



*San Gabriel Valley
Cactus & Succulent Society*

COMMUNIQUE

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

July 2012 - Volume 45, Number 7

**JULY Meeting:
Thursday,
July 12 at 7:30 pm**

Meetings are held on the
2nd Thursday of the month
at **7:30 pm** in **AYRES HALL**,
Los Angeles County Arboretum,
Arcadia.

Mini-Show Plants:

CACTUS:

*Discocactus, Melocactus,
Uebelmannia*

SUCCULENT:

Gasteria

Study Group:

Study group will meet on Wednesday,
July 18th in the Palm Room,
Los Angeles County Arboretum at
7:30 pm. The topic will be:

Staging

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President's Message

The next six weeks or so will be very busy for our group. Of course we have 4 meetings (2 regular and 2 study groups) in that time span, but we also have our annual Picnic and the Intercity Show and Sale. I hope that you all have your show plants ready and are prepared to enjoy the events and meetings as they come around.

There is more on the Picnic, later in this newsletter, but remember the date and place, July 21st at Pitzer College, Claremont.

We all know how big the Inter-City Show is and Tom Glavich and the representatives from the other involved clubs are hard at work to make this the best one ever.

Tom Knapic, from San Diego will be our speaker for July. His talks are always extremely interesting and full of fascinating information. Don't miss it!

You may know by now, I announced it at the Study Group, that the Arboretum has announced a huge increase in our meeting cost for 2013. I have spoken with the Director, Richard Schulhof, and he assures me that he is actively working to get the proposed costs reduced.

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June Mini-Show Results

Gymnocalycium

Novice

1st	Tricia Kangrga	G. saglionis
2nd	Peter Claridge	G. horstii
3rd	Rebecca Mallonee	G. bruchii
3rd	Shaun Adams	G. erinaceum

Intermediate

1st	C & C Arakaki	G. pungens
2nd	Louise Stack	G. spgazzinii
2nd	Dick Tatnum	G. denudatum
3rd	Louise Stack	G. paediophyllum
3rd	Barbara Hall	G. vatteri

Open

1st	Pat Swain	G. pflanzii v. albopulpa
2d	John Matthews	G. obductum
3rd	Yvonne Hemenway	G. horstii ssp. buenekeri
3rd	Pat Swain	G. pflanzii v. tomina

Agave, Yucca, Nolina

Novice

1st	Tom Howard	A. gypsophila
2nd	Shaun Adams	Unidentified Agave
2nd	Tom Howard	A. parrasana "Fireball"
3rd	Shaun Adams	A. nova
3rd	Peter Claridge	A. cv. "Blue Glow"

Intermediate

1st	Rita Gerlach	A. applanata "Cream Spike"
2nd	Tom Vermilion	A. victoria reginae variegata
3rd	Tom Vermilion	A. "Cubic"
3rd	Tom Vermilion	A. attenuata "Ray of Light"

PLEASE NOTE: As your club secretary advances in age, her close up vision is not so great. Please help her out and WRITE NEATLY ON YOUR ENTRY TAGS! Thanks, Pat Swain.

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 - cont'd.

For example, we pay \$70 per night to meet in Ayres Hall. The new rate is \$325.00. This is just too much, and he knows it.

If you know of an alternate meeting/show facility in the San Gabriel Valley that could accommodate us, please let me know. We have begun discussions with at least one. There is no need to call an emergency Board of Directors meeting, yet. We will continue our plan to meet on Sunday of the Inter-City Show.

Please remember that the August meeting will be a little different than usual. We will meet outside in the Walk & Talk area of the Inter-City Show. The regular meeting vendors will not be there, but vendors who have set up for the Inter-City Sale will be and the cash register will be open until 7:30. 7:30 is a definite time for closing the sales area, but our members will have first pick of the plants and pottery that have been set up.

See you at the meeting!

Buck Hemenway

This Month's Program

"Geometrical Geophytes"

— A look at the amazing gems under our feet

Our speaker this month is Tom Knapic. Tom was born and raised in Northern New York State. He moved to California where he graduated from Humboldt State University with a degree in Biology and Zoology. While visiting a friend in 1982, he saw a small succulent collection that changed the direction of his life. Tom moved to San Diego and taught for the City school district and worked part time for David Grigsby.

Tom's interest in succulent plants has taken him to countries all around the world. He has photographed succulent collections in England, Italy, Czech Republic, Austria, Thailand, Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand. Tom has photographed succulents in habitat from Mexico, Peru, Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, Venezuela, and the U.S. He will talk to us about adaptive strategies, habitat characteristics, and growth design of succulents.

Plants Of The Month

Enter your specimen plants in our monthly mini-show. 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 —

Discocactus, *Melocactus*, *Uebelmannia*

Discocactus are tropical cactus endemic primarily to Brazil, eastern Bolivia (2 species), and northeastern Paraguay (1 specie). The name of the genus is derived from the Greek word “diskos”, meaning disc, which refers to the slightly-flattened spherical shape of these plant. Like many genera, these plants are threatened with extinction.

Discocactus as a genus was first published by L. Pfeiffer (German botanist) in 1837; with *D. insignis* being the first described species. However, early publications may have misidentified some *Discocactus* species as *Echinocactus* or *Melocactus*. Again, sketchy details reported on initially-collected specimens means that some species are insufficiently known.



Discocactus horstii
(photo by Daiv Freeman)

Discocactus, like *Melocactus* undergo a transformation from juvenile to adult plants. When young, the plants look like a cactus, and when mature, they develop a cephalium (a dense mass of areoles at the plant's apex). When young, *Discocactus* look like a relatively compact green cactus,

with smallish ribbed stems with fuzzy areoles or dense spines. When mature, a woolly cephalium (yellowish-white to greyish-white) appears. Roots are thin, heavily branched and can reach up to meters (in habitat).

Large white nocturnal flowers appear on the sides of the cephalium; the flowers are showy and highly-scented. (The white flowers distinguish them from *Melocactus*.) Fruits are pink or red.

Melocactus are tropical to semi-tropical cactus endemic to the Caribbean, western Mexico, Central

America, northern South America, Peru, and northeastern Brazil. These were among the first cacti collected and sent to Europe.

Carl Linnaeus (pre-eminent Swedish botanist) first described a *Melocactus* specie in 1753 in his *Species Plantarum*, naming it ‘Cactus melocactus’. The name means melon cactus (for its cephalium). The genus *Melocactus* was adopted by Link & Otto.

Melocactus undergo a “chrysalitic” transformation from juvenile to adult plants. When young, the plants are globose, with green stems with multiple ribs, stout spines, and a distinct central spine surrounded by radials. When mature, *Melocactus* develop a cephalium, a dense mass of areoles that form a bristly wholly “cap” on top of the stem. Once formed, only the cap continues to grow (up to three feet!).

Melocactus cephaliums often appear orange, though they are white underneath; however, some specimens may be virtually all white. *Melocactus* flowers and fruit resemble those of *Mammillaria* – small, pink flowers that ring the cephalium, with red to pink fruit tubes.



Melocactus ernestii
(photo by Buck Hemenway)

The genus *Uebelmannia* was named after Werner Uebelmann (Swiss importer), whose financial backing of some of the expeditions of Leopoldo Horst (Brazilian collector) and Albert Buining (Dutch botanist) resulted in the discovery of many new species of cacti. The name was proposed by Buining in 1967.

Uebelmannia are found in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. The genus contains only a few species, but there can be considerable variability within them.

Uebelmannia are solitary globes, and with age, cylindrical with numerous sharp or divided ribs. Areoles are grey-felted and can form a woolly cap on the apex. They are usually dark red-brown in color (though there are green specimens of *U. pectinifera*). Its flowers are appear at the apex and are yellow. The fruit is oblong to cylindrical and varies in color from red to yellowish-green.

Growing *Discocactus* and *Melocactus* requires a controlled environment (i.e., a greenhouse). (I doubt a cold-frame will work, unless it, too, is highly protected and has heat.) Getting seed to germinate is relatively easy; it's growing the plants afterward that is difficult. I have had no success growing them outdoors no matter how protected; others may have more success outdoor growing.

Also, the soil must always remain moist, year round (but not waterlogged). Given their tropical origins, humid heat is strongly advised in winter. A moisture-retaining soil mix is also recommended, but it must drain well. Habitats for all three genera include pure quartzite sand, quartzite or manganese rock (fist size or bigger), humus, or moss/lichen; specimens were located with Bromeliads or under low-growing shrubs and/or small trees.

I have had success growing *Uebelmannia* outdoors, but only in pots (my planted *Uebelmannia* all succumbed). Even then, potted plants require a protected environment (from overhead water); these plants quickly succumb when wet and cold.. My plants get no winter rain but do get fog/dew/ambient winter condensation. Other than that, they are watered as my other summer plants are. Even under these conditions, *Uebelmannia* die when there is a sustained frost.

The only other (oddish) advice is that *U. pectinifera* change color (go from red-brown or green to a strange grayish color) when plants are treated with an alcohol-based solution to rid them of pests; new growth comes in as red-brown or green, but the plants retain the odd grey where previously treated. So now I just use a water-jet spray. (The actual transformation is even odder – when wet – with water or the alcohol solution, the bodies of the plants appear not to have changed color. Only when the body of the plant dries does the grayish color emerge.)



Uebelmannia pectinifera
(photo by Daiv Freeman)

Anne Keegan, July 2012

Sources: The Genus *Discocactus* Pfeiffer, Buining;
The Cactus Handbook, Haustein;
Cacti and Succulents, Haage

SUCCULENT OF THE MONTH —

Gasteria

Gasteria is a genus of succulent plants endemic to South Africa, first described by French physician Henri Duval in 1809. [Apparently, naming the genus was his sole contribution to botany, but it was significant enough that Adrian Haworth (British botanist) accepted the name.] The name is derived from the Greek word “gaster”, meaning stomach, which the flower is said to resemble.



Gasteria glomerata flowers
(photo by Buck Hemenway)

In *Species Plantarum* (1753), Linnaeus (pre-eminent Swedish botanist) described the first *Gasteria* as *Aloe disticha* (it now known as *G. disticha*); this early publication also included three other *Gasteria* species.

Like many genera that were first collected 300+ years ago, and given *Gasteria*'s close relationship to the genera *Aloe* and *Haworthia*, many putative *Gasteria* species were published. More recent intensive study has reclassified many *Gasteria* species. Also, some new discoveries are yet to be published. Further, due to the sketchy reporting of early-collected specimens, many published species are insufficiently known.

Gasteria is a difficult genus to study, given the natural variability within species (including distinct juvenile and adult forms), and variability caused by habitat and growing conditions. Still, *Gasteria* can be distinguished from *Aloe* and other genera by its distinctive flower and leaf characteristics.



Gasteria nitida v. *armstrongii*
(photo by Tony Marino)

First, *Gasteria* flowers are tri-colored and pendulous, with a larger bulbous base (hence “gaster”) than *Aloe* flowers. Secondly, *Gasteria* leaves are green, brittle, mottled, and distinctly keeled when arranged spirally; also they are not tough or bitter tasting like *Aloe* leaves. Finally, *Gasteria* can be propagated from leaf pieces while *Aloe* cannot.

Gasteria plants – which can vary from less than an inch to several feet in diameter -- are stemless with thick green leaves that are usually arranged in pairs, but can spiral or form rosettes with age. [But don't be surprised if some specimens within a species exhibit varying growth patterns with age.]

Most species have shallow, spreading root system in the upper layers of humus and decaying leaf matter, making *Gasteria* easy to grow outdoors in southern California. Where winter freezes are a regular occurrence, a protected location or greenhouse is advised, as a sustained freeze will kill them.

A well-drained soil (including organic matter such as leaf mold) and afternoon shade work well for both potted and planted (i.e., in the ground) *Gasteria*. My *Gasteria* grow most in the winter, but show some growth year-round. I water spring through fall, and



Gasteria acinacifolia
(photo by Tony Marino)

they receive rainwater in winter. Except for the winter season, I allow my plants to dry out between waterings. However, I do provide extra humidity in the summer (spray misting)

in the early morning or late evening.

My potted *Gasteria* are much more protected from winter rains and dew/fog/condensation than my planted *Gasteria*, yet my potted *Gasterias* are more prone to “black spot” than my planted specimens. [About 20% of my potted *Gasteria* develop “black spot” -- and just when they become show worthy -- only once has this happened to a planted *Gasteria*.] Apparently humidity and condensation foster “black spot”; some recommend using a systemic fungicide. Having tried this approach, I remain somewhat sceptical, so I am transplanting my potted *Gasteria* into the ground. Your decisions should be based on your specific growing conditions and experience with your *Gasteria* plants. Otherwise *Gasteria* are generally pest free. The occasional scale (again seen only in my potted plants) is easily removed with a jet spray of water.

Gasteria can be grown from seed, offsets, or leaf cuttings (though the latter route is slower and not as productive for me). Beware that *Gasteria* readily hybridize when left unprotected outdoors in southern California – with other species in the genus and with *Aloe* and *Haworthia* species. So if you want true *Gasteria* species, purchase seeds from an accredited source or self-pollinate your plants.

Anne Keegan, July 2012

Sources: *Gasterias of South Africa*, van Jaarsveld, Cacti and Succulents, Haage; SGVCCS Communique article on *Gasteria*, Glavich, and, www.thegasteriapage.com

Book Review

By Phil Skonieczki

Guide to Succulent Plants of the World

Author: Fred Dortort

Publisher: Timber Press

344 pages w/two relief maps

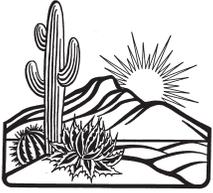
Price: \$49.95

This book was issued October, 2011, and is a comprehensive reference to 2000 non-cacti succulents. It is hard bound with silk sown binding so should hold up with heavy usage. Although it has more than 750 photographs, it is much more than a picture book.

The first two chapters deal with succulents in nature and cultivation then chapters 3 through 30 cover the families and genera and subgroups in depth.

The chapters are taxonomically sound and practical as the hobbyist, collector, and grower would view them. For example, the Crassulaceae get chapters 3 through 9 over 60 pages with the genera *Crassula*, *Adromischus*, *Kalanchoe*, *Echeveria* having their own, *Cotyledon* and *Tylecodon* covered together and *Sedums*, etc. split into separate chapters for old or new world. There is even a chapter on succulent bulbs.

The first section of each chapter deals with general characteristics, where they grow, taxonomic history and current placement. Then they are discussed in detail in logical subgroups or as species with the emphasis on horticultural requirements. As an example, Dortort talks about the almost indestructible nature of *Sansevierias* but says some are touchy



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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***.