

Desert Breeze

TUCSON CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

JULY 1996

“The Thunder shower, the clearing sky,
And sunset splendor of July.”



During the June meeting, Dick Wiedhopf showed slides of thirty-eight different species of *Haworthia*, twenty-seven of which are considered by M. B. Bayer (1976) as true species.

The slides were all of plants Dick has grown at his house over the past twenty years, and following the meeting he claimed to have listed at least half the names incorrectly. Perhaps all those slides were really of one or two plants?

No man has a good enough memory to be a successful liar!

- Abraham Lincoln



Upcoming!

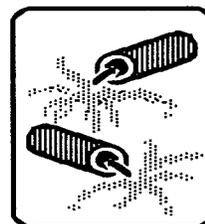
Our next meeting will be held at the Tucson Botanical Gardens, 7 pm on **JULY THE 18TH**

due to conflicts in schedule with the annual burning of “A” Mountain on the
★★★★★★★★4th★★★★★★★★

July 5-7 CSSA Show and Sale at the Huntington Botanical Gardens.

July 20-28 Henry Shaw Show.

August 17-18 Inner City C&S Show



Saint Swithin Day - July 15 - St. Swithin, Bishop of Winchester, is remembered for this rhyme:

*St. Swithin Day, if thou dost rain,
For forty days it will remain;
St. Swithin Day, if thou be fair,
For forty days 'twill rain na mair.*

It is told that a century after his burial, it was decided to move his remains - against his instructions - to a more prominent place in the Cathedral. It rained so for forty days and nights the change had to be abandoned.

July. It's what you've heard of hell and its fire. The Sonoran Desert. When Cabeza de Vaca first set eyes on it in 1536, he inscribed in his log, "Of all the things I have seen, this is the one that has left me without hope of being able to describe it in words."

Man has carried cactus, or its seeds, to Africa, the Mediterranean, and Australia. Cactus grew in the gardens of the Aztec king Montezuma at Tehuantepec. Legend has it that the gardeners plucked sacrificial blood from their own ears to sprinkle on newly planted cacti. The red fruit, representing sacrificed hearts, was used for barter, and as items of value in a dowry. In ancient Navajo wind chants, Cactus People grow out of rocks and mirages. Some cactus plants have the power to cure skin disease, some work as cardiac stimulants, some as hallucinogens in religious ceremonies. The Cactus People have the power to harm as well as help, and they must be treated with respect. In legend, the tribe wanders, eating nothing but desert plants. One cactus lures them with fruit that smells like strawberries. When the tribespeople eat it, their hearts are twisted with pain. Henceforth that cactus, the *Echinocereus coccineus*, has been called by the name Heart Twister. The custom grew that before eating the fruit of a cactus, a hair must be pulled from one's head and offered to the plant with the words, "Be good, little cactus fruit, and do not twist my heart."

The objectives of the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society shall be "to function continuously in the study of cacti and native flora..." Notice this doesn't mention other succulents, but it does direct the Society to study, protect and foster the planting of native flora in suitable places. *Acacia willardiana*, or *Palo blanco*, is endemic to western Sonora. It occurs in the coastal mountains from the Sierra Seri to Guaymas and on Tiburón Island. This thin, wispy tree is spineless and has paperlike, peeling white bark. The trunk and limbs are usually straight, slender, and flexible, yet the wood is hard. It is most common on rocky slopes and arroyos near mountains. Plant one today!



Parodia (Speg. 1923)

Information about the Genus Parodia was gathered from "The Ultimate Parodia Page" by Willy A. Verheulpen (1996) waverheu@vub.ac.be, who writes the following disclaimer: gathering data and knowledge is a never ending story! He also states that "feedback would be nice, especially if you have any corrections and/or enhancements to propose; proposed changes must be based on documented facts, 'a matter of opinion' is not good enough!"

The first Parodia Plants ever collected were probably the plants that Heinrich Schickendantz collected between 1860-1870? up to around 1890 when he sent some plants to Dr. A. C. Weber in Paris. From this batch, Weber described *Echinocactus microspermus* as early as 1896 (Dictionaire d'Horticulture 496, 1896). This was to become the type plant of the Genus. Up to then the plant was only known as 'Echinocactus.' A further species was described two years later by Karl Schumann, namely *Echinocactus chrysacanthion*. In 1907, Emil Heese described *Echinocactus maassii*.

Nothing much happened with these plants until 1922, when Britton and Rose proposed the name *Hickenia* for this Genus without knowing however that this name had already been given to a family in the Asclepeadacea, and hence it was invalid. Two of the Echinocacti, *maassii* and *escayachensis*, were transferred by these authors to the Genus *Malacocarpus*. It was Dr. Carlos Spegazzini who proposed the name Parodia in honor of Dr. Domingo Parodi (1895-1966), investigator of the flora of Paraguay. (Some books list that the name is derived from the Spanish word 'parodo' which means 'mountain pass'. Mr. Verheulpen calls this a quirk of unknown origin.)

From the "Cactus and Succulent Journal" (U.S.), Vol. 62 re: Parodia (Keisling and Ferrari, 1990): In the past thirty years many collections have been made in the field, producing a great interest in the group. Many of the new discoveries were published with scientific names but without good understanding of the considerable variability of some species and the extent of their adaptations to different environments.

The proliferation of specific names based upon quite minimal variations makes the study of this group very difficult, especially when in general the descriptions are deficient. The appearance of these plants changes considerably under cultivation, especially if they are overfed and grown with insufficient light, causing the stems to be overly large and the spines poorly developed. Also, a lack of overhead watering and the other artificial greenhouse conditions, will produce overly woolly areoles, giving the plants an attractive but unnatural appearance. All this can be seen in the illustrations of the many proposed "new species" published in recent years.

Plants small to medium size: 5-30 cm in diameter, depressed-globose to shortly columnar. *Ribs* present or completely dissolved into tubercles. *Spines* straight, arched or hooked. *Flowers* funnellform to campanulate, 2.5-6 cm in diameter. *Parodia* is distributed from central and southern Bolivia to northwestern Argentina.

Echeveria (Crassulacea)

Echeveria comprises one of the largest genera of North American succulent species, widely distributed throughout Mexico and Central America, with one species in Texas. They are freely branched plants, rapidly forming clusters of varying shaped rosettes of fleshy leaves with smooth margins and generally with small pronounced tips. The inflorescence have several bracts and bell-shaped flowers on stalks. The cover of the CSSA Journal, Vol. 66, No.3 is a beautiful photo including many echeverias taken inside Gerry Barad's coolhouse... and that's about all a month of scrounging turned up!



It would be wonderful to have articles about those cacti and succulents designated as plants of the month for the future. Plants of the month for the remainder of the year are:

September
October
November

Tephrocactus
Ariocarpus
Cephalium cactus

Lithops
Stapeliads
Kalanchoe

Submitted to the CSSA Journal, Vol. 66, No. 1, by Larry W. Mitich: Writing in *The Desert Magazine* in June 1938, Ruby Bowen related the Papago legend of the Desert Queen, better known as *Peniocereus greggii*, the night-blooming cereus of Arizona. Wrote she:

Long ago, says a Papago legend, there lived a wrinkled and bent, kindly old Papago grandmother who all her life had yearned to be beautiful. When it came time for her to set her burden basket down, Great Spirit heard her and granting her life-long wish, he touched her shriveled arms, so like dried sticks, and wherever he touched them, flower buds appeared. Once a year there after, the little brown Papago grandmother is permitted to reign for one magic night as the beautiful Flower Queen over all other desert blossoms.

On a warm June evening as that haunting perfume of the night-blooming cereus, which Indians call the "Ghost Smell," drifts across the desert sand, knowing Papagos will tell you that Great Spirit's promise has again reached fulfillment, and she who carried beauty unrequited in her heart those many years reigns again in floral loveliness.

Thus the desert Indians explain simply and beautifully that which has baffled botanists for many years, the presence of the indescribably lovely Desert Queen on our southwestern deserts, fragrantly blooming, inexplicably carrying on her traditions during one of the hottest, driest seasons of the year.

