

ESPINAS Y FLORES



Program

Woody Minnich – **Two Months in Argentina** promises many new and unusual plants to see and hear about. As you know, Woody is one of the finest speakers on things botanical and he always fascinates with his outstanding photography and presentations. He said he would likely present a digital format program which will be a first for him at our club.

Plant of the Month

Confessions of an Uebelmanniac II, or what more could you want from a temperamental little plant like Uebelmannia? By, Mark Fryer

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN DIEGO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY INC.

AFFILIATED WITH THE CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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SATURDAY JANUARY 14, 1:00 PM

ROOM 104 CASA DEL PRADO, BALBOA PARK

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

12-20-2005

Season's Greetings!

What a great turnout we had for our annual Holiday Party a couple weeks ago! Not only was there a plethora of plants and no shortage of spirits and deserts, but a palatable sense of high spirits and enthusiasm for the year ahead!

Thanks and Kudos to Terry Parr, Lee Badger, and Ed DeLollis for providing such a wonderful assortment of gift and auction plants for all of us to enjoy and share with one another. It was really humbling to see so many rare and large specimens of so many succulents. I heard so many people saying they didn't want to bring so many plants home, but who could resist? Sometimes I think we are really, really spoiled compared to the rest of the country, in terms of the plants we just give away to one another, but hey, membership has it's priveledges!

How about that wine selection? Herb Stern did it again, rising above the title of "Cork-Dork" and supplying the lot of us with as fine a selection of wines as any professional vintner might desire. The food was, as always, in abundance and the service swift and friendly. We certainly went through the cranberry sauce this year, didn't we?

On a slightly sad note, many of us

were informed of a plan by SDG&E to run a new powerline project up the S-2 corridor; creating not only a potential eye-sore, but further desecrating the desert areas along this route for it's construction. More information can be found at:

<http://www.sdge.com/sunrisepowerlink/>

Some more information will be available at the next meeting.

The SDCSS is looking for a few good volunteers for this year's slate; we need volunteers for monthly plant talks, our winter show and sale, the summer show and sale, and are always open to hearing from any and/or all of you at any time! In this slightly longer than usual President's message, I'm including the Plants of the Month for the upcoming year (for the months appropriate), and hope that I will hear from some of you interested enough in some of these groups to take a stab at writing an overview of them, your experience about them, or why you'd like to have more experience with them:

January 2006 POM:
Cactus: Uebelmannia
Succulent: Conophytum

February Show and Sale

March 2006 POM:
Cactus: Large-flowering Mammillarias
Succulent: Medusoid Euphorbias
Don Hunt

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President's Message continued--

April 2006 POM:

Cactus: Gymnocalycium
Succulent: Yuccas, Nolinias, and
Beaucarnea

May 2006 POM:

Cactus: Echinopsis/Lobivia
Succulent: Adenium
June Show and Sale

July 2006 POM:

Cactus: Pilosocereus
Succulent: Caudiciform and Pachy-
caul Trees

August 2006 POM:

Cactus: Notocactus
(including/excluding Parodia? Au-
thor's call)
Succulent: Waking up the winter-
growing South African Bulbs

September 2006 Picnic

October 2006 POM:

Cactus: Matucana, Submatucana,
and Eomatucana
Succulent: Bullet-proof Aloes for
Southern California Gardens

November 2006 POM:

Cactus: Cryptic South Americans:
Blossfeldia, Yavia, Rimicactus, Neo-
chileana, etc.
Succulent: Succulents of the Canary
Islands

December 2006 Holiday Party!

We also need YOUR FEEDBACK
about when/where we want some
fieldtrips this year, so we can start
planning NOW, if we need to lease
busses for trips. It's YOUR club, don't
hesitate to USE IT!

Happy New Year,

Mark Fryer

Quail Botanical Gardens will be continuing it's Garden of Lights on the weekends, December 15-23, 26-30 from 5pm until 9pm, admission is \$6 non-members, \$4 members, seniors, and students, \$2 children 3-12

November Brag Plant Winners have to 'self-disclose' at the next regular meeting as the tally'er wasn't informed of the need to keep track of who won what- so that will have to wait for next month, sorry

The due date for submission of articles (Plants of the Month) & Information on the Program/ Speaker will be the meeting preceding the intended issue (approximately one month ahead of time). The due date for letters, regular columns "brag table" winners and the Presidents Message will be one week later. All submissions are to be made to the Editor.

Confessions of an Uebelmanniac II

Or what more could you want from
a temperamental little plant like Uebelmannia?

By, Mark Fryer

The genus Uebelmannia is as steeped in cultivation as any genus of cactus. It's name honors the nurseryman Werner Uebelmann from Wohlen, Switzerland, who financed many of the expeditions of Leopold Horst through the wilds of Brazil. A plethora of 37 specific names from the inception of the genus (since being reduced to 4 - amazing, isn't it?) stands as a great testament to the premium Uebelmann would pay Horst for every "new" taxon he could find and deliver from Brazil to the propagating bench at Wohlen, and to the contagion with which this new uebelmannia-cism disease spread among cactus nurserymen!

Some twenty years after it's original discovery in 1928, the first Uebelmannia plant to be formally described was named *Parodia gummifera* Bckbg, originally thought to be a new variety of *Parodia*. While Backeberg might have made the first stab at naming the genus, Buining was

the real worker in terms of naming the plants. These days, most consider the genus to include four distinct species, with a couple of additional varieties.

Part of the allure behind raising some of the HU numbered forms commonly offered of this genus from seed is the poor record-keeping that was done on them originally. Unfortunately most of these forms were never deposited in herbaria so no one really knows what they're supposed to represent, aside from what remains in various nurseries in Europe. I've raised a few that appear to be garden hybrids between various species, and some that appear to be miniature or spinier forms of otherwise cognizant species.



Uebelmannia gummifera v. meninensis

All the Uebelmannia species seem to enjoy a hot-tropical type of cultivation, making them borderline good subjects for indoor growing areas. As with most cacti of this type, traditional indoor environs which are so notoriously low in humidity, the plants should be kept on the dry side for a

week or two in between watering.

These plants have most obviously adapted to a very specialized habitat where when nutrients and water are available, they are available in abundance for a brief period, and rapidly disappear. I have heard from numerous people who have had the privilege of visiting these plants in habitat, that weather "episodes" are rare but do occasionally inundate the plants with an over-abundance of water, or cold temperatures, or more commonly, drought.

My experiences with these plants in cultivation would pretty much echo the concept that a very regular culture is beneficial. I've also noticed that despite many names on seed offerings, there seems to be four "good species" with a few additional forms and varieties that also come true from seed with little or no variation. Here's a brief overview of the genus from my perspective:

Uebelmannia pectinifera

A classic form- dark purple/brownish/blackish/reddish epidermis with neat, comb-like, black spination. Small yellow flowers in the late Fall through the Winter months, occasionally throwing a few flowers in the



Uebelmannia pectinifera

Spring. Plants seem to enjoy high humidity the year around, and will exude their waxy epidermal coating faster with an occasional spritz (less than 10% mixed with water) of ammonia or isopropyl alcohol.

Uebelmannia pectinifera v. pseudopectinifera

Same as above except the epidermis is typically greener, and the spines longer. Oh yeah, and the plants are entirely self-fertile, the only taxon in the genus that is! How'd the "experts" overlook this little fact!?!?

Uebelmannia pectinifera v. multico-stata

OK, just a form, but always always always distinct from regular old *U. pectinifera* by it's additional ribs and much longer spination, almost as long as it's *v. horrida*. This one seems to have a nasty habit of being almost self-sterile, taking it's fruit-bearing habit from *U. buiningii*!

Uebelmannia pectinifera v. horrida

Another "OK, it's just a form" form, but it's neat and noteworthy for being remarkably consistent in it's overt spininess and reluctance to flower in cultivation! A true collector's plant: no horticultural merit whatsoever!

Uebelmannia pectinifera v. flavispina

We used to just call this *U. flavispina*, because it's really distinct. It's also one of those plants that's much nicer on a graft than it is on it's own roots, not only in it's appearance, but in it's ability to stay healthy and grow, too! These can be very floriferous and a couple clones can make a bucket of fruits in no time.



Uebelmannia pectinifera v. flavispina

Uebelmannia pectinifera v. crebispina

Sort of *Uebelmannia pectinifera* meets *Uebelmannia meninensis*.. the shorter, fatter, fruit-shy and temperamental cousin of *U. pectinifera v. multicostata*!

Uebelmannia gummifera

... and speaking of no horticultural merit, enter the dog's dog of Uebelmannia. As difficult as they get. Maybe it has something to do with those mucilage ducts the plants begin to form as they approach maturity, I don't know. I love this plant, just for the pure challenge of trying to grow one on it's own roots! This plant truly resembles another rarity in cultivation, and it's old generic namesake: *Parodia gibbulasoides*. Considering my lack of success in making buckets of seed on this one, I just might start crossing them with pollen from *P. gibb.* or *P.gibb.*'s favorite partner in promiscuity: *Blossfeldia lilliputana*!

Uebelmannia gummifera v. meninensis

I personally do not understand why the

meninensis types were all shuffled under *gummifera*, when all of their parts are bigger. If things get smaller during their trek over the evolutionary landscape, it seems to me *U.gummifera* belongs below *meninensis*, but what do I know? Grown a little on the hard side, these critters will flower their fool-heads off from December through February.

Uebelmannia gummifera v. meninensis fma. rubra

OK, as a horticulturalist I like forms. This form is as choice as any out there, and grafting can really help maintain their redness. Used to be more available than it is nowadays, but perhaps that's a reflection of our changing marketplace more than collector's choices. Worth watching for, and definitely worth growing for it's form as much as it's flowers (which are considerably larger than the *pectinifera/gummifera/buiningii* forms!

Uebelmannia buiningii

Probably going extinct in the wild in front of our very eyes, this is the smallest member of the genus, and easily one of the most difficult to propagate artificially. Taxonomists don't seem to know where to put it, and horticulturists seem challenged to grow it. Probably the best thing I can say about growing this one compared to all the rest is that it at least scars uniformly, as opposed to the blotchy, liver-spotted version of the *pectinifera* types, or the complete melt-down/brown scar that *meninensis* types tend to get.

What more could you want in a temperamental little plant?

Mark Fryer
December, 2005

The Other Christmas Tree

re-printed from the Los Angeles Times

No offense to the rest of the country, but there's something so Eastern about Christmas, so Hallmark special, so Anne Heche on ice skates, dusted with snowflakes. To enjoy just how different Christmas is in California, witness the jade plant. Across most of the country, it is a houseplant, whose needs extend little beyond a sunny spot on a window ledge, the occasional drink of water and a light pass with a feather duster. Here in Southern California, it is a garden shrub, capable

of becoming a 6- to 15-foot-tall tree, our very own Christmas tree, which every December is crowned by a cloud of tiny white flowers.

Jade has been loaded with so many associations that another could scarcely hurt it. Of all the plants brought to Los Angeles from all over the world, few other imports have survived the waxing

and waning of our enthusiasms with quite the same stoicism. Jade is a *Blanche du Bois*: It depends on the kindness of strangers. It cannot reproduce without a curious gardener taking a cutting and planting it. One way it won't spread is by seed. So much of the jade in America came from cuttings from the same plant, that

even if bees visit the flowers and spread the pollen, it is highly unlikely that there will be any viable seed. Jade is not self-fertile. Currently, it

seems that jade's curiosity value is low. It's not uncommon to see great clumps of it tossed on parkways after a house is sold and a new owner decides to start over. "Californians are jaded about jade," remarks John Trager, curator of desert collections at the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens. Trager, himself a jade admirer, remarks on



the sculptural lines of the plant and the translucence of the leaves — its ability to capture and hold light, in essence to glow every dawn and dusk. It seems to suffer from nonspecific exoticism. The tendency of plant collectors to put jade in china pots and prune it into extreme forms has given it a reputation for being a bonsai plant. There are all kinds of wishful notions about it being a "money" plant (which it is for canny nursery owners). Trager says the strongest connotation in California seems to be with 1960s housing tracts and a Jetsons-era look. Jade would be the new hedge when we went to Ralphs in a space jet.

In fact, jade is from the Eastern Cape of South Africa, an area bordering land that has a climate nearly identical to that of Southern California. Long before the ecology of plants that adapted to arid summers was well understood, jade was plucked from South Africa and whisked off to Europe by tall-ship botanists. By the mid-18th century, the shrub "umxhalagube" had made it to Europe and been renamed according to the emerging Linnaean classification system of the day. The genus became *Crassula*, the species *ovata*, meaning "thick" and "egg-shaped," in both cases referring to the leaves.

As the American West opened up, bringing succulents to California was like bringing coal to Newcastle. We already had agaves and cactuses. The state needed citrus, stone fruit, alfalfa. In his book "Desert Gardens," hor-

ticulturist Gary Lyons found California nurserymen slowly working with American succulents from the early 19th century, particularly before water was funneled in from the Owens Valley. Then in the 1930s, he says, South African desert plants, including jade, euphorbias and aloes, began spicing up the succulent trade. The result: a long, if never dominant, tradition in California of landscaping with succulents, and the spangling up and down the state of otherworldly gardens, including the Desert Garden at the Huntington. Because of the vagaries of fashion, Lyons worries about the future of these, particularly the privately owned ones. There is so much more to the plants than style. Their sculpted fortitude has much to teach us about the workings of nature, he thinks. Standing in the Desert Garden at the Huntington, where he has worked as curator since 1965, he stares at a 5-foot jade plant in full flower and says, "The interesting question is: How did it get that way? What does it mean?" In the case of jade, it means that this South African import endured similar if not identical environmental pressures as our Western natives did: scorching summers and little summer water other than marine layers settling as dew. Unlike porous broad-leafed plants, many succulents protect against water loss by closing the pores in their leaves during the day. Only at night do they open the pores to take in carbon dioxide for photosynthesis. In extremely dry conditions, they will keep the pores shut at night too.

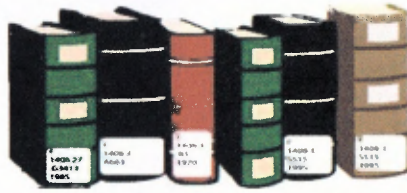
Something about South Africa created not just jade, but half of the 300 or so species that make up the *Crassula* genus. They look wild, like sea anemones, fungi, sponges — often blobby and beautiful. They are hard plants to kill, says Trager, though a freeze will turn them to mush, meaning jade is not for mountain gardens. Jade tolerates shade, but its color is best in the sun, he says. It brings out the red tinting around the edge of the leaf. Plants in shade may or may not flower, and depending on species and the temperature variations, the flowers may be white or pink.

It should be stated that jade is not as tough as our Western plants. It ain't an agave. On the Eastern Cape of South Africa, it enjoys some summer rain. However, gardeners who have dropped some aloes and jade into their California succulent garden will know that jade doesn't need nearly as much water as most irrigated gardens. Although all Los Angeles xeriscapes should be sprinkled at least once a month to wash smog and grit from the foliage, jade stands up very nicely most summers here without any irrigation. Those plump East Cape leaves might become a bit wrinkled, but one good winter rain and they will plump up again. Whatever we do, we shouldn't regard the plant's succulence as a sign of edibility, says Trager. "While they are juicy inside, they have a lot of mucilage, which is the slimy material — salts and things — which often are quite bitter." Smoothness, he warns, could



mean that it's poisonous, and as such didn't need thorns. In the U.S., it has no known browsers; in South Africa, tortoises are said to eat the leaves. In the Netherlands, jade is so prized that there are successful nurseries dedicated to propagating it, says Trager. Here, although it can be found in nurseries, occasionally at crazy Eastern prices, save your money. Unless it is one of the pink flowered or variegated varieties, it's best to take a pup from a neighbor's garden. No plant grows more easily from cuttings: Sprigs knocked off by a dog will root. Just tuck the stem in the earth, and let water, sun and time do the rest. In South Africa, jade flowers in late spring, early summer or the dead of winter. Here, it flowers in December. The plant that holds its breath by day and respire by night clearly has its physiological imperatives for blooming when the sun is lowest in the sky, and nights the longest. However, nothing about that dims the seasonal delight of the sudden appearance every December of jade's canopy of star-shaped white flowers. Let this be the first proposal that jade become

THE LIBRARY CORNER



Dear Friends,

Now that we're entering a new year, the time is fast approaching when the desert flowers will be in top bloom – usually from February through May. The best time to catch the blooms in Anza-Borrego is late March to early April. In preparation for this, some books in our library on the subject of deserts are:

Flowers of the Southwest Deserts by Natt N. Dodge;

100 Desert Wildflowers in Natural Color by Natt N. Dodge;

Sonoran Desert Spring by John Alcock;

Deserts – The Encroaching Wilderness by Tony Allan and Andrew Warren;

Cacti of the Southwest by W. Hubert Earle;

Desert in Bloom, The Southwestern Inventory by W. Hubert Earle;

Desert Southwest – The Sierra Club Guides to the National Parks;

Adventuring in the California Desert by Lynne Foster;

Cacti of Arizona by Benson;

Cactus, A Prickly Portrait of a Desert Eccentric by Linda Hinrichs and Nikolay Zurek; and

The Great Saguaro Book by Susan Hazen-Hammond.

These books could spark a desire in you to visit our deserts out here or in nearby states to check out the fantastic blooms during this time period. It is always wise to be prepared with knowledge about an area before visiting it. And always remember, never desert your dessert in the desert.

By the way, Happy New Year to You All!

Your lovely librarians, Jan and Phil Kent

UPCOMING EVENTS

2006

Feb 11th: San Diego CSS Winter Show and Sale, Room 101, Casa Del Prado, Balboa Park; sdcss.com

April 8 & 9th: South Coast CSS Show & Sale, at So. Coast BG, 26300 Crenshaw, PV; 310-832-2262

April 22 & 23rd: South Bay Epiphyllum Society Show & Sale; same addr; info call: 310-831-1209

May 6 & 7th: Sunset CSS Show & Sale, Veterans Mem. Ctr, 4117 Overland, Culver City 310-822-1783

May 21st: Huntington Plant Sale, 10-5pm, Huntington BG, 1151 Oxford Rd, San Marino; 626-405-2160

May 21st: Epiphyllum Society Show & Sale; Los Angeles County Arboretum; 310-831-1209

June 3 & 4th: San Diego CSS Summer Show & Sale; Room 101, Casa Del Prado, SD; 619-477-4779

June 10th: Gates CSS 29th Show & Sale; Sale: Sat, Sun 9-4; Show opens 1pm Sat. after judging; Jurupa Mountain Cultural Center; 7621 Granite Hill; Glen Avon: CA 909-360-8802

June 30: July 2nd: CSSA Annual Show & Sale – Huntington Gardens, Plant sale June 30, July 1st, 2nd; Show July 1st, 2nd; Huntington BG, 1151 Oxford Rd, San Marino; 626-405-2160 or 2277

June or July? LACSS Show & Sale at Sepulveda Garden Center, 16633 Magnolia Blvd, Encino, CA info: 818-363-3432; Set in lovely community garden, just off 101 freeway a couple exits west of 405. Will probably be combined with bromeliad society show.

Aug 19 & 20th: 21st Annual Intercity Show & Sale at the LA County Arboretum; Largest Cactus & Succulent show in world; Long Beach, LA CSS and SG CSS clubs work together on this show. Info 818-998-9306

Sept 2nd: Huntington Botanical Gardens Succulent Symposium, all day at HBG; These have been going on for years; There is a fee for this, they include tours of special areas, meal and plant auction. Renowned speakers from all over the world give talks.

Sept 24th: Long Beach CSS club annual auction at Dominguez Adobe, 18127 So. Alameda St, Compton, CA (Dominguez Hills)

Oct 14 & 15th: San Gabriel CSS Annual Show & Sale, at LA County Arboretum, exit Baldwin off 210, Arcadia, CA. And be sure to leave time to tour the grounds, it will have cooled down this time of year.

Espinas Y Flores

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Winter Show: TBA
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