



# Desert Breeze

Newsletter of the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society

February 2010

Thursday, February 4, 2010 at 7:00 PM

## "Unusual Agaves, Aloes, and Yuccas"

Presented by Chad Davis - Curator of Agavaceae, Aloaceae, & Nolinaceae at the Desert Botanical Garden



Agaves, aloes, and yuccas are fascinating plants that feature bold forms, as well as dramatic colors and textures for our hot desert landscapes. The vast array of sizes, colors and forms makes them useful both as accents and specimen plantings. This presentation will focus on some spectacular, yet underused, agaves and yuccas, as well as durable aloes that can tolerate our climatic extremes. We will discuss preferred site selection, maintenance practices, potential cultural problems and pest of these amazing plant groups. Special attention will be given to large arborescent species of aloes and yuccas.

Chad has been with the Desert Botanical Garden since 2002. Prior to his promotion to Curator of Agavaceae, Aloaceae, & Nolinaceae in 2003, Chad served in the Security Department as a Ranger at the Garden.

As the Curator of Agavaceae, Aloaceae, & Nolinaceae, Chad curates and maintains three primary plant collections in the Garden. This entails tracking of collections, acquisition and propagation of suitable plant material, designing and planting of garden displays and serving on internal Garden committees. He regularly works with volunteer groups, has obtained and maintains a Certified Pesticide Applicator License, as well as teaching in the Garden's Desert Landscaper School. Chad has designed and installed the Arizona Agave Beds, expanded the Aloe

Collection/displays in the Garden, coordinated the installation of the Succulent Gallery and the new Berlin Agave & Yucca Forrest. He has given numerous presentations to environmental groups and garden clubs such as the Arizona Native Plant Society, Central Arizona Cactus and Succulent Society and McDowell Park Association, as well as leading a workshop during the Cactus and Succulent Society of America National Convention. He is a regular contributor to the Garden's Sonoran Quarterly and has appeared on local and nationwide television shows.

Chad received an Associates of Applied Science in Urban Horticulture from Mesa Community College and is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies (BIS) degree combining the disciplines of Landscape Architecture and Urban Horticulture at Arizona State University.

Please make sure you attend this excellent program and welcome Chad as our guest speaker! This will be a great opportunity for every member. Please join us, bring a friend and come enjoy your evening!

Thursday, March 4, 2010

## "Native Succulents of the Eastern United States"

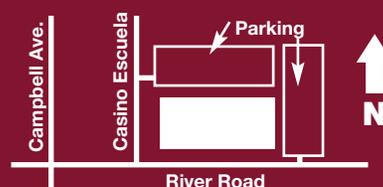
Presented by Michael Chamberland

## Free Plants and Door Prizes

Plants for February are in the genus *Mammillaria*. Please refer to the comprehensive article in this month's *Desert Breeze* for cultivation tips.

A double-serving of specimen plant door prizes is offered for this month's meeting to make up for last month!

Meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month.



Junior League of Tucson, Kiva Bldg.  
2099 E. River Road

## President's Message



### **SONORAN VIII May 14 - 16 InnSuites Hotel Civic Center**

In 1996, we initiated this regional conference to celebrate the success of the 1995 CSSA Convention and thank all the TCSS members for their hard work. The purpose of this regional conference is to learn about growing succulent plants in the Sonoran Desert and especially, Tucson and vicinity. The format for the conference was established so that best parts of a CSSA

convention could be rolled up into a regional conference. May 14th is set-up, activities are open on May 15th and 16th.

**The TCSS Plant Show.** This is an opportunity to show to the public examples of the diversity of cactus and other succulent plants. Our hope is to provide an educational showcase for these plants and to engage the public and answer questions. Rather than a competitive show we ask the public to vote on their favorite plants by giving them 10 beans to place in the voting box next to each plant. At the end of the show the beans are counted and the owners of the plants receive a small award. It's not 1st, 2nd, 3rd, but "Oh Boy", "Gee Whiz", "Wow" in no particular order. It is fun for the public, especially kids, and everyone gets an "I Voted" sticker. The plant show admission is free and open to the public.

**The Plant Sale.** This is one of the highlights of any gathering of plant enthusiasts. The first preference of vendors goes to our member nurseries and businesses. They are tremendously supportive of TCSS and this is an opportunity to highlight them to the public. The sale consists of plants, pottery, books and other plant related items. We also have plants from our rescue program available for purchase at this sale. The sale admission is free and open to the public.

**Silent Auction.** There will be a wonderful assortment of plants and related materials up for bid at this silent auction. If you are registered for the conference you will have a bid number otherwise you just sign in at the registration desk on Saturday May 15 and then place your bids. The auction closes on Saturday just before the start of dinner. Your donations of special plants or plant related material are always welcome and rules governing reimbursements for high value items will be available next month. The silent auction will be in the Lobby of the Hotel and open to the public.

**Speakers and Workshops.** This portion of Sonoran VIII requires registration and payment of fees. Each registrant will hear 5 speakers, attend 5 workshops of their choice, lunch and dinner on Saturday May 15 and closing lunch on Sunday, May 16. Workshops are limited to about 20 participants so there can be a lot of interaction in the hour and 20 minute long time frame. There will be plenty of time to shop at the plant sale on Saturday and Sunday mornings. The fee for this portion of Sonoran VII will

be \$120 which is a great price for 5 speaker, 5 workshops, 2 lunches, dinner and more. We do limit this to no more than 100 attendees so it is a first-come first-serve event. Registrants will get their choice on workshops based on the date of registration.

**Special Dinner Speaker:** The Saturday, May 15 dinner and speaker will be available to all TCSS members and guests, whether you are or are not registered for the conference. There will be a small charge and RSVP required for those who are not registered, but well worth it. Our speaker for this evening event is Deborah Lee Baldwin, award winning writer, editor, artist and photographer. Her 2007 book "Designing with Succulents" is in our library.

The complete list of speakers, workshops and vendors will be available soon, along with registration materials. These will be sent to all members and also available on our website. I hope you will continue to support this event.

Thank you

*Dick Wiedhopf, President*

## Library Update

**"A Field Guide to The Aloes of Malawi"** by *Stewart S. Lane*  
Thirty-two aloes are described and divided into five groups. The author gives a description of the plant and the flowers. The back of the book has a page on flowering times.

**"Cactaceas de Sonora, Mexico: su Diversidad, Uso Y Conservacion"**  
*Rafaela Paredes Aguilar, Thomas Van Devender, Richard S. Felger*  
Donated by Mark Dimmitt this book is written primarily in Spanish. The color photographs has Spanish and English descriptions.

**"Chile Nuestra Flora Util"**  
This book written completely in Spanish.

**"Tequila Exploring the Legend"** A Desert Speaks DVD  
David Yetman travels to Jalisco with ecologist Albert Burquez and Ana Valenzuela to inspect the history and production process of tequila.

**"Desert Living is Different An Environmental Guidebook for Newcomers"**  
Written and Illustrated by K-12 Students. Written for the newcomer, this book is a quick read but quite informative for the person new to Tucson.

*Joie Giunta*

## President's Award

The President's Award recognizes outstanding Service to the society. Recipients are announced at the annual meeting in conjunction with the Holiday Party. A list of all past recipients will be on our website in the near future. This years President's Award were given to the follow members:

# Mammillaria

## A Genus for Everyone

By Norm Dennis

One of the perennial favorite genera for cactophiles is Mammillaria. The genus is commonly referred to as Mamms or pincushions. The reasons for this are several: a wide range of forms, profuse flowers twelve months of the year, cultivation demands that range from very easy to challenging, the presence of local species, mostly inexpensive and locally available from nurseries.

The genus ranges from the southwest US to Texas and down to the northern part of South America and some Caribbean islands. Most species are found in Mexico, but Arizona has *M. grahamii*, *M. thornberi*, *M. heyderi*, *M. mainiae*, *M. wrightii*, and *M. lasiacantha*. They are characterized by: tubercles or nipples, areoles on the end of the nipple, flowers from the axils at the base of the nipples, and a fleshy fruit containing the seeds.

Mammillarias typically have two growth forms. Here is a cylindrical form of *M. fraileana* and a globose form of *M. deherdtiana*.

Flowers emerge from the previous years growth and open during the day. They can be solid or striped, in pink, red, white, yellow and cream. Some



*M. fraileana*



*M. deherdtiana*

species when injured will exude a milky latex sap. Many Mamms develop showy red fruits, which can persist for several weeks or until found by rodents, birds and ants who in turn disperse the seeds.



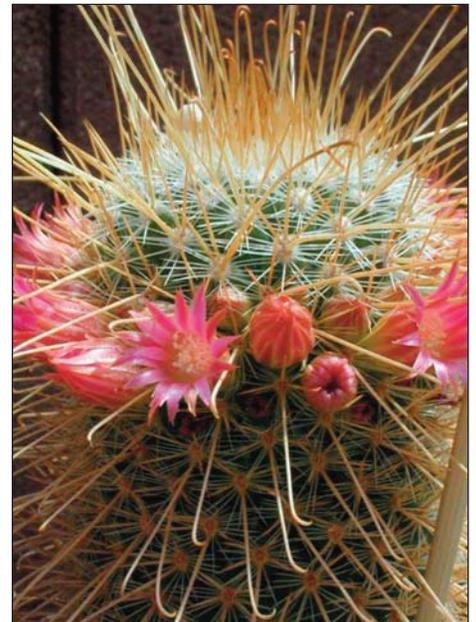
*M. haageana*



*M. rubrograndis*

In Tucson, starting in January and February, *M. haageana*, and *M. rubrograndis* are two examples of good bloomers. They may also be acclimated for use as landscape accents in filtered light.

Cultivation includes many different aspects. For the most part, all of the species can be grown inside on the windowsill. Of course some will get quite large with age, forming impressive multi-headed clumps, while others will remain small. *M. magnifica* pictured below will make clumps up to three feet across, while *M. herrerae* stays small enough to fit in a 6 inch pot. Many of the larger forms are appropriate for use as landscape plants in less sun intense areas.



*M. magnifica*

Typically Mamms prefer a very open potting mix with 50% or more inert material such as pumice. They do best if watered only after the soil has dried out during the growing season, which usually falls in the months March through October here in Tucson. Of course your conditions may vary. Monthly feeding during the growing season with ½ strength balanced water-soluble fertilizer is a good recommendation, or use a time-released fertilizer for convenience. Regular feeding will encourage growth and flowering.

Some growers keep their plants in heated greenhouses and have the benefit of a longer growing season,

while other growers have plants outside with only protection from rain overhead. Of course there are some species that benefit from our winter rains like *M. grahamii* and *M. heyderi*. Others are prone to rot when watered too much, especially with lower temperatures. Also pictured on the following page is *M. grahamii* along with *M. heyderi* v. *macdougalii* – both of these are local species.

With good care, many species of *Mammillaria* can grow into nice specimen plants faster than one might expect. For example, *M. plumosa* can grow from a two inch plant to a 16 inch plant as pictured below over a period of 7 years. An important precaution is that *M. plumosa* is very sensitive to over watering, and in addition should only be watered from the sides or below, and never on the top of the plants – otherwise the plant is very likely to rot. A shallow pot is recommended rather than a deep one that can stay too wet.

In a period of 5 years, *M. hahniana* can grow from a two inch plant to a 10

inch or larger specimen plant and flower each year. This species offers a good opportunity as it is easy to grow and readily available. Some forms (as pictured) are *M. hahniana* forma *supra*, and are known for their ready formation of offsets and clumps.

Of course, many of us are unable to provide the space for large plants, so why not grow a specimen of one of the many small Mamms, such as *M. huitzilopochtli*. Over a period of 5 years, the plant may attain a size of 8 inches.

Some of the more difficult species include *M. tetrancistra*, *M. lasiacantha*, *M. humboldtii*, *M. solisiodes*, *M. albicoma*, and *M. glassii*. These are sometimes available from our local nurserymen. Easy species include *M. hahniana*, *M. magnimamma*, *M. spinosissima*, *M. haageana*, *M. compressa*, *M. gemnispina*, and many others. Most of these are easily found in our local nurseries, along with dozens of other species in the genus.

If you are curious or want to grow *Mammillaria*, you will find yourself in

good company. The TCSS has several members who are fans of the genus, as are our nurserymen. So be sure to ask questions of our members and growers – take advantage of their experience to enhance your fun in growing these always popular plants.

If you are reading this and are not in the Tucson area, remember to consult with your local experts for more information on growing mamms in your area.

For additional information on *Mammillarias*:

Book: "**Mammillaria**", by John Pilbeam 376 pages., 425 color photos

[www.tucsoncactus.org/cgi-bin/MySQLdb/DisplayCollection.php?Collection=Gallery5](http://www.tucsoncactus.org/cgi-bin/MySQLdb/DisplayCollection.php?Collection=Gallery5)

[mammillaria.forumotion.net/forum.htm](http://mammillaria.forumotion.net/forum.htm)

[www.mammillarias.net](http://www.mammillarias.net)



*M. grahamii*



*M. heyderi* v. *macdougalii*



*M. herrerae*



*M. plumosa*



*M. hahniana* forma *supra*

### **Matt Johnson & Pat Rorabaugh**

They have been long time contributors to our success. This year they have opened their garden for our home tour, participated in most of our rescues, including bringing fresh greenhouse vegetables for everyone's delight, part of the team that cleans up after every meeting and event and have been generous with their knowledge about the desert habitat. They both contributed significantly to the success of the CSSA Convention.

### **Wendell Niemann**

A more recent member of the society who wishes he knew about us years ago. He is making up by being an extraordinary volunteer. He is there to assist in the set up and take down of our events. Wendell takes an active roll in our rescue program and more. Someone has to help unload and maintain the rescued plants between sales. Wendell is one of those volunteers and has done a great job keeping our rescued material looking good.

### **William (Bill) Thornton**

Bill is an active member of the rescue crew and helps out at all our sales and events. He spurred on our conservation activities by getting us involved in a potential program to microchip saguaros to help prevent them from being stolen. He has authored a fine article on Saguaros for the CSSA Journal. Bill has a knack for acquiring all sorts of interesting plant from his friends for the benefit of the Society.

I have only briefly described some of the things that these four members have accomplished for the Tucson Cactus & Succulent Society. The list goes on and on.

Thank you and congratulations.

Dick Wiedhopf, President

## **SAVE THE DATE**

The next free TCSS Desert Garden Tour will be Sat. March 20, 2010. 9:00 am - 3:00pm. There will be 5 member gardens to visit, located in the West and Northwest part of Tucson. More details to follow. taking home one of the large ocotillo or cereus cuttings.

### **George Virtes, Jr**

**January 8, 1943 – January 7, 2010**



George was a special part of the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society and along with Gail, helped it grow to more than a thousand members. When volunteer efforts were needed George was always there to help. He had a passion for being involved. It was never too hot or too cold, too hard or too easy, too much work or too little effort, it was what it was and he was there with Gail to help. I and so many others who knew him will miss him and think of him often. We express our thoughts of sympathy to Gail and all his family.

*If you would like to share your thoughts and memories about George or just read what others have to say, visit [www.rubinmemorialchapel.com](http://www.rubinmemorialchapel.com), click on obituaries. It will take you to a memorial guest book.*

## **TCSS BOARD**

### **Officers**

**President: Richard Wiedhopf**  
**885-6367**

**Vice President: Vonn Watkins**

**Secretary: Dave Moyer**

**Treasurer: Joe Frannea**

### **Board of Directors:**

**(Ending Dec. 31, 2010)**

**Linda Bartlett**

**Martin (Marty) Harow**

**William (Bill) Hicks**

**John Swarbrick**

**(Ending Dec. 31, 2011)**

**Ed Bartlett**

**Mark Dimmitt**

**Joie Giunta**

**Bill Salisbury**

**(Ending Dec. 31, 2012)**

**Chris Monrad**

**Dale Johnson**

**Keimpe Bronkhorst**

**CSSA Affiliate Rep:**

**Bill Holcombe (2011)**

**Cactus Rescue**

**[cactusrescue@tucsoncactus.org](mailto:cactusrescue@tucsoncactus.org)**

**Cactus Rescue: Chris Monrad**

**Educational: Joe Frannea**

**Free Plants: Chris Monrad**

**Librarian: Joie Giunta**

**Programs: Vonn Watkins**

**Refreshments: Patsy Frannea**

**Technology: Kevin Barber**

**Research Grants: Gerald Pine**

**Editor: Karen Keller**

**[runbunny@cox.net](mailto:runbunny@cox.net)**

**Deadline for copy: 15th of each month**

**TCSS Web Page:**

**[www.tucsoncactus.org](http://www.tucsoncactus.org)**

**Webmaster: Keimpe Bronkhorst**

**Everyone is Welcome!**

**Bring your friends, join in the fun,  
and meet the cactus and  
succulent community.**

## **February Refreshments**

**Those with family names beginning with X, Y, Z, A, B, C, and D please bring your choice of refreshments to the meeting. Your generous sharing will be greatly appreciated and enjoyed!**

**4 8 0 3 4**  
**2 3 2**  
**Cacti Rescued**  
**238 Rescues Accomplished**

Please see our Website Calendar for the next rescued cactus sale. They are scheduled at various times during the year based on our inventory.

TCSS Club Members receive a 10% discount

**February 2010**

Thursday, February 4, 2010	7:00pm Monthly Meeting, "Unusual Agaves, Aloes, and Yuccas", presented by Chad Davis, Curator of Agavaceae, Aloaceae, & Nolinaceae at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix, Arizona
Tuesday, February 9, 2010	7:00pm Board Meeting at the U of A College of Pharmacy
Thursday, February 18, 2010	7:00 - 9:00pm Aloe Round Table Discussion

**Photos taken  
by John Durham**



*How many rescued plants can you fit in one trailer? (Stacking and transporting can become quite a challenge at times.) Our hardworking crew dug well over 200 ocotillo and barrels at the UofA Science and Technology Park recently before new construction grading.*



*TCSS Rescue Crew volunteers line up ocotillo for tagging and sorting before they get loaded for transport to our holding area.*



*At the conclusion of a cool and windy morning dig, the rescue crew shuttle, tag and load plants.*