



DESERT BREEZE

Newsletter of the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society

November 2010

Thursday, November 4, 2010 at 7:00 PM

“The Cacti of the Northern Mojave Desert and Adjacent Areas”

By Donald Barnett Native Plant Horticulturist at the Springs Preserve in Las Vegas, Nevada



Echinocereus canyonensis

Donald's parents both have Biology degrees and have always been his largest influence. At the age of 5 years old he was fascinated with Dinosaurs. Dinosaurs were extinct and his parents encouraged him into Herps (reptiles and amphibians) and the outdoors. He did a large amount of traveling to Americas' National Parks and looked closely at the true beauty of nature. Around the age of 8 years old the “idea” of xeriscaping began showing up in Colorado. His father convinced his mom to convert their non-sustainable lawn into a desert rock garden. He started out with a handful of native cactus including the red flowering strawberry cactus, *Echinocereus triglochidiatus* and eventually he had over 100 species of cactus and 25 species of agave. At 11 years old, he was more into cactus and succulents and began experimenting with growing yucca and agave from seed. Later he began growing many species of cactus including *Sclerocactus* and *Pediocactus* from seed. At 17, he began working for Wild Things Wholesale Nursery in Pueblo, CO. They specialized in growing natives including succulents of southeastern Colorado to northern New Mexico. At 19 he found a job in Las Vegas, Nevada at the new Las Vegas Springs Preserve (Springspreserve.org). He is currently a horticulturist with many duties, including managing the seed repository, herbarium and over see all the cactus and succulent propagation. Now at the age of 22 his main hobby besides plants is photography, the website, <http://donnie-barnett.artistwebsites.com> has a large



Opuntia x curvispina

amount of photos taken while hunting for the rare species of cactus within the area.

“Cacti of the Northern Mojave and Adjacent Areas” originally was a book idea and is in progress. At the moment it is a PowerPoint presentation and is a ‘complete’ overview of cactus in Nevada. Although, the main area covered is from the Vermillion Cliffs National Monument, Arizona to Death Valley National Park, California and from Joshua Tree National Park, California to the Great Basin National Park, Nevada. Many genera of cactus are found throughout, including the genera *Echinocactus*, *Echinomastus*, *Escobaria*, *Ferocactus*, *Opuntia*, *Pediocactus* and *Sclerocactus*. Each species will be pictured and described with great detail, including habitat, elevation and a few locations where the plants may be viewed. All the information on these plants has been acquired through reading and 3 years of field work.

I will go into the *Opuntia*s with great detail and explain the differences between each of the *Opuntia*s in Southern Nevada.

Sunday, December 5, 2010 from 12:00–3:00 PM
TCSS Holiday Party 12pm–3pm
Junior League of Southern Arizona

Free Plants—See page 5

President's Message

The holiday season is fast approaching which means it's time for Membership Renewal, Election of Officers and



Board Members and our Holiday Party. Information about all these activities will be mail to you in early November. Mark your calendars for the Holiday Party on December 5, 2010 starting this year at 3:00pm. This is a new time due to scheduling at the Junior League facility. All the details will be available in the November mailing. Don't forget you will need to RSVP since space is limited.

We are working on developing an optional online payment system for Membership and Donations and hope to have it available for your convenience (with security) in the next couple of weeks. We know this will make it easier for many members to make payments and keep good records. There will be no change in the dues structure except for student members. The Board will be asked to reduce regular dues from \$10 to 8 to make it a little more appealing to students and meet our needs for the online payment system. I would also encourage you to pay for a student who is interested in cacti and succulent plants to insure that our hobby will have a strong future.

The nominations committee has a slate of officers and board nominees that will be presented to the November meeting. At that time additional nominations from the floor will be accepted as long as the nominee is present or has given written permission to be nominated. The nominations will be closed and a ballot prepared and sent to every current member. The ballots need to be returned by December 1, 2010. The results will be presented at the Holiday Party. The concept plans for the Prickly Park (Opuntoid Garden) will also be presented at the November meeting. There are a lot of next steps. This is only the pre-beginning! There is a lot to consider on how this activity is managed and funded and we want your input. We will continue to solicit your advice on all matters concerning this special community educational activity. A questionnaire is being developed to help us get your input. It also will be in the November mailing.

Finally, sincere thanks to Maria Voris for preparing this newsletter in the absence of Karen Keller.

Thank you.

Dick Wiedhopf, President

Library Update

"Art of Cooking with Cactus: A Collection of Favorite Recipes from the Texas Prickly Pear Council"

With over 290 pages of recipes, this cookbook is just in time for the holidays. Contains Appetizers, Desserts, Main Dishes & more.

"Cactus & Co. XIII Vol. 3"

Agave ovatifolia, Echinocereus chaletii, Melocactus intortus, Yavia cryptocarpa are covered in this volume.

"Cactus & Co. XIII Vol. 4"

Pediocactus nigrispinus, Dioscoreae, Pteroduscus, Pelecyphora strobiliformis are covered in this volume.

"Cactus & Co. XIV Vol. 1"

Ulbelmannia pectinifera var. eriocactoides, Pediocactus, Astrophytum wonders Part 1: asterias, Australian Native Succulents are covered in this volume.

Joie Giunta

TCSS Fall Round-Table Discussions

November Round-Table Discussion:

The Collector's Discussion

Thursday, November 18, 2010 at 7:00PM

Junior League of Tucson, 2099 River Road

Many of us have a plant collection. Even if you have collected a large group of plants or a small group, this discussion will need your help. We really want to feature anyone who has started a plant collection or who may be interested in starting a collection. We invite all our collectors to come to this round-table and let all of us know what you have and how or why you started. This will be an excellent opportunity to have some fun, maybe bring in a plant to show and find out who and what is collected by some of our members. This will be an open discussion for everyone so please mark your November calendar and come talk about your plants!

If you have any questions about the Round-Table Discussions, please send an email to: cactusdude1@yahoo.com

Thanks, Vonn

**Meetings are held on the first
Thursday of each month.**



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

Growing in the Desert Series: *Agave zebra* and *Agave pelona*

By Mark Dimmitt

Photos by Mark Dimmitt unless noted



Figure 1 *Agave pelona* (left) and *A. zebra* in the Sierra del Viejo.



Figure 2 *Agave zebra* in habitat. Notice the strong banding and bud imprinting.

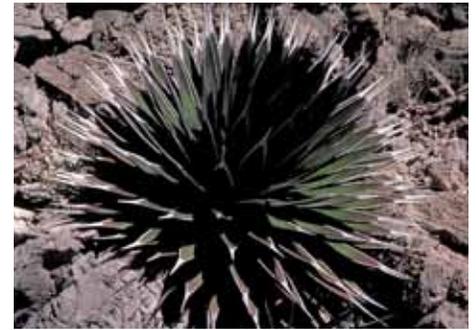


Figure 3 *Agave pelona* in habitat.

I'm treating these two very different but equally beautiful agaves in the same article because they grow together in the same habitat (**Figure 1**) and have the same culture. They are endemic to the Sierra del Viejo, a limestone mountain southwest of Caborca, Sonora. This range is in the Central Gulf Coast division of the Sonoran Desert. The climate is hot and very arid. All of these traits make these agaves well adapted to the climate and often caliche-laden soils of southern Arizona.

The similarities stop there. *Agave zebra* (**Figure 2**) is in the subgenus *Agave*, the one with paniculate inflorescences. *Agave pelona* (**Figure 3**) is in the subgenus *Littaea* and has spicate inflorescences. The former species forms offsets, while the latter is always a solitary rosette. The leaves of *A. zebra* are broad, gracefully recurved and channeled, and have beautiful gray banding and very toothy leaf margins that leave bud imprints on adjacent leaves. *Agave pelona* has many narrow, straight, toothless leaves; they're dark green with a smooth white margin.

Both species grow slowly, so they will grace your garden for many years before they flower and die. *Agave zebra* flowers are bat-pollinated and are a dull brownish white. Although the flowering rosette dies, offsets will keep the clone going. But the final act of *Agave pelona*'s solitary rosette is a spectacle. The spike shoots up to about 15 feet tall, densely packed with flowers of a strange brownish-red hue (**Figure 4**). My plants took 20 years from seed to mature, and that was with regular watering.

These agaves are only sporadically available, especially *A. pelona* because it can be propagated only from seed. Each one has look-alike species that can be substituted. Some clones of the variable *Agave colorata* (**Figure 5**) closely resemble *A. zebra*. It's a tropical species, but it tolerates our frost and nearly full desert sun. *Agave ocahui* var. *ocahui* (**Figure 6**) looks almost exactly like *A. pelona*. Most clones are non-offsetting; its inflorescence is a more ordinary yellow.



Figure 4 The striking inflorescence of *Agave pelona*.



Figure 5 *Agave colorata*, a particularly broad-leaved, strongly banded clone.



Figure 6 *Agave ocahui* var. *ocahui* in habitat near Magdalena, Sonora. Photo by T.R. Van Devender



Figure 7 *Agave zebra* (shown) and *A. pelona* typically grow on the high ridges of the Sierra del Viejo.

An Opportunity to Purchase some Great Plants

Large Silent Auction Cactus—Bid at November 4th Meeting

Pick up at holding area later, near Oracle Road and Magee Road

At our November 4th regular meeting we will be auctioning off ten large mature plants. Bids on the plants (pictured here) will taken on bid sheets (using your member number) up until the end of the meeting when a last call for bids will be given. The last bid (highest dollar amount) will be the winner, the plant needs to be paid for with cash, check, Visa, or MasterCard at the meeting. Plants that you win will need to be picked up at a holding location near Oracle Road and Magee by arrangement in the next couple of weeks.

Good luck! These are wonderful specimens that would be a great addition to your collection. Not pictured is a 5' *Pereskia grandifolia*.



C. Toothpick 44" high *Stetsonia coryne*



A. 16" diam. *Echinocactus platyacanthus*



B. 36" high x 48" wide *Yucca rigida*



D. 24" high x 36" wide *Agave mutiflora*



E. 80" tall *Oreocereus celsianus*



J. 60" high x 48" wide at the top
Hesperaloe funifera



K. 14" diam. *Ferocactus pottsii*



F. 43" high *Cleistocactus hyalacanthus*

G. Totem Pole 36"

H. Totem Pole 48"

Lophocereus schottii monstrosus

Free Plants

Ferocactus macrodiscus

Ferocactus macrodiscus is a small barrel cactus, reaching a full size of about 5-6 inches tall and 8-12 inches across. These are found naturally hiding out among the grasses in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. When traipsing about down there, one must keep the head down to avoid stepping on these hidden gems. This species is one of the most satisfying to grow as they will produce their pink, candy striped flowers when only about 3-4 inches across.

Keep the plants shaded; water them about once a week in the summer, and then once every two to three weeks from fall until spring.

Thelocactus hexaedrophorus

Thelocactus hexaedrophorus is a hardy, single stemmed, Chihuahuan Desert cactus that gets about 3-4 inches tall and up to 6-8 inches across. Beautiful, white or pink flowers will appear repeatedly throughout late spring and summer. These are found growing among small rocks on the slopes of limestone hills.

Grow these in full sun or very light shade; water about once a week in summer, and then once every two to three weeks in the winter.

Oct. 9, 2010 Desert Garden Tour!

Great gardens, great weather, great crowds and a great committee (see picture). 130 club members and guests toured 7 amazing yards and were treated to unusual, rare and beautiful cacti and succulents. The next Desert Garden Tour will be in April, 2011. Be on the lookout for more information. Your hard working committee consists of Ed Bartlett, Bill Salisbury, Nancy Reid, Patsy Frannea, Marija and Rim Tallat-Kelpsa.

Bill Salisbury



JTED Students Learn Cactus Grafting Techniques

Nicole Harrington, a TCSS member, left teaching at Catalina Magnet High School last year for a great opportunity with Pima County JTED, starting a Central Campus at their Tanque Verde location. They opened the campus this August with a new building and since have installed a 24 by 48 foot greenhouse with students building twelve raised vegetable garden beds. This is just the beginning of her work, they had a ribbon cutting ceremony on October 28th to showcase their new agriculture program!

Over one hundred of Nicole's students recently learned how to graft cactus and they loved the experience! Nicole was awarded a TCSS Educational grant last year and she has put it to good use. Mike Ellis and Miles Anderson contributed their expertise and Mike sold them cactus and other supplies. Another great example of TCSS Members helping make educational opportunities possible.

Joe Frannea
photos by Nicole



Nicole with student grafting cactus



JTED Students grafting cactus

TCSS BOARD

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Everyone is Welcome!

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

November Refreshments

**Those with family names beginning with
I, J, K, L, M, N, and O please bring your choice
of refreshments to the meeting. Your generous
sharing will be greatly appreciated and enjoyed!**



Cacti Rescued **249 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

November 2010

Thursday, November 4, 2010 7:00 pm

“Cacti of the Northern Mojave and Adjacent Areas”

Presented by Donald Barnett Jr.

Tuesday, November 9, 2010 7:00pm

Board meeting at the U of A College of Pharmacy

Thursday, November 19, 2010 7:00pm

TCSS Fall Round-Table Discussion

“The Collector’s Discussion”

FUNFEST 2010

The FUNFEST 2010 is coming 3,4 & 5 November and TCSS is going to be there for the third year—with your help! The Math, Science & Technology Funfest is an annual event held at the TCC where over 6000 4th thru’ 8th grade students get a chance to work hands on in small groups on projects involving math, science or technology. Over the last two years we have had over 1500 students come through our booth and build a model cactus. This year we are planning for 900 students. The kids work in groups of 8–10 with a TCSS leader for about 20 minutes learning the functional anatomy of a generic cactus and then building a model incorporating the functions of roots, stems, core, structure, skin, spines & flowers. It has been a big hit the last 2 years both with students and teachers. To make this work we need volunteers: to help assemble the model kits in October; and to work the booth in November. The October work party to assemble the kits will be 2 to 4 pm at the College of Pharmacy Drachman Hall, room 326. Just take the elevator to the 3rd floor.

The Funfest runs from 9:00am to 1:00pm each day (Wed, Thurs, Fri), so we will be setting up 2 hour shifts (9:00am–11:00am and 11:00am to 1:00pm) on each day and will need 6 volunteers to staff the booth on each shift.

If you are interested in participating, please send me an e-mail at funfest@tucsoncactus.org.

John Swarbrick