cindy Bergland, Michelle Tse, Phil Skonieczki, Dean Elzinga, Lee Miller, Dick Schreiber, Inacia Matheus, Evelyn Stevens, Walter & Susan Weststeyn, Margie Wilson, Cynthia Robinson, Hannah Nguyen, Quy Nguyen, Artie Chavez, Steve & Phyllis Frieze, Gerald Richert, Kim Jacobi, Sandy Chase, Chris Rogers, Natalie Welsh, Mark Dubrow, Jay Kapac, Nancy Neymark, Joyce Schumann, Danielle Duboff, John Matthews, Juana Williams, Sonia Villarroal, Kyle Williams, Duke & Kaz Benadom, John Suciu, Roberta Hanna, Leo Martin, Ethan Martin, Rob Roy MacGreger, Jim Gardener, Richard Deming, Laurel Woodley, Peter Claridge, Irma Juarez, Bob & Dianne Danks, Chris Miller, Arnold Cheney, Naomi, John & Lisa Bloss, Dean & Audrey Hart, Alex Abrahamian, Tom Howard, Nels Christianson, Bonnie Ikemura, Maria Capaldo, Judy Horne, Janet Burnham, Gregg De Chirico, Gary Duke, ESA, Jim Nones, Eileen Tufenkian, Daniel Veelik, Hank Warzybok, Emily Yarnell, Minh Au, Don Sneberger, Diana Liu, Chuck Everson, Gerry Williams, Karen Zimmerman, John Trager, Cody Howard, Joe Wujcik, Petra Crist, Steven Duey, Jeff Pavlat, Scott Bertrand, Jan Parsonault, Gary & Ellen Stubblefield, Don Knipp, Eunice Thompson, Darrin Griggs, Mike Hackett, Fred Gaumer, & Pat Swain.

Barbara Hall, Show Chair

Our Annual Plea for Entrants

This 29th Annual Inter-City Cactus and Succulent Show is less than a month away. This is one of the stellar events in the Cactus and Succulent World, with a worldwide reputation for the quality and quantity of entries. The Inter-City Show pioneered the concept of Walks and Talks adding an important educational component to the show.

The Inter-City Show has a well-deserved reputation for the place to see one of a kind plants, but more importantly, it has the reputation as the place where plants are grown to standards of excellence that are impossible to exceed.

With this in mind, the Inter-City Show is also one of the easiest and most encouraging to enter. There are three classes, Novice, Advance and Open. Novice is anyone who has won less than 40 first places in recognized shows, Advanced is anyone who has won more than 40, and Open is for anyone who wants to compete at the highest level. This show is one of the main sources of new members for all three clubs. A little known secret is that it is the novice entrants that do the most to encourage new members to join the clubs and enter future shows. We need more novice entrants.

Entries can be brought in from 1 to 7 on Wednesday August 6, 8 AM to 9 PM on Thursday August 7 and 8 AM to 5 PM on Friday August 8. Judging starts at 5 on August 8th and everything needs to be on the tables by then. There are always plenty of people to help with any identification problems, so don't let a lost label keep you from entering a plant. Advice and help on last minute grooming is also available, and there are plenty of people to help make sure your plants are placed in the right categories. We do everything we can to make this the easiest and friendliest show to enter.

The sale is one of the highlights of the Show. It will be open from 1 PM on Friday. We have dealers from Northern California, San Diego, Tucson, Phoenix, New Mexico and local specialists. There will be an amazing selection of wonderful plants for sale as well as on the show tables.

We have already heard from people coming from Georgia, Florida, Korea and elsewhere to see the show. Please help make this an event they will always remember. We have lots of tables to fill. We would like you to attend and bring your friends, and we need you to bring your plants.

Thanks in advance

The Inter-City Show Committee

Inter-City Show and Sale August 9-10, 2014

By now you should have identified all your show plants and repotted as needed. Don't wait until the day or two before the show to water your plants. Wet plants leave stains on the tablecloths that don't seem to come out. All those great plants you entered in our LACSS show (and your June POM favorite plants) and the CSSA show should be a good start in selecting those plants you want to show. There are novice, advanced and open categories to show in so don't feel intimidated. Entry tags and show schedule will be available at our August meeting and at the show. We have approximately 105 show tables to fill so bring lots of show plants. You may want to bring a little extra of each top dressing you use to handle those travel mishaps. Don't forget the Golden Sweeps so you may want to bring 3 or 4 plants in a category. Please bring your show plants in for set-up on Wednesday, August 6th from 1:00PM to 7:00 PM, Thursday, August 7th from 8:00 AM to 9:00 PM; and on Friday, August 8th, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. You can remove your plants from the show starting at 5:00 PM on Sunday, August 10th. You may want to bring extra packing material for the ride home since things may not pack as well going home in the rush.

The LACSS makes a significant amount of money from sponsoring the Inter-City Show and Sale. That results from great sales and a great show to attract visitors. Both the show and sale run smoothly only with a lot of volunteer help. I would like to see the same amount of LACSS volunteer help at the Inter-City event as we had for our own show and sale. PLEASE sign up to volunteer and/or clerk at our August meeting. Alternatively, you can call me at (661) 714-1052 if you can't attend the August meeting. Also remember that early sales on Friday, August 8th is only open to recognized volunteers or documented show entrants.

For more Inter-City information, see the LACSS July Chronicle or the Inter-City newsletter on the LACSS website.

We still need a videographer for the show (see below). This would be a big boost to the publicity for the show/sale.

John Matthews, Inter-City Co-chair

Videographer Needed for Inter-City Show

Tom Glavich needs someone to do videography for the Inter-City Show and Sale. Job description follows. Please contact Tom at 626-798-2430 if you can take over these very important tasks.

Job Description follows:

Make a video of the Inter-City Show, emphasizing plants and in particular, blue ribbon and trophy table plants. Also pictures of the sales area and show area, but not focusing on anyone without permission. Some simple editing capabilities will be required, along with a steady hand. Add low key legal musical background, and upload to YouTube. Can attend judging, set-up etc as able. Quietest time is Sunday Morning before the show opens. Steadiness is the key and ability to edit out extraneous background noise. No video during auction or dinner.

(There is an older YouTube of the show, but it is so jerky that you can get motion sickness trying to watch it.)

Plant of the month: *Fockea*, *Brachystelma*, & *Raphionacme*

The Apocynaceae is one of the largest of all plant families, with familiar plants such as Milkweed, *Plumeria*, and Oleanders. People may also recognize the name Asclepiadaceae, which is an old name for some members of the group. It is very popular with succulent enthusiasts as the family has hundreds succulent species including trees, shrubs, caudiciform vines, and even cactus like plants. Almost every succulent enthusiast will have at least one member of the family in their collection, whether it be a Pachypodium, Adenium, Stapeliad, or the subject of this month's article: Southern African tuberous caudiciform Apocynaceae, specifically the genera *Fockea*, *Brachystelma*, and *Raphionacme*.



Fockea edulis

Fockea is probably the most commonly cultivated genera of the three, with *F. edulis* found in the collections of most caudiciform succulent enthusiasts. All six species in the genus form a thick tuberous root that is normally buried below the soil in nature, but is commonly raised in cultivation since it is the most distinctive feature of the plants. The upper part of the plant is a vine. Much of the variation between species is in regards to leaf shape, with some species having short oval leaves, some having very narrow almost linear leaves, and others having very wavy leaves. These wavy, or undulate, leaves are most prominent in *Fockea capensis*, and plant commonly but incorrectly grown in cultivation as *F. crispa*. In other words, there is no *F. crispa*, and if you have a plant named that please change your label to *F. capensis*!



Raphionacme burkeri

Raphionacme contains 37 species of mostly geophytic shrubs, with only a handful of climbing species. However, the most commonly cultivated species *R. flanganii* is a vine and therefore is the habit people associate with the genus. While most species are in southern Africa, the genus can be found from South Africa, through tropical Africa, and even into Arabia. It grows in a wide variety of habitats ranging from deserts to tropical rainforests. The plants we usually see in cultivation tend to be South African species that are adapted to a dry, non-tropical, climate like our own.

Brachystelma is a big genus of 100 species or more. It has the largest range of these genera as it occurs from South Africa through India and Southeast Asia, and even to Australia! The largest number of species grow in South Africa. The species most commonly grown have a similar habit to *Fockea* and *Raphionacme*, but are noteworthy in having spectacular flowers that are similar to Stapeliads (the other genera have small nondescript flowers). The most commonly grown species, *B. barbarae* doesn't look like a succulent at all from above as it has large green leaves. Only when you see the tuber do you realize it is a desert plant.

Cultivation for the most commonly grown, South African, species of these genera is fairly easy. Treat as a summer growing succulent that doesn't like to dry out completely. Most plants will go dormant or semi-dormant in the winter and shouldn't be watered as often, though they seem fairly tolerant of our wet winters if the soil is well drained. The tubers/caudex grow the fastest when buried, so it is advantageous to grow them that way for several years before raising them.



Brachystelma vahmeijeri

-Kyle Williams

Plant of the Month: Obregonia, Echinomastus, & Strombocactus



Echinomastus johnsonii

This month we have a grab bag of three small, unrelated, genera of cacti, *Obregonia*, *Echinomastus*, and *Strombocactus*. All combined these three genera have only approximately 11 species between them. They are native to Mexico for the most part, though some *Echinomastus* reach the southwestern United States. All stay small enough to make nice potted specimens.

Echinomastus has about six to nine species in northern Mexico and the United States, particularly in Arizona, Texas, and adjacent parts of Mexico. Most species are covered in dense spines. Interestingly, the various species could easily be mistaken for other genera at first glance. *E. johnsonii* resembles *Ferocactus*, *E. mariposensis* looks like a *Mammillaria*, while *E.*

erectocentrus could be mistaken for an *Echinocereus*. The reality is that *Echinomastus* is most closely related to *Sclerocactus*. In cultivation they take typical cactus care, and most are reasonably to very cold tolerant, certainly able to withstand any cold snaps in our region.



Echinomastus erectocentrus



Obregonia denegrii

Obregonia is a monotypic genus (i.e. a genus with only one species) containing the species *Obregonia denegrii* from a small region of Tamaulipas, Mexico. This plant gets its name from a fairly shameless attempt to impress both the President of Mexico, Mr. Obregon and the Agriculture Minister of Mexico, Mr. Denegri, at the time the plant was discovered. If you are going to have a cactus named after you this is one of the better ones as *Obregonia* is one of the most unusual and coveted cacti in cultivation. The common name "Artichoke Cactus" belies this. The plant forms unusual leaf like tubercles that really do resemble an artichoke, though this is much slower growing and you wouldn't want to eat it! For a long time this species was quite rare and expensive in cultivation. In recent years the price has come down quite a bit as more and more plants are produced. While certainly not common, you can find it fairly readily at cactus shows and through specialist cactus nurseries.

Plants are slow growing but cultivation isn't particularly difficult. Plants grown in shady conditions are usually green, but give them more light and they will become a beautiful bronze color. Because they are slow growing and tuberous rooted they can be prone to rot, especially in the winter, if kept too moist. Treat it like an *Ariocarpus* and you will be fine.

Strombocactus, like *Obregonia*, is monotypic. The two genera are somewhat similar in appearance and at one time were thought to be closely related, though DNA research has proven this untrue. The sole species of the genus is *S. disciformis*. Its native habitat is on limestone cliffs in central Mexico. This harsh, very dry, natural habitat is strikingly similar to that of *Aztekium* (albeit around 300 miles apart), and botanists at one time thought they belonged together in the same genus. Cultivation is similar to *Obregonia*.



Strombocactus disciformis

-Kyle Williams

Cactus & Succulent - Calendar Of Upcoming Events For 2014

- August 9-10** 29th Annual Intercity Show & Sale-LA County Arboretum, 9am-5pm Daily
301 No. Baldwin Ave **Info** Tom Glavich (626) 798-2430 or John Matthews (661) 714-1052
- August 30** Huntington Botanical Gardens Succulent Symposium **All Day at the Huntington**
- September 7** Long Beach Cactus Club Annual Plant Auction -12-5
Rancho Los Alamitos, 6400 Bixby Hill Road, Long Beach 90615 **Info:** (310) 922-6090
- October 25-26** Palomar Show & Sale, **Info:** hciservices@gmail.com, 858-382-1797
230 Quail Gardens Road, Encinitas
- November 4-5** San Gabriel Cactus & Succulent Society Show & Sale 9-4 Both Days
LA County Arboretum 301 No. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia

Updated 7-24-2014

REFLECTIONS by Walt Wegner

This issue of Reflections is addressed to the newer and/or younger members of LACSS. You have seen & listened to the many superior programs that have been presented at our monthly meetings. From Brazil, Argentina, South Africa & so many other places that you may never be able to visit.

But wait, there are many places you can visit to enjoy plants in our hobby. The Huntington Gardens, the Arboretum, farther away the Phoenix & Tucson gardens in Arizona, and yes Baja California, my favorite place. Remember our June presentation by Ernesto Sandoval, which brought back many fond memories. Maxine & I have driven the length of Baja twice. These trips took around 2-weeks long and we enjoyed the 1,000 mile long cactus & succulent country.

Our last trip was in 1985 after we bought a diesel pickup with automatic transmission, why? The life line of Baja is trucking and they always use diesel. In years past, getting the correct fuel for our vehicle in Baja was difficult. We obtained the Auto Club Baja map and plotted the diesel stations. We also obtained the Auto Club Baja booklet which listed the Presidente Hotels along the way and we pre-reserved our lodgings. We made six stops going and coming. Our favorite, of course, was Catavina and San Ignacio. The one thing we did not have was the Baja California Plant Field Guide by Norman Roberts, a must for any Baja trip. We made a slide presentation on this trip which we have shown at LACSS and many other clubs.

Can't take two weeks, then you can get to Catavina or San Felipe over a long weekend as we have done many times.

**Plant of the Month
2014**

August

Obregonia, Strombo-
cactus, Echinomastus
Fockea, Raphionacme,
Brachystelma

September

Thelocactus
Fouqueria

October

Ariocarpus
Euphorbia
(Madagascar)

November

Miniatures

December

Holiday Party

2015

January

Discocactus
Anacampeiros, Avonia,
Ceraria

February

Mammillaria Clusters
Sarcocaulon

March

Pediocactus,
Sclerocactus
Sedum

April

Variiegates

May

Aztekium
Geohintonia

June

Favorite

July

Echinocactus,
Ferrocactus
Pachypodium-
Madagascar

August

Eriosyce, Neochilinea,
Neoporteria
Lithops

July Plant of the Month Winners

Succulent -- Cucurbitaceae

Rookie

First Kyle Williams Kedrostis africana

Novice

First Robert and Carolyn Feldman Trichomeria debilis

Plant of the Month

Advanced

First Kim Thorpe Zygosicyos ssp nova
Second Barbara Hall Gerrardanthus macrorhizus
Third Sandy Chase Ibervillea lindheimeri

Open

First Artie Chavez Coccinia trilobata
Second Artie Chavez Seyrigia humbertii
Third John Matthews Ibervillea tenuisecta

Cactus -- Escobaria, Coryphantha

Novice

First Sylvia Strehlo Escobaria minima

Advanced

First Kim Thorpe Coryphantha
Second Kim Thorpe Coryphantha
Third Barbara Hall Escobaria zilziana
Third Barbara Hall Escobaria sneedii ssp leei

Open

First Manny Rivera Escobaria laredoi
Second John Matthews Coryphantha durangensis
Third John Matthews Coryphantha pallida
Third John Matthews Escobaria orcuttii v. kuenigii



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General Meeting

August 7

Program:

Jardines Botánicos del Mundo (Botanical Gardens of the World)
By Rick Vitelle

August Event

August 9-10 29th Annual Intercity Show & Sale-LA County Arboretum, 9am-5pm Daily
301 No. Baldwin Ave **Info** Tom Glavich (626) 798-2430 or John Matthews (661)
714-1052