



*San Gabriel Valley
Cactus & Succulent Society*

COMMUNIQUE

An Affiliate of the Cactus & Succulent Society of America, Inc.

February 2009 - Volume 42, Number 2

**February Meeting:
Thursday,
February 12 at 7:30 pm**

Meetings are held on the
2nd Thursday of the month
at **7:30 pm** in the Palm Room,
Los Angeles County Arboretum,
Arcadia.

Mini-Show Plants:

CACTUS:

Ceroids

SUCCULENT:

Gasteria

Study Group:

Study group will meet on Wednesday,
February 18th in the Palm Room,
Los Angeles County Arboretum at
7:30 pm. The topic will be:

Gasteria

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President's Message

I hope that everyone who could, came out to enjoy that glorious day at the Huntington. Perfect weather, succulents in bloom, fantastic. I for one appreciate the efforts that the staff and volunteers (several SGVCSS members included) of the Botanical Gardens expend for those of us in the C&S hobby.

Mark your calendar - July 18 is the date for our trip to Lotus Land. More details will be forthcoming.

We attended the Haworthia Hoedown last night, excellent turnout. Thanks Patty and Rene Caro for adding a little spice to the Study Group. The plants that members brought to share and to trade were great.

We hear that Jim Hanna is on the mend after 15 days in the

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This Month's Program

Our speaker for February will be Tim Nomer. Tim is very familiar for those who attend any of the C&S shows in the area. He and his wife, Anat are seen at all of the shows photographing the plants. He will present a digital slide show that will highlight recent San Gabriel and Intercity shows. His interesting perspectives on what makes a plant worthy of a second look give us all a hint at how better to prepare our plants for shows.

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Study Group

Wednesday, February 18th • Genus *Gasteria*

The study group is an informal, hands-on learning experience that is fun for expert and novice alike. Come and learn from the experience of others. We are always happy to share our knowledge.

Meetings are held the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm in the Palm Room at the LA County Arboretum, 301 N. Baldwin Avenue, Arcadia.

Mini-Show Results

Cactus – *Mammillaria* Clusters

Beginner

1st	Brian Le	<i>M. spinosissima</i>
2nd	Anne Keegan	<i>M. pattersonii</i>
3rd	Tricia Kangrga	<i>M. duwei</i>

Intermediate

1st	Dodson/Birgh	<i>M. thornberi</i>
2nd	Cindy/Calvin Arakaki	<i>M. plumosa</i>
3rd	Barbara Hall	<i>M. duwei</i>

Advanced

1st	Buck Hemenway	<i>M. bombycina</i>
2nd	Rita Gerlach	<i>M. species</i>
3rd	Buck Hemenway	<i>M. karwinskiana</i> ssp. <i>nejapensis</i>

Succulent – *Othonna* & *Senecio*

Beginner

1st	Minh Au	<i>S. vitalis</i> crest
2nd	Anne Keegan	<i>S. longiflorus</i> var. <i>madagascariensis</i>
3rd	Tricia Kangrga	<i>S. desflersii</i>

Intermediate

1st	Cindy/Calvin Arakaki	<i>O. euphorbioides</i>
2nd	Barbara Hall	<i>O. filicaulis</i>
3rd	Dodson/Birgh	<i>S. barbonicus</i>

Advanced

1st	Alan Hooker	<i>O. euphorbioides</i>
2nd	Manny Rivera	<i>O. retrofracta</i>
3rd	Buck Hemenway	<i>O. euphorbioides</i> x <i>cremuophyllum</i>

Be sure to take a look at the Club's website at www.sgvcss.com. Thanks to Gunnar Eisel for managing our website. If you wish to receive your **COMMUNIQUE** on-line please notify the editor at yvonne@pricklypalace.com.

Book Review

Namaqualand and the Richtersveld, Nature's Spectacular Canvas - Volume 1

Reviewed by: Buck Hemenway

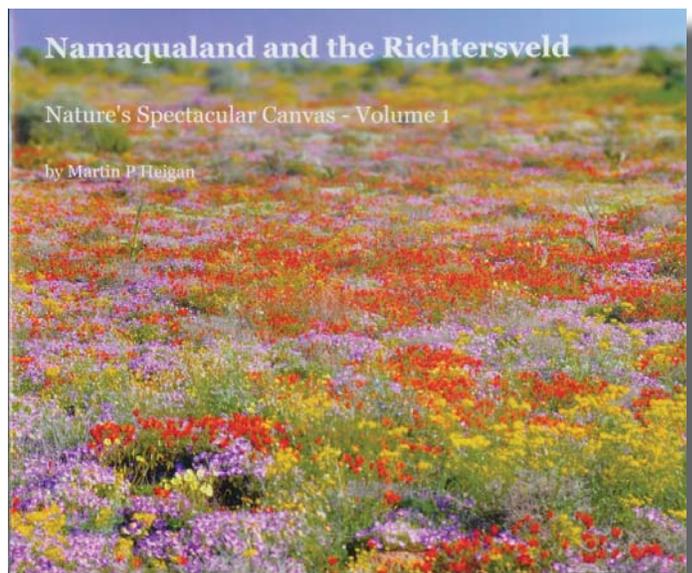
Martin P. Heigan
2008 78pgs.

The author's final line "go where the air is clean and the streets have no names..." perfectly describes this fantastic part of our world and his exquisite pictorial review of the flora of Namaqualand.

Tucked in the Northwest corner of South Africa, this semi-desert region is home to a dazzling array of plant life. Mr. Heigan's book brings the spring blooming season to life.

It's a small book at 78 pages, but the quality of the photography is excellent and his descriptions and local knowledge anecdotes are interesting and thought provoking. As a traveler to this far away place, I highly recommend this invitation for more.

Available at: www.amazon.com (\$79.95)
www.blurb.com (\$65.95)



Refreshment Signup

These club members have signed up to provide refreshments at our January meeting.

William Molina
Barbara Nolan
Pat Swain

President's Message

(continued from page 1)

hospital for heart by-pass surgery. We all wish you a speedy recovery, Jim.

There is a good list of upcoming succulent events on our web site, you can always find it there if you've misplaced your list. The next big event is the Winter Show and Sale in San Diego on February 14.

Congratulations to our newly-weds - Mike and Ana Wiznev were married in early January.

We'll have a meeting of the Board of Directors at Coco's (corner of Colorado and Michillinda) before the Study Group in February (18th). Plan to be there at 6:00, we'll be able to eat (if you wish) and do business at the same time.

Buck Hemenway

DESERT FORUM AT THE HUNTINGTON BOTANICAL GARDENS



Horace and Hank enjoying the day



Aloe "David Verity"



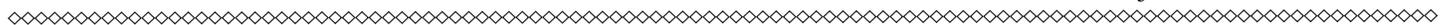
Boojum trees



Notocactus bloom



Aloe ferox



SGVC&SS LEADERSHIP TEAM - 2009

Buck Hemenway, President
Horace Birgh, Vice President
Rita Gerlach, Treasurer
Anne Keegan, Secretary
Manny Rivera, Board Member and Winter Show Chair

Cindy Arakaki, Board Member
John Matthews, Board Member
Phil Skonieczki, Board Member
Karen Ostler, Board Member
Ralph Massey, Board Member
Tom Glavich, Intercity Show Chair

Jim Hanna, CSSA Affiliate Representative and Plant Sales Chair
Woody Minnich, Program Chair
Bill Gerlach, Membership Chair
Liz Alba, Library Chair
Gunnar Eisel, Website Chair

Plants Of The Month

Enter your specimen plants in our monthly mini-show. It will help you prepare for the real shows and give you an additional opportunity to show others your pride and joy. If you don't have any of these species of plants you can learn about them at the meeting.

CACTI OF THE MONTH —

CEROIDS

Ceroid or columnar cacti are not a closely related set of genera, but a lumping together of all the cacti that are much longer than they are around. Ceroid cacti vary in size from a few inches, as in the aptly named, *Pygmaeocereus* to the giants like *Pachycereus* and *Carnegiea* (Saguaro). Most are robust growers, given adequate water, fertilizer, room for root development and support. They expect more nitrogen in their soil and more water than most globular cacti. They do well in normal cactus soil, as long as they get additional fertilization.

Propagation is generally by cuttings or seed. Cuttings need to be dried well before planting. A few weeks are the minimum for some of the larger columnar species. They do best if dried in an upright position. If placed on their sides the cut end rots easier. Seed of columnar cacti are readily available, and are particularly enjoyable to grow. While all of the globular cacti are the size of a pea, many of the columnar cacti are filling the pot, and an inch or more high. If grown from seed, many will not tolerate crowding for long, and demand their own pot. This is particularly true of *Oreocereus*, which will quickly stop growing if there is more than one plant per pot.

A look through any of the references listed below gives many genera names that are rarely seen in cultivation. This is because the plants take many years to reach flowering size, are only really happy in the ground, and get too big for pots in any case. Some genera are very popular, and these are described below.

Popular North American Ceroids —

Stenocereus (Lemaireocereus) marginatus is a wonderful garden plant. It makes straight thick stems from the ground, with short spines in neat orderly

rows. It is easy to grow, but can topple in wet soils during windy conditions.

Myrtillocactus geometrizans is fairly rapidly growing species that branches quickly. It is from central Mexico, but does great in California gardens. It is easy to grow, makes a wonderful blue stemmed accent in any garden, and requires practically no care.



Myrtillocactus geometrizans

Cephalocereus senilis is the popular 'Old Man cactus'. It is surprisingly difficult to grow into a large specimen, subject to rot if it gets cold and damp. It is native to Hidalgo, Mexico.

Carnegiea gigantea or the Saguaro is another large plant, this time from Arizona, with a few in California. It does well in California gardens, at least until it gets large, but it is very slow.

Popular South American Ceroids —

Cereus are found in much of South America. *Cereus peruvianus*, found in many Southern California gardens, has been cultivated for over 400 years, and is not known in the wild!

Cleistocactus is one of the most beautiful genera of the columnar cacti. These slender plants branch from the base, and have dense spines and often wispy hair. They are easy to grow, and quickly set flowers that are usually long red tubes sticking out through the spines. One of the best is *C. smaragdiflorus*, with red

flowers, a yellow band near the tip, and a bright green tip. *C. strausii* is a fuzzy white marvel, and often seen at sale tables at shows.

Espostoa come from Ecuador and Peru. Most of these are covered with dense white wool that entirely hides the plant body.

Haageocereus come from Peru and Chile. They stay short (for a ceroid), rarely exceeding 3 or 4 feet, and have dense spines, and showy red flowers.

Micranthocereus is a small genus of Brazilian cacti. All of the species branch from the base, and make densely spined clusters. They stay small (to about 2 feet), and are happy as pot plants.

Oreocereus are beautiful hairy plants, with wicked spines hidden in the hairs. Some branch from the base. They prefer outdoor air to a greenhouse, and need frequent turning to keep symmetrical growth.



Oreocereus celsianus

Pilosocereus is a largely Brazilian genera, almost all of which are worth growing. It has a wide distribution, stretching into central Mexico. Many of the species are a glaucous blue with bright yellow spines and hairy areoles. *Pilosocereus magnificus* is one of these, with 4 to 12 deep ribs. The outer edges are covered with short yellow spines. *Pilosocereus aureispinus* has 18 to 20 very shallow ribs, and distinct areoles, that make dense yellow spirals around the plant on a dark green background.

References:

W. Cullmann, E. Gotz, G. Groner, The Encyclopedia of Cacti
E. Haustein, The Cactus Handbook
D.C. Zappi, Pilosocereus

SUCCULENT OF THE MONTH — **GASTERIA**

Gasteria is a popular and easily grown genus of plants that has been collected and kept as house plants since the 17th century. *Gasteria* are readily distinguished from *Aloe* and *Haworthia* (both very close relatives) by the shape of their flowers. *Gasteria* flowers are carried on a long scape (leafless flower stalk). They generally hang down as they open, and have a swollen (gasteriform) portion at the base of the flower. The word *Gasteria* comes from the Greek “gaster” meaning stomach or belly.



***Gasteria batesiana* flower showing the belly that gave the genus its name**

Gasteria vary in size from an inch to several feet in diameter. Almost all plants start out with the leaves in two rows (distichous), although most eventually begin to spiral, either remaining in a distichous spiral, or changing into a rosette form. *Gasteria* are very variable in appearance. They have definite juvenile and adult forms, have local variations in appearance, and leaf size and growth are dependent on the soil type and amount of sunlight.

Typical natural habitats are humus rich, sandy soils. They grow on dry rocky hillsides and generally grow under larger shrubs particularly when young. They also can be found in rock fissures or in the shade of large rocks. The roots are shallow and thick which helps the plants obtain moisture from barely wet soils, and nourishment from decaying leaves and debris from larger shrubs.

Gasteria cultivation is easy. They are mostly

winter and spring growers, but grow some all year except for the hottest part of the summer. They are tolerant of almost any growing mix. They prefer partial shade, particularly in the afternoon; however the best color is obtained by giving them as much light and sun, short of sunburn, as possible.

Gasteria are generally free from most pests. The one difficulty is 'black spot', a fungus that attacks many *Gasteria*. The fungus is rarely fatal, but causes large unsightly black spots on the leaves. There is no way to remove the spots, and since the leaves remain on the plants for several years, the fungus can quickly ruin show plants. The fungus can be minimized by keeping the leaves dry, and particularly keeping dew off the leaves. It can be prevented by regular application of systemic fungicides, but vigilance is required. Funginex is a popular rose fungicide that gives some protection.

Gasterias are readily propagated from offsets at the base, which can be simply pulled off and planted. Leaf cuttings will also root easily. *Gasterias* left in the open in California will be rapidly pollinated by hummingbirds, although the resulting seed is often an uncontrolled and unknown hybrid. Controlled pollination is easily accomplished with a small brush or toothpick. Seed can be collected as soon as the fruits start to dry.

Gasteria hybridize easily, and cross pollination can produce interesting plants. Many hybrids are available, as are several variegated cultivars. Intergeneric hybrids with *Aloes* and *Haworthia* are also available.

Great *Gasterias*:

Gasteria armstrongii (newly restored from *Gasteria nitida* v. *armstrongii*) This is a small plant, with distichous leaves only a few inches long. The leaves are dark green (almost black in some cases), and are tuberculate (covered with small bumps). Selected cul-



Japanese cultivar of *Gasteria armstrongii*

tivars with improved leaf shape, more robust growth and white spotting have been produced around the world, with some of the best cultivars coming from the United States and Japan.

Gasteria batesiana is another of the dark green tuberculate species. The leaves spiral with age to form rosettes. The plant is much larger than *Gasteria armstrongii*, and the tubercles are often a lighter green than the main body, giving the plant a speckled appearance. The clone from Barberton is one of several select forms.



Gasteria batesiana (Barberton)

Gasteria carinata var. *verrucosa* (often found as *G. verrucosa*) is a lighter colored species. It is larger than *G. batesiana*, with thinner leaves. The tubercles are much larger, and often merge into large areas of glaucous green on a dark green background.

Gasteria elaphiae is a relatively new species. It has a great grey texture, but is a slow grower.



Gasteria elaphiae

References

E.J. van Jaarsveld, *Gasterias of South Africa*
F. Sajeve and M. Costanzo, *Succulents, The Illustrated Dictionary*

Tom Glavich January 2009



Thank you to Tom Glavich for putting together the Plant of the Month article. If you would like to participate by submitting a plant of the month write up for the **Communique**, please contact Tom Glavich at tglavich@sbcglobal.net.



**** Note ** Membership Dues are Due!** February 18th is the deadline for inclusion in the 2009 Roster. The February Communique is the last one you will receive if you have not renewed your membership. If you are in doubt of your expiration date, you can contact Bill Gerlach at 626-332-8008, billgerlach@verizon.net or talk to him at the February meeting.

Dues are \$15 per household if you receive the Communique by e-mail or \$20 if you elect to receive the Communique by US Mail. The definition of a household is one listing for the Communique by either E-mail or US Mail regardless of the number of names involved.

You can send your dues to SGVCSS Membership, 719 S Albertson, Covina, CA 91723 or pay Bill Gerlach at the February meeting. Make checks payable to SGVCSS. Any changes or corrections from last year's Roster should be brought to Bill Gerlach's attention.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

February 14, 9:0 am to 4:00 pm — San Diego Winter Show and Sale, Room 101, Casa Del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego.

March 7 and 8, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm — South Coast Cactus and Succulent Society 2009 Show and Sale at the South Coast Botanical Gardens, 263 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verde Peninsula. For more information contact Vendor Coordinator Jim Hanna at 562-920-3046 or Show Chair Jim Gardner at 310-378-1953.

March 28 and 29, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm — The Prickly Palace Garden Tour and Plant Sale in the Hemenway gardens, 5890 Grinnell Drive, Riverside, 92509.

April 10 thru 15 — CSSA Convention at the Westin La Paloma Resort, Tucson, Arizona. For more information go to www.cssainc.org.

April 18 and 19 — Green Scene Plant Sale at the Fullerton Arboretum, 1900 Associated Road, Fullerton, 92831

2009 Plant-of-the Month and Study Group Topics

	Cacti of the Month	Succulent of the Month	Study Group
Feb.	Ceroids	Gasteria	Gasteria
Mar.	U.S. Native Cacti	U.S. Native Succulents	Mexico Road Trip with Vince & Rene
Apr.	Echinocereus	Haworthia	Spring Seed Workshop
May	Echinopsis	Echeveria	Vegetative Propagation Workshop
June	Cephalium bearing Cacti	Adenium	Astrophytum
July	Eriosyce	Cyphostemma	Staging
Aug.	Favorite	Favorite	Sansevieria
Sept.	Gymnocalycium	Euphorbia (caudiciform type)	Photo Tour
Oct.	Parodia & Notocactus	Stemless Mesembs - No Lithops	Ariocarpus
Nov.	Frailea & Blossfeldia	Tylecodon	Winter Seed Workshop