

# ◆ DESERT BREEZE ◆

TUCSON CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 1994

## TCSS HOLIDAY HAPPENING

SUNDAY, DEC. 11, PORTER HOUSE, TBG  
PROGRAM: POTLUCK SOCIAL  
SET UP AT 12:30; WE BEGIN SERVING AT 1

TCSS will provide turkey, rolls, drinks & cups.

Members & guests will need to bring a PLATE, UTENSILS, DISH TO SHARE, and a GIFT to exchange. A couple of notes -

- ★ on the GIFT: a plant, pot or related item, preferably wrapped ; worth at least \$3.
- ★ and the DISH: in true potluck style - bring what you like! Bring enough to feed yourself, your guests & 6 more.

To aid planning, we encourage you to R.S.V.P. by December 7 to Jeri (321-9484). Please feel welcome if you forget!

In January, the CSSA board is again meeting at the DoubleTree Hotel, sight of our convention!

Stay tuned for details!



COLORATA  
GEMINIFLORA  
HORRIDA  
MACROACANTHA  
PARRASANA  
PARRYI TRUNCATA  
PELONA  
POTATORUM  
SCHIDIGERA  
VICTORIA REGINAE

AGAVE  
TOP TEN

## AGAVE FIESTA with GARD ROPER

NEW MEMBER GARD ROPER journeyed from Scottsdale to give us a wonderful talk on Agaves. He and his traveling companion Jim Elliott (President of Central Arizona C&S Society), are paid through 1995 - are you?

Southeastern Arizona is an ideal climate for Agave cultivation. (In fact, Gard would like suggestions on locations of prime Agave habitat.) A 'monsoon plant', Agaves like a generous supply of soil moisture IN THE GROWING SEASON. They prefer a heavy soil - cactus potting soil drains too quickly.

Agave parryii is his favorite.

In Mexico, Agaves are used to control erosion. (If you've ever tried to transplant a large one, you understand why!)

Gard often referred to the years of Agave research by Dr. Howard Gentry, whose favorite was 'colorata'.

A genetic survival technique of Agaves in response to fire, transplanting, or being partially eaten is to form offsets, often prematurely.

Chopping the bloom stalk forces about 20 pups, but sacrifices important forage or habitat for birds, bats and bugs. The liquid stored there is truly an oasis for desert dwellers.

Agaves are covered with a reflective wax coating to deflect light. This works at night, too!

THANKS, GARD, for such a friendly, informative program!!



**TUCSON**  
a taste of the  
Sonoran Desert  
and more.....  
JUNE 19-23

SUCCULENTS OF INDIA  
WITH  
MEENA SINGH

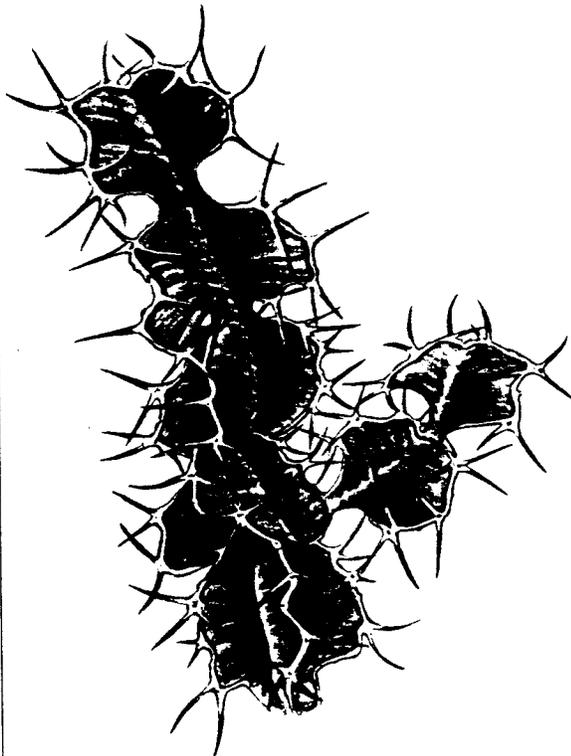
In October, Meena Singh showed many slides representative of several years in the field, working under a research grant from CSSA to study Euphorbias.

Besides featuring Euphorbia and Ceropegia (her 'next project'), slides of Caralluma, Adenia, and Scilla were shown. She reports there are many ferns, cycads, lantana and orchids growing there, also.

Author of Euphorbias of India, she is a regular contributor to the CSSA journal. (Editor's note: check out Mrs. Singh's article and the Agave parrasana on the cover of Volume 66.)

THANK YOU, MEENA, for sharing your incredible hands-on knowledge!

India has lots  
of Ceropegia....  
'my  
next project!'



NOVEMBER FREE PLANT  
ECHEVERIA BELLA

This ground-hugging, rosette-forming native of Mexico readily offsets, requiring filtered light and protection from cold.

RAFFLE PLANT: Agave macroacantha (6")  
DOOR PRIZE: (All Agaves) parryi pattoni dwarf, vershaffeltii cv-sheji rajjin, macroacantha (4"), medio alba picta & species.

MYRTLE ETHINGTON reports

a September bank balance of

\$5,351.84



## NEIGHBORS

by Les Sloan

To introduce this new column, we've selected a "neighbor" which is, to many folks, nearly as much a symbol of the Southwest as is the saguaro. That neighbor is the roadrunner, *geococcyx californianus*. Aside from the fact that they don't really go "beep-beep", there are many interesting facts about this neighbor you may not have known.

First of all, they are members of the cuckoo family, which is sparsely represented in the Western hemisphere. And most cuckoos are nothing like our roadrunners. First of all, as the name implies, roadrunners prefer to run, and don't fly much. And, unlike their kin, they aren't nest parasites, that is, roadrunners build their own nest rather than leave their eggs in another bird's nest.

Their diet is made up of assorted small reptiles, insects, rodents, cactus fruit and berries, nestling birds, and even hummingbirds - a habit which has earned them a number of human foes. And, yes, the stories are true - a roadrunner can even kill and eat a rattlesnake. The main dietary item, however, is the whip-tailed lizard. As you've likely noticed, even in the warm Southwest, lizards are pretty scarce in the winter months. And so, it seems, are roadrunners. In fact, no one is certain where they go in the winter. They don't seem to migrate. (Remember that part about "they don't fly much"? Well Central America's an awfully long walk, especially when your legs are only a few inches long.) They oc-

cupy their range from Texas and Oklahoma west to California year-round.

Some theorize that they become somewhat dormant during winter months, lowering their body temperature and metabolism. It is known that the roadrunner lowers its metabolism at night to conserve "fuel". When the sun first clears the horizon the next morning, the runner fluffs up its feathers and reveals an H-shaped patch of feathers and dark skin which it turns toward the sun, which then warms the bird for its morning activities. This saves about 50% of the energy it would otherwise need to get itself up to working temperature. But do they do that all winter? Studies are going on in the Coachella Valley in California to find out the runner's wintering habits.

The sexes are identical in appearance. About the only way to tell them apart is to see who does the courting or who lays the eggs. They'll readily nest in the spiniest cholla, not far off the ground. This past spring and summer they nested in a couple of our grapefruit trees - great for shade, but offering poor photo opportunities for us. About 4-6 eggs are laid, and the youngsters leave the nest a day or two apart as they reach fledging size. Then they start to wander, keeping mom and dad busy, tracking them with their little rattling contact calls, and feeding their insatiable appetites.

You may have wondered, What did they call it before there were roads? The old name was chaparral cock. But whatever you call it, it's one of our more interesting neighbors, and a great complement to the Sonoran desert.



*'...an awfully long walk, especially when your legs are only a few inches long.'*

### JERI'S GEMS

ADDRESS CHANGES...

KIM COLLINS  
5545 E. Lee 85712

HELEN KING  
1530 N. Bryant Ave. 85712

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

ROBBIN BAZA 888-2890  
4709 N. Laird Way 85705

GARD ROPER  
5843 E Waltann Lane  
Scottsdale, AZ 85254

JOHN STEVEN HOLMES &  
KIMBERLEY CURRIER  
638 N 1st Ave. 85719 624-8747

BETTY & ALAN BLACKBURN, both life members, are in poor health. Alan is on dialysis & Betty suffered a fractured pelvis in October. NORMA BECKMAN reports that they miss Tucson friends and wish they could attend meetings. We at TCSS are thinking healing thoughts & wish you both a speedy recovery! As you can see, I am now using your newsletter name suggestion - 'DESERT BREEZE' - THANKS! Cards of encouragement are welcome! Send to: 155 W. Brown Road, #144 Mesa 85201.

DAN BIRT, MYRTLE EHINGTON & RICHARD WIEDHOPF were judges at the Men's Garden Club Show November 12 & 13. NORMA BECKMAN won the Manz Memorial Award for the Best Horticultural Entry. As well as BEST IN SHOW!! CONGRATULATIONS, NORMA!!

THE CONVENTION IS COMING...

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THE CONVENTION IS COMING...

### 1995 ELECTION RESULTS

NEWLY ELECTED DIRECTORS to serve 1995-1997 are:

MILES ANDERSON  
682-7272

LINDA RYAN  
299-2338

SARA PERPER  
743-3162

TCSS OFFICERS for 1995 are the same good people:

PRESIDENT  
DICK WIEDHOPF  
885-6367

VICE PRESIDENT

TO BE FILLED

SECRETARY  
JERI OGDEN  
321-9494

TREASURER  
MYRTLE EHINGTON  
887-4507

NEW SPECIAL ASSISTANTS:

SARA PERPER  
HELEN HOUSMAN  
LES & DALE SLOAN

REFRESHMENT COORDINATORS

DEBRA SHEPHERD  
SALLY WILLIAMS

Our newsletter name DESERT BREEZE comes to us courtesy of BETTY & ALAN BLACKBURN!!

DUES...

DUES...

DUES...



'Twas THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS  
IN THE DESERT

- by -  
Charlotte Van Bebber

'Twas the night before Christmas  
in the the desert you know,  
Way out in the West  
Where the tall cactus grow

The Stockings were hung  
near the woodburning stove....  
Where fragrant mesquite embers  
shimmered and glowed....

Such magical shadows  
were cast on the wall...  
As Hank and Sally dozed  
to the crickets soft call

When all of a sudden  
there arose such a roar!  
they sprang from their bunks  
and ran to the door!

What is it? they wondered  
with eyes open wide...  
Is it a bobcat or a coyote  
with cactus in its' hide?

The oldtimers say  
there are ghosts in the mountains..  
Could it be old Geronimo  
out there whoopin' an' hollerin'?

"Let's go back inside",  
Said Sally with a shiver,  
It was then that they spotted  
the long-awaited figure!

He had come in a pick-up  
all laden with toys!  
And a list that he carried  
of good girls and boys!

He stood in the dry wash  
all covered with dust,  
wearing Levis and Boots  
and a look you could trust!

And there, right beside him,  
wonder of wonders.....  
stood eight out-of-breath,  
but hardy Roadrunners

He looked at them fondly  
and called them by name,  
that kindly old gent  
of Santa Claus fame.

Now Chula and Cholla,  
Dusty and streaker,  
Pepita and Rita,  
Chico and Treaker,

We've come many a mile  
through the star-spangled night,  
now my little companeros,  
you've been a real delight!

He set to work at once  
with a twinkle in his eye...  
And he whistled a tune  
as he strolled right on by...

He filled up the stockings  
with bright wonderous toys,  
with oranges and candy  
and other Christmas Joys!

And then just as quickly  
as he'd come out of the night,  
He jumped into his pick-up  
and drove out of sight!

They heard his voice echoing  
throughout the foothills...  
Merry Christmas my Amigos!  
and then the desert grew still..

