



*San Gabriel Valley
Cactus & Succulent Society*

COMMUNIQUE

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

September 2010 - Volume 43, Number 9

**September Meeting:
Thursday,
September 9 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 —
Astrophytum**

**SUCCULENT—
Bursera,
Commiphora**

Study Group:

Study group will meet on Wednesday,
September 15th in the Palm Room,
Los Angeles County Arboretum at
7:30 pm. The topic will be:

Mammillaria

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President's Message

Wasn't that show fabulous? Congratulations to Tom Glavich and his team for putting on one of the best Intercity Shows, ever! 1500 exquisite plants and the sales area was terrific. Thanks from all of us.

Our speaker for September has changed. (Thanks again, Tom for making space for him.) More later in this newsletter, but don't miss John Lavranos.

As we head into the final few months of 2010 we have a few matters of business to attend to. I will ask for volunteers to serve on a nominating committee. We are looking for a new President, Vice President and three Board members. If you have desire to serve this vital organization, please contact one of the current Board members.

We have decided to have another Home Tour in 2011. We are looking for volunteers now. The decisions will be made shortly so you can have time to spruce up your yard for the Tour. We would like to hold it sometime in March or April.

Dues will be due soon. The Board has decided that dues for people who receive their Newsletters by US Postal Service must pay a more fair share of the actual cost. Just the newsletter costs the club more than \$16.00 per member per year if it is delivered by post. There is no cost if delivered electronically. The rate for 2011 will be \$15.00 per household member for electronic delivery and \$25.00 per household per year for postal delivery. The Board acknowledges that this may cause hardship on some members and is willing to reduce the postal rate for anyone who might not be able to join because of the rise in cost. Please see Bill Gerlach if this is the case.

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August Mini-Show Results

Cacti - Favorite

Novice

- 1st Rebecca Mallonee Mammillaria bocasana
cv 'Fred'
- 2nd Renee Hernandez Coryphantha elephantidens
- 3rd Gary/Jamie Mancuso Ferocactus rectispinus
- 3rd Gary/Jamie Mancuso Echinocactus platycanthus

Intermediate

- 1st Rita Gerlach Notocactus scopa
- 2nd Rita Gerlach Mammillaria marcosii
- 3rd Tommy Dodson Echinocereus reichenbachii

Master

- 1st Frank Nudge Epithelantha micromeris crest
- 2nd Manny Rivera Pelecyphora aselliformis
- 3rd Manny Rivera Ariocarpus kotschoubeyanus

Succulents - Favorite

Novice

- 1st Jairo Ramirez Bursera sp.
- 2nd Mary Brumbaugh Haworthia truncata cv
"Lime Green"
- 2nd Gary Mancuso Agave dasylirioides
- 3rd Lorraine Lutz Euphorbia species
- 3rd Fred Parrales Echeveria hyb. "Black Knight"

Intermediate

- 1st Rita Gerlach Haworthia cymbiformis variegata
- 2nd Tom Vermilion Aloe hybrid
- 2nd Tom Vermilion Lithops pseudotruncatell
v 'Alpine'
- 3rd Tommy Dodson Eulophia petersii
- 3rd Tom Vermilion x gasteraloe "Spikey Jr"

Master

- 1st Manny Rivera Adenium obesum
- 2nd Manny Rivera Cyphostemma betiforme
- 3rd Yvonne Hemenway x Hoodiapelia beukmannii
crest

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.

President's Message - Continued

We will have a bus trip in the spring, most likely to the Santa Barbara area. More in coming months.

We have joined the California Garden Clubs, Inc. This is the first step in the process for the club to become a not-for-profit corporation.

We have made the first move towards hosting the Cactus & Succulent Society of America's bi-annual convention. The next available date is the year 2015, but we need to be in position to make a presentation at the next convention in San Diego in April. More to come on this later, but I regard this as an very exciting proposition which will make our club an even more vital force than it is now.

Don't miss the Huntington Succulent Plant Symposium on Sept. 4.

Do you have your plants ready for our Winter Show, November 6 and 7?

See you at the meeting,

Buck Hemenway

This Month's Program

Our speaker for September will be John Lavranos. Several of us know John and above all he is one of the nicest men on our planet. In addition, he is one of the world's great Succulent Explorers. He is responsible for discovering and rediscovering countless species of succulent plants from around the globe.

His own carefully kept field collection numbers are more than 32,000, signifying carefully preserved herbarium samples along with detailed descriptions and locations. His talks are always full of information and very entertaining. It is a great treat to welcome John to speak to our Club.

Study Group

Wednesday, September 15th • Mammillaria

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.

Plants Of The Month

Enter your specimen plants in our monthly minishow. 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.

CACTUS OF THE MONTH —

Astrophytum

In 1839, Charles Lemaire, a French botanist, applied the term "*Astrophytum*" to describe a genus of cacti, closely related, yet distinct from, *Echinocactus*, that had been collected in northern Mexico. The holotype used to establish the genus was *A. myriostigma*. The name *Astrophytum* comes from the Greek: aster (star) and phyton (plant).

There are six recognized species of *Astrophytums*, all of which are internationally listed as endangered. Luckily *Astrophytums* are readily grown from seed.

Astrophytums are indigenous to the Chihuahuan Desert region bordering Texas (in the Rio Grande River valley) and Mexico (primarily in the states of Nuevo León and Tamaulipas), though their specific habitats vary considerably. Most species are also quite variable in appearance -- many forms and variants abound. In addition, a number of growers have developed a number of cultivars and hybrids, as many of the species can be interbred quite readily. (Cultivation of hybrids and cultivars is the same as for the species.)

Yet *Astrophytums* can be quite difficult plants for the novice to grow. These plants must remain absolutely "dry" during their rest period. Thus greenhouse cultivation (or similar user-controlled environment) is recommended; grafting is another alternative

Though these plants can take some frost, they must be kept perfectly dry in winter, including little to no atmospheric humidity. Plants can then be watered sparingly from March till October. All species of *Astrophytum* have very fine roots.

Astrophytums also require loose, well-drained soil and bright light (full sun can lead to scaring). All have yellow flowers (though *A. coahuilense*'s have a red throat).

A. asterias (common names: sand dollar cactus,, sea urchin cactus, star cactus) is a green, flattened globular plant in native habitat, where they are practically buried. In cultivation, plants may attain a spherical to columnar shape.

Plants may have scales (usually loose and sprinkled in irregular patterns over the stem), but may also be arched in around the areoles or on line, or be completely flake-free pure green specimens. In cultivation these plants grow slowly. These plants require a little fertilizer when watered.

A. capricorne (common name: goat's horn cactus) is a globular to shortly cylindric plant that is often green, sometimes bluish, and sometimes tinged purple (the latter depending on sunlight). This plant's identifying characteristic is its prominent long spines. There may be up to 20 spines per areole, originally golden yellow and later aging to grey.



Astrophytum capricorne x asterias

A. caput-medusea is a relatively newly identified species. It grows among the thorn scrubs in relative shade. It is odd looking with a very reduced, shortly cylindrical stem that lack any ribs. Its tubercles fairly mimic the "snakes" on Medusa's head; they are cylindrical or occasionally triangular when young, of cartilaginous consistency, smooth, and up to eight inches in length. The specific requirements of this new and very particular plant are still being investigated, though their dormancy is long – it starts in August and lasts through April.

A. coahuilense is found in sunny southern and eastern slopes on lime formations. This species is surprising similar in appearance to *A. myriostigma*, but its flower, fruit and seed characteristics closely resemble *A. capricorne*. While these plants looks like *A. myriostigma*, softer, grey flecks more densely cover the plants.

A. myriostigma (common names: bishop's hat, bishop's cap, bishop's mitre cactus, bonete de Obispo, mitra) is found in the highlands of northern and central

Mexico. It is a many-dotted, spineless plant, usually solitary or with very few basal branches. Viewed from above, the stem has a perfect star-shaped form. Plants are green globular to cylindric (up to five feet tall), covered with many minute white hairy scales that give it a characteristic chalk-white or silvery-grey appearance, though some plants are naked. Plants grown in light shade tend to have a richer, darker appearance.



Astrophytum myriostigma cv onzuka

A. ornatum (common name: monks hood) grows in wild canyons and limestone cliffs sometime on near vertical rockfaces in Hidalgo, Queretaro and Guanajuato in Mexico. This is the southernmost species of *Astrophytum*.

Plants are shortly columnar, appearing star-shaped when viewed from above. Plants have (quite variable) white cross-bands of wooly scales. It is the largest (girth-wise) and (supposedly) the easiest to grow. This species is more heavily spined than other *Astrophytums*. Its ribs may be straight or (more frequently) spiraling. This plant may take up to seven years before it first flowers.



Astrophytum ornatum v mirbellii

Anne Keegan, August 2010

Sources: The Cactus Family, Anderson; The Cactus Handbook, Haustein, and, Cacti, Innes & Glass

All pictures courtesy of Tom Glavich

SUCCULENT OF THE MONTH —

Bursera and Commiphora

This month's succulents are a study in parallel evolution of two or three genera of pachycaul (swollen trunk) shrubs. Both *Bursera* and *Commiphora* are members of the *Burseraceae*. *Bursera* are confined to the New World, mostly from Southern California through Guatemala and into the islands of the Caribbean. *Commiphora* are confined to the Old World, mostly South and East Africa and Madagascar. A closely related genus, until recently rarely grown, is



Bursera simplicifolia

Boswellia best known from the Arabian peninsula. *Boswellia* is the source of incense.

All three genera have similar cultivation requirements. They all do best when watered in the summer in Southern California. They will all tolerate being left unprotected, outdoors during the winter rains, although some of the *Commiphora* are sensitive to freezing temperatures, and need protection when hard freezes occur. Any standard succulent mix will do as a potting medium. Growth is much more rapid when they are fed and given free root room. If grown in an open mix they can take an amazing amount of water in the summer, and will reward the grower with substantial growth and trunk thickening. These are trees. They need food! All of the plants do well when treated as bonsai, and pruned to expose the geometry and structure of the trunk and bark. Planting in the ground along with proper irriga-



Commiphora abyssinica

tion will greatly accelerate the growth rate. They can be left in the ground for several years, and will tolerate lower temperatures in the ground than they will in pots.

Bursera is a wide-spread genus, with a range that extends from California into South America. Many of the species are beautiful trees with red or brown peeling bark, rarely seen in cultivation. Some of the tree-like species are very vigorous growers, going from a foot to 4 feet or more in a just two years in a three gallon pot. They should be pruned to shape rather than let to grow into thin whips. Most *Bursera* are aromatic, with wonderful woody to turpentine like fragrance from their leaves and bark. Nearly all of the species are worth growing and can be made into show specimens by suitable pruning. Many of the larger species require hard pruning every year to avoid having them turn into trees. Species frequently seen are *Bursera fagaroides*, *Bursera microphylla*, with very small leaves, *Bursera multijuglans* (with red peeling bark), and *Bursera simplicifolia*. There are many other species from Central and Southern Mexico, and Central America that should be grown and shown.

Commiphora are the African equivalent of *Bursera*. *Commiphora* is also a widespread genus, stretching from South Africa through tropical Africa and continuing into Madagascar. Many of the species have peeling bark, although the color tends to run more to-towards the yellow and brown rather than red.

Vigorous growth is also found in well fed and watered plants. *Commiphora* are aromatic, with fragrances that manage to be both similar and different to *Bursera*. *Commiphora pyracanthoides* is similar to

some of the tall growing *Bursera*, and is easily grown from seed. *Commiphora capensis* and *cervifolia* are both occasionally available. Unnamed (or unidentified) species of *Commiphora* from Sudan, Madagascar, Kenya, and Tropical Africa are sometimes available and are beginning to be propagated. Named species are beginning to appear on seed lists and nursery catalogs. The genus is understudied, and there are many species unknown or unidentified. Almost all *Commiphora* first appear as unremarkable seedlings in relatively small pots. If these are grown on, and grown in the ground for a few years, very much as Bonsai growers do, amazing trees and shrubs appear. These are all worth the effort of a little digging and a lot of pruning.

Boswellia are tropical plants. They need more protection, but will survive San Gabriel Valley normal winter temperatures (a few hours below freezing) without difficulty. They are slow to leaf out in spring, but grow well once they do. They are an interesting challenge for the experienced *Bursera* grower.

Tom Glavich, August 2010



Boswellia nana x sacra



Thank you to Tom Glavich and Anne Keegan 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.



Refreshment Signup

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

Rosie Garcia
Richard Roosman
William Molina

The first three club members who sign up and bring refreshments each month will receive a **FREE** plant as thanks.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

September 4, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm — Huntington Botanic Gardens Succulent Symposium. Symposium fee is tentatively set at \$75 which includes lunch. Fee for optional dinner presentation is \$25. Reservations are required and will be accepted beginning in August.

September 26, 12:00 noon — Long Beach Cactus Club Annual Plant Auction. 18127 South Alameda Street, Rancho Dominguez.

November 6 & 7, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm — San Gabriel Valley Cactus & Succulent Society Show and Sale at the Los Angeles Arboretum, 310 Baldwin Avenue, Arcadia. Show schedules and entry tags will be available at the meetings and Study Group.

December 3-5, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm — Orange County Cactus & Succulent Society Winter Show and Sale at the Fullerton Arboretum, 1900 Associated Road, Fullerton. Contact Vince Basta at 714-267-4329 for more information.



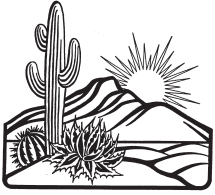
Welcome New Members

Please welcome these new members and make them feel welcome at our functions.

Sandra Williams, Rancho Cucamonga	Sharon Yonashiro, Pasadena
Brigitte Bergman, Pasadena	Carolyn Jackson, Lynwood
Raymond Nicolai-Vargas, Long Beach	Della Wyler, Los Angeles
Don Reining, La Canada	Dean Ezinga, Los Angeles
Greg DeChirico, Summerland	Alan Del Castillo, Los Angeles
Dean Hart, Buena Park	David Hawks, Riverside
Linda Hsiao, Los Angeles	Minh Huynh & Kim Le, Upland
Renee Kland, La Canada	Rob MacGregor, Riverside

2010 Plant-of-the-Month and Study Group Topics

	Cacti of the Month	Succulent of the Month	Study Group
Sept.	Astrophytum	Bursera, Commiphora	Mammillaria
Oct.	Ariocarpus	Sansevieria	Tips and Tricks for Successful Growing
Nov.	Opuntia	Asclepiad	Winter Seed Workshop



COMMUNIQUE

Newsletter of the San Gabriel Valley
Cactus and Succulent Society
c/o Yvonne Hemenway
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Riverside, CA 92509

FIRST CLASS MAIL

If you have a cactus or succulent related event that you would like to have announced in the ***COMMUNIQUE***, forward the information to the address below. Please verify the event date. Articles, Notices and Corrections can be sent via email to: yvonne@pricklypalace.com or via mail to: San Gabriel Valley Cactus and Succulent Society Newsletter Editor, c/o Yvonne Hemenway, 5890 Grinnell Drive, Riverside, CA 92509. Material must be received by the last Thursday of the month to be considered for publication in the next issue of the ***COMMUNIQUE***.