

Espinas y Flores

MAMMILLARIA THORNERI

NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN DIEGO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

Affiliate of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America, Inc.

VOLUME XXXI NUMBER SEVEN, SATURDAY, JULY 13, 1996 @ 1:00PM

畫圖西遊譚

サボテンノ花
朝王樹花

花の色
カバ黄



同全圖



駿府町敷九土町有皆板屋作御城ハ生束の右に河
四面山繞々氣候不順夏月忽變々々冷ま々々
土俗曰富士山より冷際乃風と吹々々々
フキオロスユ

JULY SPEAKER: STEVE PLATH

RESTORATION OF A MOHAVE GOLD MINE

As Woody Minnich put it in his November '95 program *Cactus, Canyons & Coyotes*, "Steve has the ultimate killer job — the envy of any devout cactophile."

The Nevada mining company that Steve works for is concerned with making as little impact on the environment as possible. Steve is in charge of a crew that 'rescues' plants from mining areas, keeps these plants (*mostly xerophytes, of course*) alive and healthy while the mining takes place, and then restores them to the land after the mining is done. This special slide show presentation documents Steve's wonderful job working with the plants he loves!

You may already be familiar with Steve and his wife Denni (*a tall bubbly redhead with a distinctive contagious laugh!*), as they have actively participated in the InterCity Shows at the Los Angeles Arboretum for many years. Originally residents of Southern California, the Plaths now reside in Las Vegas. Steve & Denni attended the CSSA conventions in San Francisco '93 and Tucson '95, and should be an intricate part of the 1999 CSSA Convention in Las Vegas. He has served as a judge for many Southern California shows and judged cacti at our San Diego C&S Show in 1995. Steve is especially interested in *Echinocereus*, *Ariocarpus* & *Astrophytum*. He is also a talented artist and has contributed his work for use on T-shirts, posters, and trophies — especially for the InterCity Show. You are sure to enjoy and learn something, too, from this exceptional program. Join us! Saturday, July 13th @ 1:00 - Room 101, Casa Del Prado.

- ★ HOW ARE WE DOING? DID WE GET IT RIGHT?
- ★ IF THERE IS ANYTHING INCORRECT ON YOUR MAILING LABEL,
- ★ OR IF YOU HAVE CHANGED YOUR ADDRESS
- ★ PLEASE LET US KNOW!
- ★ MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION SHOULD APPEAR ON YOUR MAILING LABEL
- ★ PLEASE MAKE ANY RECTIFICATIONS BY CONTACTING:
- ★ ELIZABETH GLOVER @ (619) 264-6769
- ★ ★ ★ PLEASE NOTE: THE EDITORS, MAY NEVER SEE YOUR COMMENTS, OR CRITICISMS, UNLESS ADDRESSED DIRECTLY TO MICHAEL & JOYCE.

PLEASE SEND
LETTERS TO THE
EDITOR, PLANT OF
THE MONTH
ARTICLES, AND ANY
OTHER ARTICLES,
INQUIRIES,
CONTRIBUTIONS,
SUGGESTIONS,
PUZZLES, POEMS,
PHOTOS, ETC. TO:



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The Real Show Winners Are Real People!

A big, hearty **Thank you!** to all who helped with June Plant Sale. It never ceases to amaze me, that so much work can be accomplished within a very limited time. The dollars earned during this sale goes to support the many SDC&SS activities, programs, library, newsletter, etc., as well as, the many educational, botanical, and horticultural gifts that the SDC&SS contributes to the community. This society has many wonderful, hard-working and caring individuals — they make all that labor, sweat, and spines-in-the-wrong-places fun!!!

Betty Athy sent us a list of cashiers, helpers, label makers, security, table movers, plant counters, plant sitters, truck drivers, and the providers of cookies, chips, cold drinks, chocolate and even lunch (*Thank you! Alan Weiss*). Also — our utmost respect & appreciation to those knowledgeable individuals who are able to graciously answer "**that same stupid question**" one more time!

Betty made the list, then called with more names, and then sent an additional list! Still, we are sure to leave someone out — if it is you, or someone you know, please let us know! We'll get you next month, along with a long list of new members! Now, here go the

GREAT BIG THANK YOUS TO:

Ted Alford
Brent Athy
Lee & Pam Badger
Jullian Belding
Tom Birt
Michael & Joyce Buckner
Dorothy Byer
Amna Cornett
Nicki Delgado
Ed & Debe DeLollis
Carl Dykema
Chuck Everson
Phil Favel
Phyllis Flechsig
Joan Fleer
Sandy Frost
Floyd Gable

Avelina Gaerlan
Kelly & Sean Griffin
Kurt Hammel
Jim & Roberta Hanna
Judy Hanula
Marylyn Henderson
Susan Hopkins
Beverly Kirkegaard
Tom Knapik
Joe Kraatz
Ellen Low
Brent McCowen
Carl McLeod
Woody & Kathy Minnich
Ted Nelson
Rennie O'Connell
Emily Ormond

Diana Peterson
George Plaisted
Camille Rutkowski
Sara Schell
E.L. & Phyllis Sheldon
Diedra Smothers
Mary Sorrentino
Ethel Standish
Herb Stern
Paul Stewart
Tom Stiko
Alan Weiss
Jerry Williams
Carol Jean Wolcott
Carol & Joe Wujcik
Stan Yalof
. . . . and Super Cashier:
Michelle Heckathorn

*Now you might have noticed that there are a couple of very noticeable omissions!
Yes, the SDC&SS is lucky enough to have a few irreplaceable gems — truly fine
people with hearts of gold, impeccable work ethics, and as reliable as death & taxes!*

The San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society Hall of Fame

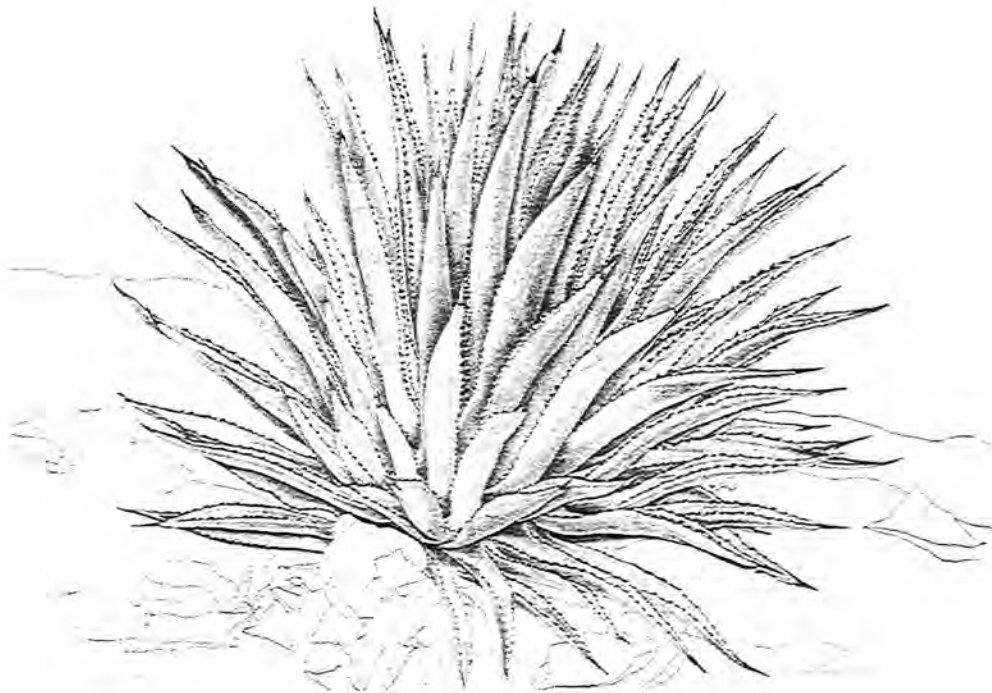
*Michael Cullen
Elizabeth & Wilbur Glover
Tom & Laura DeMerritt
Rudy Lime
Rick Plant
Joe & Kay Quijada
John Williams
Monty Woodworth*

Thank You!!!

OUR FRONT COVER: Borrowed from the CSSA Journal (U.S.), Volume 52, 1980.

"Another early work depicting the opuntia is a book in five volumes by Shiba Köhan, *Illustrated Diary of a Trip Westward (Gazu Seiyü)*, published by Bunkindö in Naniwa (Osaka), *Kansei 2 (1790)*. This work deals chiefly with local photography, natural resources and marine animals, but a couple of plants are pictured. One of these is the *saboten*, or prickly pear, which is pictured rather crudely next to a description of the town of Sunfu, west of Mount Fuji, perhaps implying the plant might be found there. The flower is shown in some detail and described as dark orange.

These two glimpses, however brief, record early impressions of the Japanese of a plant literally from another world. "It is neither fruit nor vegetable; it has no branches, no leaves . . . the skin is blue-green and glistens." No wonder they pictured it in their books of marvels."



Agave palmeri pencil drawing by Margaret Pope

4 ~~The Monthly Benefit Drawing~~

Our May drawing brought happiness to a number of lucky winners, and a few extra dollars to our Society's coffers! Hooray for us!! This member supported drawing is proving to be very popular and is helping defray some of the SDC&SS expenses. (Such as paper, printing & postage for *Espinas y Flores*, newly released botanical books for our library, or good speakers and quality educational programs.) Let's all support and nurture this worthwhile event.

Many, many thanks to all of the following generous members who donated these wonderful items: *Begonia partita* from Madeline Lee, *Adenium obesum* and THE POCKET ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CACTI by Edgar & Brian Lamb from Betty Athy, *Dyckia platyphylla* from Carol Jean Wolcott, *Begonia suffruticosa* from Phyllis Flechsig, *Aloe* species Hummel Hybrid from Bruce Edward, *Adenia fruticosa* from Brenda Post, *Fouquieria columnaris* from Alex Murphy, and *Begonia dregei* (aff.) *partita* & *Begonia dregei* (aff.) *natatensis* from Anna Cornett.

The May table was a terrific showcase of very desirable and unusual plants: Thanks to our generous donors, and to our special plant sleuth, Betty Athy. Please remember, if you have any wondrous to behold plants or other items you would like to contribute, please give our Plant Procurer, Betty Athy a call @ 469-7647.

FREE TO A GOOD HOME: Several large older varieties of **Night Blooming Cereus**. These lovely & fragrant old plants presently reside in the North Park area. Presently, the property is being renovated and prepared for sale - all the Cacti in back yard will be removed. If you would like to "save" one of these aromatic beauties, please leave a message for Linda @ 284-0121. Linda is the daughter of **Warda Steenson**, who was a SDC&SS member back in the 1960's.

SAGUARO SEEDLINGS NEED TO BE ADOPTED: We also received a call from Claire, requesting some assistance. Claire's mother recently passed away; she resided in the Rancho Bernardo area. Apparently Claire's mother took much pleasure from watching these baby Saguaro grow from seed. Claire really would like to give these infants to someone who is able to keep them alive. You may leave message @ 310-430-9737 or 619-485-7370.

We were very pleased to see **Bob Smoley** at our June Show & Sale — especially since he came all the way from Gibsonia, PA. Bob is an avid collector of variegates and crests and offers many unusual species for sale by mail. He also offers many very rare and unusual Kalanchoes, Sansevieria, Haworthias, etc. For Bob's current (1996-1997) catalog of Collectable Cacti & Succulents, send \$3.00 to Bob Smoley's GARDENWORLD, 4038 Watters Lane, Gisonia, PA 15044, or fax (412) 449-6219.

July 20 - 21 Begonia Festival at Weidner's Gardens — Several speakers, Big Begonia Q & A, Beneficial Insects corner, door prizes and the "famous tuberous Begonia Sorbet", cookies & punch. Weidner's is located @ 695 Normandy Rd, Encinitas; call 619-436-2194 for info.

July 20 - 21 San Diego Artistic Plant & Landscape Association 4th Annual Show, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park.

July 27 - 28 San Diego Orchid Society Mini-Show at Casa del Prado, Balboa Park; noon to 5pm on Saturday, 9am to 4pm on Sunday.

July 28 San Gabriel Valley Cactus & Succulent Society Picnic & Auction @ El Dorado East Regional Park, 7550 E. Spring Street, Long Beach [for park /camping information 310-570-1771]. Set up begins at about 10:15 am; **potluck picnic** - bring utensils & dish to share, club will supply non-alcoholic beverages & charcoal for BBQing; **games** — Joe Clements has promised to bring Opuntia pads for the "Famous Opuntia Toss"; **auction** - a great way to add to your collection or you may bring special specimen plants for auction. Please call Jim or Roberta Hanna @ (310) 920-3046 if you wish to participate in the auction, or have other questions. [The editors, Michael & Joyce @ 222-3216, have a copy of map, auction rules, and parking pass, which we can fax to you, if requested.

August 10 - 20 Janet Huckaby will be presenting four separate programs:

Aug 11 - "Traveling Through the Southwest" @ 1:30pm, South Coast CSS - South Coast Botanical Gardens, 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes Peninsula; (310) 832-2262.

Aug 12 - "Agaves and Their Place in History" @ 7:00pm, L.A. C&SS - Sepulveda Garden Center, 1663 Magnolia Blvd, Encino. Carpool - call: Brigitte Williams (818) 352-4531.

Aug 14 - CANCEL BOB SCHICK!! "Transplanting a Cactophile" @ 1:00pm, CCGA - Ikebana Room, Huntington Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Rd, San Marino; (818) 886-4891.

Aug 19 - "Dudleyas, the Treasure of the West Coast" @ 8:00pm, Sunset Succulent Society - Felicia Mahood Center, 11338 Santa Monica Blvd., L.A.; (310) 839-0330.

**REMEMBER THE SAN DIEGO PICNIC & PLANT AUCTION IS ON
SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 14th**

For more information please contact Tom or Laura DeMerritt (619) 270-5544.

WHY DO YOU LOVE CACTI and/or SUCCULENTS??

Carol & Karen will be decorating the walls of the L.A. Arboretum and they need your help!! Please jot down a few ideas, a prickly poem, a desert joke, a cactus cartoon, or an amusing incident. Please include your name and club and then give or send to:

Carol Wujcik, 10860 El Mar Avenue, Fountain Valley, CA 92708

or

Karen Ostler, 7038 Lasaine Avenue, West Van Nuys, CA 91406

August 17-18 The Eleventh Annual Southern California Inter-City Show & Sale @ the Los Angeles Arboretum on Baldwin Avenue in Arcadia. Sponsored by the Long Beach, Los Angeles, and San Gabriel Valley Cactus & Succulent Societies. **This is an open show;** setup begins on Wed 14th. This may be the largest cactus & succulent show in the world!! And don't miss the Saturday night banquet. For info: Larry Grammer (310) 599-1146, Kathy or Woody Minnich (805) 944-2784, Chris Rogers (818) 891-6998.

We received a terrific letter from Alfred Lau the other day - he writes of remote spots in Oaxaca, where he found new plants and of a red-flowering Euphorbia that he had previously mistaken for a Pedilanthus and an Hechtia, he had never seen before, on a climb to the Sierra Salamanca in Tamaulipas. He writes of Passifloras in the Amazon jungle, dwarf palms, tremendous thunderstorms, orchids, forest destruction, empty stomachs, sad huts destroyed by hail, and ripe fruits full of seed.

Alfred wishes to present as many appearances as possible during his Southern California tour. He has 14 programs, each with 200 slides; and there is the possibility that one of his university students will accompany him, which would enhance the program. Here are his open dates in Southern California: September 19-22, and 24,25,27. Please contact Mrs. Evon Ray, 321 Flood Road, Auburn, CA 95603, (916) 885-2777 for arrangements.

September 28 - Alfred Lau to Speak at the Palomar Cactus & Succulent Meeting. Begins 12:45pm at the Joslyn Senior Center, 724 N. Broadway, Escondido. Eleanor Hewitt has very graciously invited all SDC&SS Members to attend this very special program. If you are not a Palomar C&SS Member, please contact Eleanor @ (619) 753-3651, so she may plan for the larger audience.

Sadly, we note the passing ***Penny Bunker***. Penny served as the executive secretary of the San Diego Botanical Garden Foundation from 1972 through 1994; she was instrumental in organizing many of the floral exhibits, obtaining permits and typing the contracts that originally created the botanical garden headquarters at Casa del Prado in Balboa Park. She was an active member (*often a founding member, as well*) in all of these San Diego Botanical Societies: Fuschia, Geranium, Orchid, Epiphyllum, Iris, Rose, and the San Diego Floral Association and the Balboa Park Committee of 100. She wrote a column for the ***California Garden*** magazine called "Now is the Time". Over the years Penny assisted the SDC&SS on numerous occasions — everything from making the arrangements and reserving the space for our Casa del Prado meetings, show & sale, and Christmas party — to making sure we had enough tables & chairs, kitchen space, and lights, air-conditioning, etc. etc. Her stature in the San Diego floral community was recognized when then-Mayor Maureen O'Connor proclaimed June 9, 1992, "Penny Bunker Day". She was a close friend of Elizabeth & Wilbur Glover and long time friend and neighbor to the Latimers — Rick named an Epiphyllum in her honor. She will be missed by many.



Mammillaria thornberi

San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society

P.O. Box 33181, San Diego, California, 92163-3181

Presidents Message for July 1996

The Show and Sale was a great success this year! Volunteerism is what makes our society so great. Thanks are due to the following people: Elizabeth & Brent Athy, Lee & Pam Badger, Tom Birt, Michael & Joyce Buckner, Alex Cardenas-Murphy, Amna Cornett, Thalia Criscenzo, Michael Cullen, Beth Dargan, Ed & Debe DeLollis, Tom & Laura DeMerritt, Carl Dykema, Bruce & Joyce Edwards, Chuck Everson, Philip Favell, Phyllis Flechsig, Sandy Frost, Ken & Gloria Graham, Kelly Griffin, Michelle Heckathorn, Marylyn Henderson, Sally Holmes, Susan Hopkins, Dick & Lupe Hulett, Beverly Kirkegaard, Thomas Knapik, Joe Kraatz, Bernadette Kubacki, Perlso Lewis, Rudy Lime, Ellen Low, Elibet Marshall, Brent McCowen, Greg McNaughton, Woody & Kathy Minnich, Martin Mooney, Ric & Marilyn Newcomer, Renee O'Connell, George Plaisted, Rick Plant, Joe & Kay Quijada, Ruth Richardson, Hayes Robinson, Steve & Rowena Southwell, Ethel Standish, Herb & Ana Stern, Tom Stiko, Alan Weiss, Jerry Williams, John Williams, Carol Jean Wolcott, Monte Woodworth and Carol & Joe Wujcik. About 70 people helped with the show and sale this year!

The show had around 550 different entries this year, a little less than last year. The following people entered plants in the show: Ted & Marilyn Alford, Elizabeth Athy, Jim & Shirley Berry, Tom Birt, Michael & Joyce Buckner, Dorothy Byer, Alex Cardenas-Murphy, Amna Cornett, Ed & Debe DeLollis, Tom & Laura DeMerritt, Carl Dykema, Phyllis Flechsig, Sandy Frost, Ken & Gloria Graham, Kelly Griffin, Michelle Heckathorn, Marylyn Henderson, Mary Ellen Holman, Dick & Lupe Hulett, Virginia & Donald Innis, Kirk Juneau, Nellie Kennett, Beverly Kirkegaard, Thomas Knapik, Joe Kraatz, Rudy & Teresita Lime, Elibet Marshall, Martin Mooney, Theodore Nelson, Ric & Marilyn Newcomer, Vince Nguyen, Joan Nimick, Renee O'Connell, Don Patterson, Marie Pearce, Diana & Carl Peterson, George Plaisted, Joe & Kay Quijada, Ruth Richardson, Hayes Robinson, Vincent Scheidt, Sara Schell, Steve & Rowena Southwell, Herb & Ana Stern, Paul Steward, Robert Taylor, Cindy Wead, Alan Weiss, Jerry Williams, John Williams, Monte Woodworth and Carol & Joe Wujcik.

The awards went to the following people: Best Cactus - Renee O'Connell, Best Epiphytic Cactus Plant - Rowena Southwell, Best Mammillaria - Carol & Joe Wujcik, Best Opuntiaeae - Marylyn Henderson, Best Succulent - Martin Mooney, Best Agave - Dorothy Byer, Best Aloe - Joe Quijada, Best Echeveria - Marylyn Henderson, Best Euphorbia - Steve & Rowena Southwell, Best Mesembryanthemum - Dorothy Byer, Best Pelargonium or Sarcocaulon - Dorothy Byer, Best Sansevieria - Joe Quijada, Best Graft - Dick & Lupe Hulett, Best Mexican Plant in Show - Renee O'Connell, Best Plant From Seed Grown by the Exhibitor - Martin Mooney, Best San Diego County Succulent - Marylyn Henderson, Best Pachycaul or Caudiciform - Michael & Joyce Buckner, Best Succulent Bonsai - Rudy Lime, Best Educational Display - none this year, Best Exhibit - Rudy Lime, Most Artistic Display - Rudy Lime, High Points 50 or fewer entries - Marylyn Henderson and Sweepstakes Trophy - Marylyn Henderson. **Please bring in your plants to the July meeting, if at all possible.**

The society had about 20 vendors this year: Ted & Marilyn Alford, Elizabeth & Brent Athy; C & S from Elizabeth, Michael & Joyce Buckner, Edward & Debe DeLollis; The Chlorophyll Kid, Carl Dykema; Cactus Statements, Chuck Everson and Jerry Williams; Rainbow Gardens Bookshop and Nursery, Phil Favell, Phyllis Flechsig, Floyd Gable, Kenneth & Gloria Graham; Graham's Greenery, Marylyn Henderson, Richard & Lupe Hulett; Pet Plants, Joe Kraatz, Madelyn Lee; Grigsby Cactus Gardens, Rudy & Teresita Lime, Woody & Kathy Minnich; Cactus Data Plants, Don Patterson, Joe & Kay Quijada, Steve & Rowena Southwell; R.S.V.P. and Carol & Joe Wujcik.

Thanks for all of your help this year, sincerely,

Joey Betler

CACTUS OF THE MONTH: DISCOCACTUS

BY EDWARD NOLAN PH.D.

The genus *Discocactus* was first described in 1837 by Dr. L. Pfeiffer writing on the species *Discocactus insignis*. In 1964 Dr. Buxbaum published a survey of the genus that was very thorough, according to Buining. A. F. H. Buining revisited all of the published habitats in 1974 and produced the only available monograph on the *Discocactus*. This fine publication by Albert Buining, produced by the **SUCCULENTA** organization in Germany; (*no date given but post 1975, and currently out-of-print*), is the technical source of information for this article.

Discocactus are small, more-or-less flattened-globose plants endemic almost exclusively to Brazil. Their sizes range from golf ball size to nearly that of a soccer ball, (*remember, these plants are Brazilian*). They possess from 8-25 or more ribs, that often resolve almost completely into tubercles, and upon reaching maturity form a true top cephalium (*I always thought it was a pseudo-cephalium, but Buining classifies it as true*). Their spines are often strong to robust and the presence or absence of a central spine(s) appears to be one of the most important attributes used to classify the different species. The flowers are elongate, slender, funnel shaped, and hairless; the nectary is either open or closed, which is a second characteristic upon which species are separated. The flowers

are always an elegant version of white or cream with the more outer petals containing undertones of very subtle shades of green, or brown, or purplish hue, particularly in the mid line and tip of the petal. In general the flowers are all very similar between species and almost always fragrant. Buining describes 34 species in his monograph using, as mentioned, the traits of spine and nectary structure as key components with radial spine number and overall spine color as lesser characteristics. Not included in Buining's list is the diminutive recently discovered species named in his honor:

Discocactus buiningii.



Discocactus horstii

(dis-kō-käk'-tüs)

CACTUS OF THE MONTH: DISCOCACTUS

While many species of *Discocactus* such as *Discocactus horstii*, *Discocactus boomianus*, *Discocactus silicicola* etc. are obviously different, the specific characteristics which separate some of the other species seems tenuous at best. For example, differences in the color of the cephalium bristles of *Discocactus silicicola*, *Discocactus heptacanthus*, *Discocactus griseus* and *Discocactus catingicola*, appear to be the only decree for segregated species. This exemplifies one of the problems with the current methods of species designation. The *Discocactus* may be a worthy subject for DNA analysis, as a model for classifying how the differences in two plants need to be (*or need not to be*) considered the basis for defining a separate species.

The *Discocactus* superficially resembles some species of the genus *Gymnocalycium*; some also have flowers that are similarly shaped. This does not mean that these plants

are closely related, however, it might be a good place to start. The *Discocactus* does not appear to be closely related to any other genus — another aspect that adds to their mystery.

In cultivation the *Discocactus* do present some challenges — all related to that nasty three letter word . . . ROT. The problem lies somewhere in the fact that most discos have a very shallow whimpy root system composed of many small fine roots. If these roots ever fail, the ability to regenerate roots is not proficient. This may explain the observation that in habitat, these plants are found growing in very sandy soil and — often in pure sand! The recent presentation by Inga Hoffman demonstrated that most of her experiences with the Discos found them in very silica rich or gypsum rich material, devoid of much organic matter, and according to Inga, "not nearly as uncommon as Dr. Buining would have us believe".



Discocactus horstii Buin. & Bred.



Discocactus heptacanthus (Rodr.) B. & R.

This soil characteristic explains why Discos are one of the better subjects to graft. Once grafted, they don't significantly alter their typical growth characteristics, they flower more, and they offset extensively which provides more material to propagate. If a mature Disco does lose its roots or rots at the base, it is very difficult to reroot and should, instead, be grafted. Species such as *Discocactus horstii*, for example, are very difficult to grow on their own roots, however, in turn do very well on grafts.

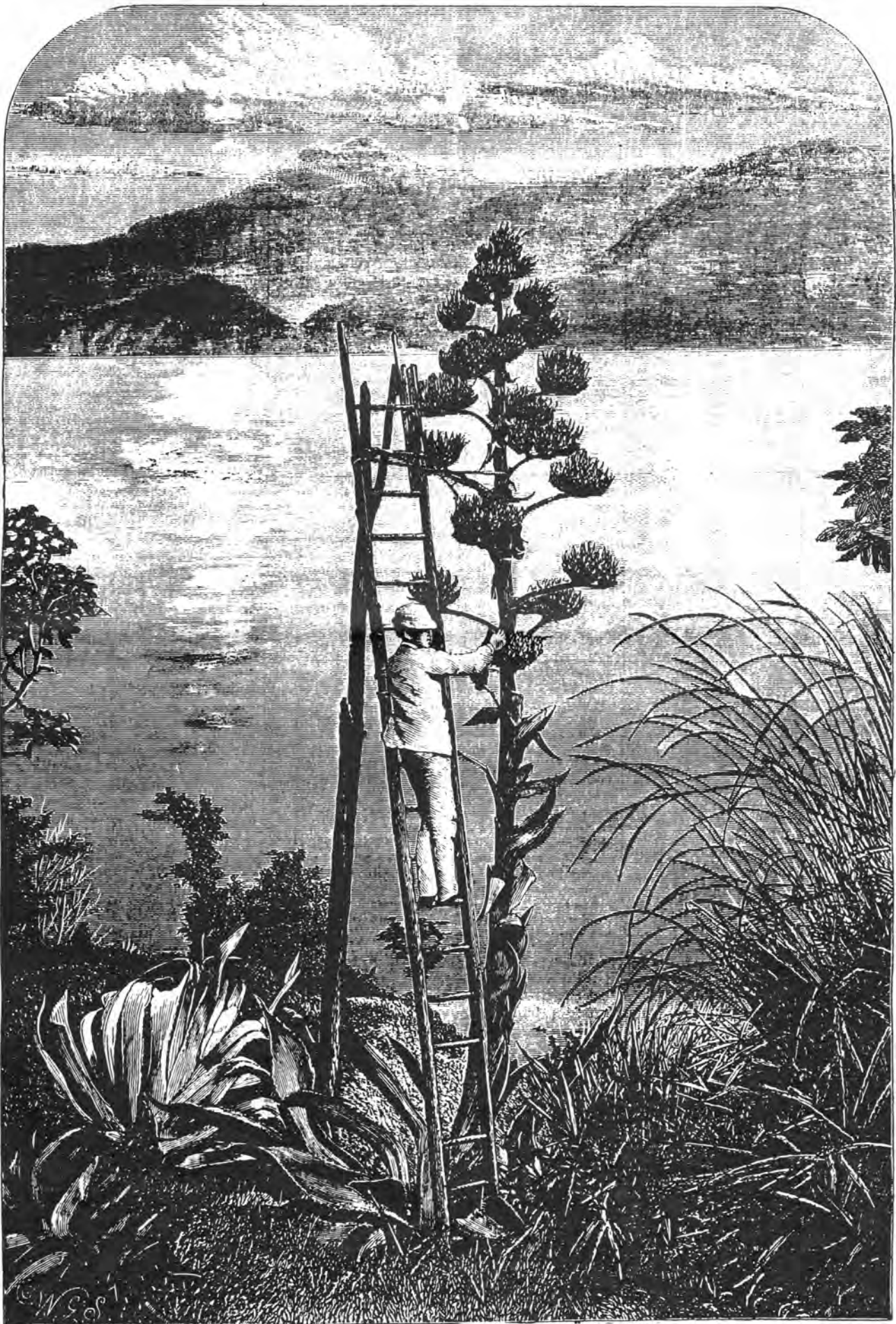
Discos need dry conditions in the winter, and also protection from cold temperatures. Likewise, in the growing season reasonable watering and feedings stimulate growth and more importantly root growth (*if not grafted*). Many of the Disco species are hard to find in the trade, but all are handsome plants and very worthy of growing.

One of the most remarkable attributes of the *Discocactus*, and a good reason for growing them, pertains to their flowers which are intrinsically beautiful and remarkably scented. The buds first emerge in the morning and have the interesting habit of often arising as clusters of many flowers. As the day progresses the buds elongate and shortly before sunset they begin to open, becoming fully open shortly after dark. My own interpretation of the reason behind the mass flowering is that since the flowers open at night, the pollinators (*bats? or moths?*) may easily miss one open flower, but the presentation of a dozen or more white flowers, combined with their scent, is a beacon which is not easy to miss. This idea is further supported by the fact that *Discocactus* are small low growing subjects that would be very

inconspicuous at night unless they possessed a flashy advertisement. I cherish the times when I walk out to my greenhouse at dusk to be greeted at a distance by the intoxicating scent of one of my Discos that has "exploded" into bloom. Upon finding the wanton culprit I usually bring it into my house, where one can find me frequently dipping my face into the exotic bouquet as it fills my chambers with its spicy scent. The flowers seem to actively "pump" their fragrance into the night air and I have often smelled a blooming plant from many yards away. Maybe *Discocactus* got their name from their ability to recreate the aroma of John Travolta's cologne on the set of "Saturday Night Fever"! With their beautiful, sweetly scented night blooming flowers, the *Discocactus* are true romantics of the cactus family.



Agaves in the Landscape



Agaves in the Landscape

A Succulent of the Month Tale by Ed DeLollis

The most shocking, diabolically conceived and ultimately forbidding *Agave* planting, I ever beheld occurred in 1981 — during my vacation in Hawaii. Incorporating a little business with pleasure, I was to contact several growers, on behalf of our nursery, to survey plants we might import to the mainland. A college friend, Red Murphy, the production manager for Rain Sun Nursery, one of the largest Palm and *Dracaena* exporters located on the Big Island, requested that I look him up. Speaking to a straw-hatted Mexican worker, I learned that Red was with a crew at a location. I was directed across town, driving through a maze of switchbacks on confusing lava backroads with few signs.

My destination, I realized, was the private estate of Boyce Dithsby, owner of Rain Sun Nursery; Dithsby had reneged on a job offer and now I represented a rival nursery — we shared a mutual dislike for each other. Across a rushing stream was the gate, but the drawbridge was up and surrounded by tall palms and Pandanus. Not seeing a doorbell I drove further — the stream disappeared — and then I saw the Agaves. Acting as a redoubt** along the embankment of lava that circled the estate, numerous Agaves, Yuccas, and other spiky succulents formed a dense fortress against would-be intruders and prevented both entry and view of the grounds within. I parked the car,

retrieved my knapsack, and decided to take a closer look on foot.

Huge *Agave americanas* and a white-striped variegated *Agave americana medio-picta* [form *alba*] grown closely together formed the first part of the barrier which followed the road a short way and then cut into the scrub brush at a 90° angle to the dryland area west of the mountains. I followed the black lava cart path noticing populations of spiny and stoloniferous* *Agave lechuguilla* and the two foot long horny edged swords of *Agave univitatta* [*Agave lophantha*] growing among the *Agave americanas*. Small gorgeous variegates of *Agave victoriae-reginae*, *Agave parviflora*, and *Agave toumeyana* now appeared.

I realized these thousands of Agaves were planted on mounds of native scoria and lava that were approximately eight feet high and created using a bulldozer. The Agaves appeared to be fifteen to twenty years old; many flowering spikes of numerous species and varieties emanated as far as you could see along this shocking border. Colonies of *Agave shawii* showed their golden scarlet-tinged inflorescence and broad horny borders of dark green leaves. Tall trunks of *Agave decipiens* displayed numerous toothed offsets; the robust broad-leaved gray rosettes of *Agave parryi* var. *huachucensis* wedged their way into the mix.

A Succulent of the Month Tale by Ed DeLol/vis

I wanted to climb to the top for a closer look inside, but didn't want to be ripped to shreds! I wished for a throng of unarmed *Agave inermis* and then came upon a vast section of *Agave attenuata*, which I could work my way through intending to get to the top of the ridge — only to find the ferocious large hooked teeth of *Agave horrida*. Endemic to the lava fields of Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico, the *Agave horrida* thrived in the Hawaiian lava mounds. Nearby the brown leaves and gray spiny margins of *Agave obscura*, native to the lava beds of Limon, La Joya, and Veracruz, Mexico, appeared.

Down the path I heard the sound of water as the stream made its exit from the estate through an iron picket fence. The green algae in the water caused me to reach into my knapsack for my trusty salinity meter — normally the streams of Hawaii have very low readings, usually close to zero. Outflow of the Agave lined property showed a reading of close to 400 parts per million; this lead me to believe that heavy fertilization was being utilized.

Intrigued, I continued down the path and heard voices — Mexican gardeners clad in white & wearing straw hats were attending an Agave field directly in front of me. Not wanting to be noticed, I ducked into the tree fern brush and crept closer to the activity. A large cluster of *Agave angustifolia marginata* had

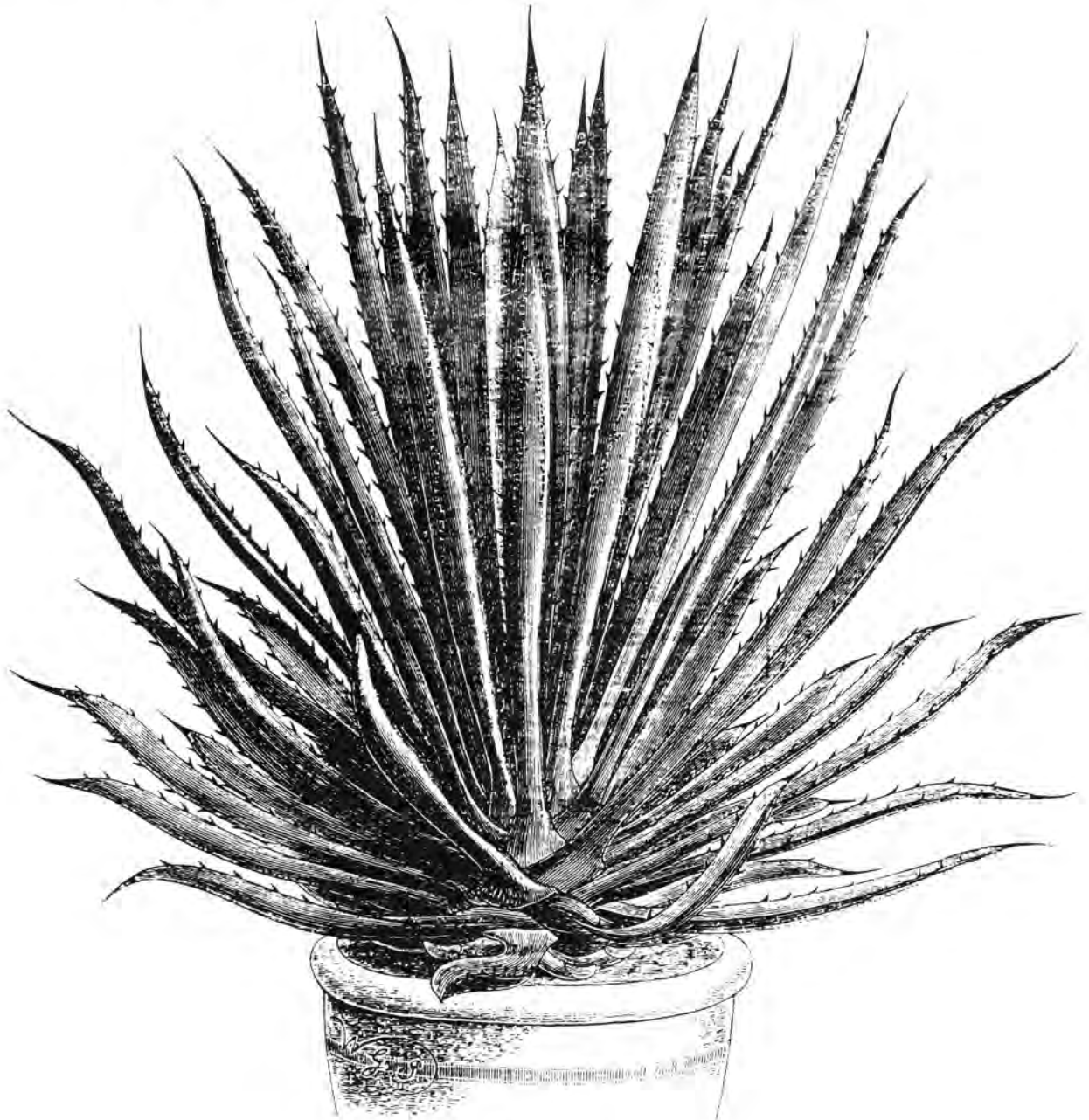
sent up flower spikes; several large plants had already died. Shards of desiccated leaves littered the ground like a bunch of burst balloons, creating an open path to the top of the lava ridge. The workers were replanting this area; Agaves were being brought up from an electric cart parked on the path. One gardener was high atop a ladder collecting bulbils from the spike of an *Agave tequilana* — suddenly the wind picked up to a stiff breeze. The worker fell. He landed on his back the dark green acuminate*** point of an *Agave ferox* [*Agave salmiana* var. *ferox*] pierced the side of his belly; a horrid red flow soaked his white shirt. This mobilized the crew, who under the direction of a heavily perspiring Red Murphy, extricated the poor fellow from his erstwhile petard and carried him to the cart. Red and his gang sped off.

Down the path. I was left alone at the front of the Agave fortress. I grasped the opportunity and made my way up through the opening created by the dead plants. I could see much of the ten acre estate from this vantage point at the top of the ridge. Dark green Fan Palm, much prized on the mainland for its interior durability, covered a great portion of the property apart from a residence on the far end. I noticed the specialized digging machines and realized they were plucking and potting up the palms, driving them across town where they could be grown briefly on benches in the nursery before shipping to the mainland. This was an unethical and illegal practice.

Boyce Dithsby, an accomplished succulent collector, had cultivated an awesome assemblage of Agaves to protect his cash crop. All at once I was looking down the double barrel of a twelve-gage shotgun; the tall aristocratic grinning Boyce Dithsby at the other end. Beads of sweat were glinting off his bald skull; he motioned with the gun to move back down the slope. Gripped with panic and thinking I would surely die, I kicked out with my right foot, pushing the gun upward. Both barrels went off severing the bulbil laden flower stock of an immense *Agave vilmoriniana*. The

heavy spike fell on top of Dithsby, pinning him to the ground. Not waiting to ask questions, I jumped to the bottom of the embankment and ran back to my car.

Several days later I was back in California, but in all the years since this frightening, yet botanically intriguing adventure, I have only told this story once. I shared my discovery at a meeting of the "Potbusters" Specimen Growers Plant Club — the members were not so much impressed by the Agaves, as they irked by Dithsby's ruthless cornering of the Fan Palm market.



I shall always remember the endless exquisite Agaves. A more noble planting, I have never seen in any botanical garden — public or private. I am sure it would have impressed even the renowned Agave aficionado, August Breitung. Better still, this garden should stand as a tribute to Howard Scott Gentry.

Agaves have historically played a very special roll in the indigenous civilizations of North America. "As man settled into communities, agave became fences marking territories, protecting crops, providing security, and ornamenting the home."**** I hope that people who read this will be inspired to use more Agaves to protect the things they hold dear.

POSTSCRIPT:

Debe and I traveled to Hawaii in 1986 for our honeymoon. One afternoon I drove past the Agaves, just to see that they were still there. Plants grown in Hawaiian soil often sanction fungus, viruses and/or nematodes which can have a detrimental, or even fatal, effect on many of the commercially grown plants in California nurseries. In the late '80's laws were relaxed — allowing the growth of palms in the ground, which greatly accelerates growth. These plants could then be spot treated with pesticides and shipped to the mainland. In 1996 the law again changed — it is now illegal to ship Hawaiian plants to California unless these plants are grown entirely on benches 30 inches above the ground.

*Editor's note: All names have been changed to protect the good, the bad, the ugly, the guilty, the innocent - and most important of all:
The San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society, Incorporated!*

- * **stoloniferous** — with prostrate stem at or just below ground surface, producing new plants from buds at its tips or nodes.
- ** **redoubt** — an isolated work forming a complete enclosure of any form, used to defend a prominent point.
- *** **acuminate** — tapered to a sharp keen point.

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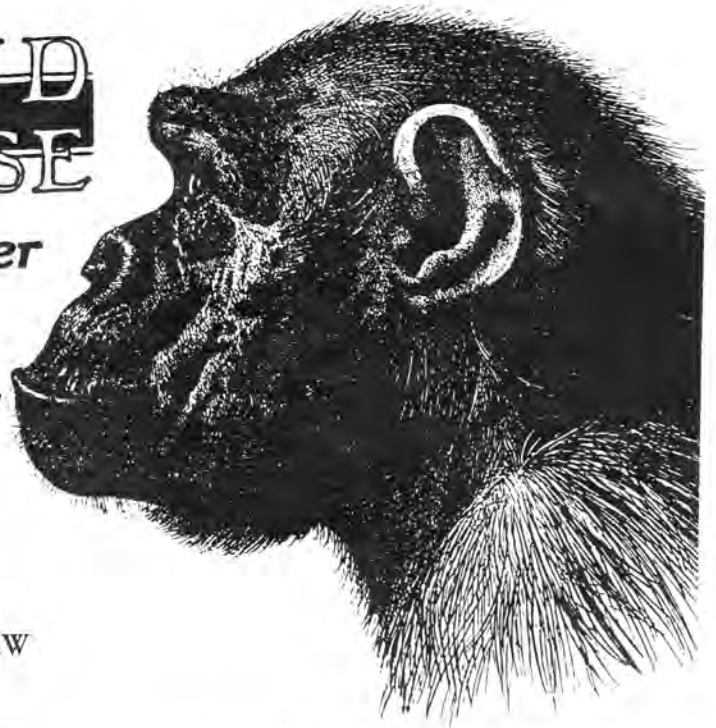
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WISE AND OTHERWISE

by Michael Buckner

*You see things;
and you say, "Why?"
But I dream things
that never were;
and say, "Why not?"*

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



This is how the people from Lagos are. There were five gardeners (*migrant farmworkers*) traveling together. They were hot; they were tired. They sat down in the shade of a huge Saguaro, and all of them stretched out their legs. They said, "What are we going to do? We won't be able to get up any more. We are no longer able to tell which of those feet belong to which. What are we to do? We'll just have to stay here."

Who! There they were, pretty hungry and thirsty there in the shadow of a grand Saguaro. Stagnant — ambivalent — perhaps, a bit dimwitted - they couldn't get up.

A young traveler (*photographer, naturalist*) passed by, and says, "What are you all doing there in the shade of that large cactus when the moon has come up?"

"Well, here we are. We can't get up."

"Why?"

"Because we don't know which feet belong to which."

"For goodness sake! What will you give me if I tell you?"

"Well, we'll give you something, as long as you tell us which of those feet belong to which."

So the young scout plucked a long Saguaro needle from the shade tree — and began to stick them with it. She stuck one of them — one foot, that is.

"Ouch!!"

"That's yours. Pull it in!"

He stuck another one of them.

"Ouch!"

"That's yours! That one. Pull it in."

And she stuck all of them the same way, until all five of them were standing on their own two feet.

Américo Paredes, editor & translator. 1970. *Folktales of Mexico*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London. This editor elaborated joke was "borrowed" from *The Drivers Who Lost Their Feet or Numbskulls Cannot Find Their Own Legs*, a *blason populaire* which was originally directed at the residents of the town of Lagos de Moreno, Jalisco.

"Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not."
THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY

WISE AND OTHERWISE



"We should be careful
to get out of an experience
only the wisdom
that is in it—
and stop there;
lest we be like the cat
that sits down
on a hot stove lid.
She will never sit down
on a hot stove lid again
—and that is well;
but also she will never sit
down on a cold one
any more."

MARK TWAIN

Although it was not called "monkeywrenching" [ed. note: until Edward Abbey's book *The Monkey Wrench Gang*] back then, ecological sabotage of the Earth First! type began at the height of American perception of an environmental crisis. A few zealots went beyond the law to dramatize their demands for responsible treatment of nature. In the early 1970s in Chicago area "The Fox" plugged factory smokestacks and, on one occasion, diverted liquid toxic waste from a U.S. Steel plant to a location inside the chief executive's private office. Once, over the telephone, he responded to an interviewer who asked if his tactics were illegal or immoral by observing, "No more so than if I stopped a man from beating a dog or strangling a woman." The "ecological Lone Ranger," as the press dubbed The Fox, successfully concealed his identity; he has never been unmasked.

Roderick Frazier Nash, *THE RIGHTS OF NATURE — A HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS*, 1989, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin.

Lithops vallis-mariae cv. 'Valley Girl' (HAMMER) — The point of cultivated interest here is not the body colour — the usual biscuit-like pale tan — but the pure white flowers. ZAPPA'S Valley Girl was like, totally white as well.

. Ruschias have always had one advantage: they have never been sacrificed on the wide altar of commerce, "shrubbies" being a rare taste amongst plant collectors. As proof of this: for years Mesa Garden offered *Ruschia salteri* (HAMMER & BRACK 898) without a single taker. Then I suggested that it should be advertised as "the *Ruschia* which no-one ever orders" and within six months the plants were sold out! Clearly I should switch to Madison Avenue — my description of *Dinteranthus pole-evansii* (N.E. Br) Schwantes as a "vegetable golf ball" was also effective — but meanwhile I've introduced people to some strange and interesting species. There are merits other than beauty, after all.

Steven Hammer, 1995. *Supplemento al numero 4 di Piante Grasse speciale 1995*, Oct-Dec 1995 - Volume 15 - AIAS (*Cactus & Succulent Society of Italy*), Rome.

Espinas y Flores

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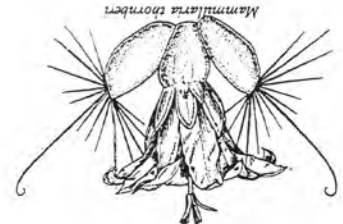
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