



MAMMILLARIA THORNERI

# Espinas y Flores

NEWSLETTER of the SAN DIEGO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY, INC.

A Non-Profit Public Benefit California Corporation

VOLUME XXXII NUMBER ELEVEN, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1997 @ 1:00PM



Miss Kate Sessions (1857-1940) is known as the "Mother of Balboa Park" and a pioneer San Diego horticulturist. She was responsible for introducing many of the remarkable plants we now grow in San Diego. Miss Sessions was extremely interested in succulents, especially aloes, euphorbias, agaves, yuccas, and mesembryanthamums.

Soon Balboa Park will have a larger-than-life bronze statue of this remarkable woman who left an indelible mark on our fair city with her love of plants. More about her achievements in this issue: Wise & Otherwise.

November Program:  
**Rain in the Atacama?!**

The habitat photos of *Copiapoa* in the Italian publication *Piante Grasse* and Fred Katterman's work on *Eriosyce* convinced me Chile had the most interesting and beautiful assemblage of cacti anywhere. I had to go see them!

Dylan Hannon and I planned an August trip early this year and were excited to hear about a June rain in areas that receive little or no rain at all. The Atacama desert is one of the driest on earth. The rain brought out a bloom of flowers the likes of which had not been seen in 5 years or more. We witnessed a rare event but little did we realize the problems the rains brought to the area and the risks we were really taking.

Come join us for an adventure in the Atacama Nov 8, 1PM at Casa del Prado room 101. Tom Knapik

Our cover: Kate Olivia Sessions pictured with *Ceanothus*. Taken from *Southern California Gardens* by Victoria Padilla, University of CA Press, Los Angeles, 1961.

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Please send your letters, artwork, poetry, Cactus or Succulent-of-the-Month articles, puzzles, comments, or criticisms, etc. to:

MICHAEL & JOYCE BUCKNER, EDITORS  
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PUBLICATION DEADLINE IS THE 20th of the prior month.

*Espinasy Flores*, the newsletter of the San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society, Incorporated, P. O. Box 33181, San Diego, CA 92163-3181, is published monthly with the exception of a combined May-June issue (11 issues per year). Newsletter circulation is approximately 350 with about 300 issues going to members (one issue per household) and an additional 40-50 issues going to educational institutions, botanical societies, cactus & succulent nurseries, local publications, related natural history events & exhibits, and other interested groups or individuals upon request. Subscriptions (membership dues for an individual) are \$10 per year for bulk mail within the USA.

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Election of Board of Directors for 1998 - 1999 with occur at the November Meeting. Presently, nominees are (*in alphabetical order*): **Elizabeth Athy, Pamela Badger, Tom Birt, Michael Buckner, Ed DeLollis, Dan Hammonds, George Plaisted, and Stan Yalof.** That's eight members running for six positions, folks. Please make your choices wisely. Nominations can also be accepted from the floor at the November meeting. All nominees need to be aware that by accepting this nomination, they are making a two-year commitment. Any SDC&SS member who is interested in making a very worthwhile contribution to this organization by becoming a SDC&SS Board Member 1998-1999 should please contact: **Laura DeMerritt @ (619) 270-5544**, nomination committee chairwoman, or SDC&SS Secretary, **Beverly Kirkegaard @ (619) 670-1035.**

❁ **HAPPY BIRTHDAY SDC&SS LIFE MEMBER, ELIZABETH GLOVER!!** ❁

We understand that lucky, lucky **Kay Quijada** is traveling this month. She will tour Thailand, Nepal, and Tibet - Wow! We hope she has a wonderful time and will bring back some exotic plant information to share with us!

Thank You **John Rebman, Ph.D.** for a terrifically interesting and entertaining program. I know we all left the October meeting enriched with knowledge and laughter because of your program.

**Good News for the Anza-Borrego Land Acquisition!** At the October general meeting a motion was made by **Michael Buckner** and passed unanimously by the membership to increase the SDC&SS matching funds from \$500 to up to \$1,000. **Betty Athy has generously contributed \$500** and we have received pledges and checks from several others. Our treasurer, **Hervey Stern**, will provide a complete accounting for the December issue. Please dig down deep and contribute whatever you can — even \$5 or \$10 will help and means \$10 or \$20 more will go to this auspicious cause!

**November 6-9: Huntington Botanical Gardens Fall Plant Festival**, 1:00pm - 4:30pm, at 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino; free talks at 2:30; garden entrance fee: \$8.50; info: (626) 405-2141.

**November 8-9: San Diego Potters Guild Sale** - 9am to 4pm, Spanish Village, Balboa Park.

**November 10: Bill Baker — Lost Gardens of Xilitla - San Diego Horticultural Society meeting @ Del Mar Fairgrounds Satellite Wagering Facility**, 6:30pm; info: (760) 630-7307.

**November 19: San Diego Bromeliad Society Speaker - Lou Levinsohn, South African Naturalist** - 7:30pm in Room 104, Casa del Prado - Balboa Park. Visitors Welcome!!

**December 5-6: Christmas on the Prado Celebrates its 20th Year!!** If you have never attended a Christmas on the Prado event you are missing out on a tremendously good time! All the Museums are open free of charge from 5pm to 9pm. There is exotic food everywhere - from roasted Chestnuts to awesome Swedish Meatballs to Chicken Teriyaki; a Southwestern BBQ will be the fare at the SD Aerospace Museum. There is also music everywhere; roving Christmas Carolers; the SD Youth Symphony which will be featuring "Mozart, Mocha, & Mistletoe" in the Casa del Prado; and live entertainment at the Organ Pavilion along with portable stages set up throughout the park. All parking lots have adequate lighting and a free shuttle service. For more information, call 239-0512, or Kim Lande 232-3821, ext#244.

**December 13: SDC&SS Annual Holiday Banquet & Plant Exchange @ noon** - This year we are going to try something new: **POT LUCK DESSERTS!!** I sure hope **Virginia Buckner** will make us some of her wonderful peanut butter cookies! We will have our Holiday Gift Exchange — If you have not participated before, this is how it works: Any member, or guest of member, may participate; all you do is bring in a healthy, happy, desirable cactus or succulent. (*Occasionally, someone brings in a creative succulent related item - I am the proud owner of a Virginia Innes "No Water Ever Necessary Cloth Cactus" that I obtained at one of these exchanges many years ago.*) Gift should have a label that identifies plant and your name. The first plant to be selected will be auctioned off at the end of the meeting, and the person who brought in that plant gets first choice of all the gifts on the table. Whenever a plant is selected, the person who brought it gets the next choice. The more appealing the gift that you bring in is, the earlier you will get your chance at the many fine specimens our members have brought in. This is a terrific way to give, receive, and broaden your plant collection. So look through your collection, and start grooming that special December gift!

**Please use the Holiday Banquet Form on back of Membership Application for dinner reservations.**

**January 10: SDC&SS First Annual Mini-Winter Show with Steven Hammer @ 1:00pm.** - more info in this issue. Winter Show Co-Chairmen: **Ed DeLollis (760) 945-7892; Ed Nolan (619) 226-1413.**

# Presidents Message

The Oct. meeting was a busy one! Several issues were brought up, discussed, and voted upon by the members present. It has been decided that our Christmas Party on Dec. 13 will be catered, however, you are encouraged to bring a dessert to give the party a personal touch.

Another issue discussed was the land acquisition for Anza-Borrego. The SDCSS has voted to match up to **\$1000** of donations by the members. The dead line will be our regular Nov. 8 meeting and a check from our club will be presented at a Nov. 22 meeting at the Anza-Borrego visitors center. You are all encouraged to give what you can to assist the purchase of this scenic and environmentally sensitive area.

Our club is going through with plans to hold a 1 day winter show on Jan 10, 1998. **Steve Hammer** will be our guest to judge and show slides of his recent field work in South Africa. **Ed Nolan** and **Ed DeLollis** will co-chair the show that will feature winter growing succulents and blooming cacti. So, clean up those plants and get ready to show off your best, lets make this a success!

I want to thank **Joyce** and **Michael Buckner** for their article and presentation on ***Orostachys*** and **Marilyn Newcomer** for her work on ***Gymnocalycium***. The presentations add so much to our meetings. A special thanks to **Jon Rebman** who gave us an exciting look at the ongoing research in Baja. Two days after our meeting he departed on a 3 week expedition into 2 unexplored mountainous areas with a team of scientists from the Natural History museum and Mexico. We look forward to hearing about their new findings. Bring a friend to the next meeting Nov. 8, see you then. Tom

## The Monthly Benefit Drawing

October's Benefit Table sported a great variety of collectables, such as *Welwitschia mirables*, *Aloe suzannae*, *Rauhia peruviana*, *Agave leipoldtii II*, and *Copiapoa tenuissima* monstrose crest. Aside from gaining approximately \$100 for our coffers, we had an exciting drawing and many delighted winners. Many thanks to our donors:

**Betty Athy - *Adenium obesum*, *Carallum socotrana*, *Cyphostema juttae*, and a *Mammillaria* species and Joyce Buckner for the hand-built ceramic "Tex" Pot.**

We really appreciate the donations!! Please look around folks and see if you have a "Fall Harvest Specimen" that you would like to donate for our November Benefit Table. Please call **Betty Athy**, our "Plant Finder Extraordinaire", at **469-7647**, if you have a cool jewel to donate. Many thanks for all your support!

Thanks -

**Kay Quijada**

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### BRAG TABLE WINNERS FOR OCTOBER 1997: JUDGED BY PHYLLIS FLECHSIG

SUCCULENT:	FIRST PLACE:	<b>Joe Quijada's <i>Huernia zebrina</i></b>
	SECOND PLACE:	<b>Joe Quijada's <i>Faucaria tigrina</i> "Tiger's Jaw"</b>
	THIRD PLACE:	<b>Amna Cornett's <i>Conophytum pearsonii</i></b>
CACTUS:	FIRST PLACE:	<b>Kay Quijada's <i>Gymnocalycium torulosum</i> - full bloom!</b>
	SECOND PLACE:	<b>Joe Quijada's <i>Ariocarpus trigonus</i> - also in bloom!</b>
	THIRD PLACE:	<b>Michael Buckner's <i>Opuntia tesajo</i> bonsai - from Baja</b>

MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE SHARING OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE, GROWING SKILLS, AND PLANT MATERIAL BY SHOWING THEIR PLANTS ON THE BRAG TABLE. YOU, TOO, CAN BECOME INVOLVED!! SIMPLY GO TO YOUR PLANT COLLECTION, PICK OUT SOMETHING NICE WHICH YOU HAVE OWNED FOR AT LEAST SIX MONTHS - PELLARGONIUMS, DUDLEYAS, ARIOCARPUS, EPIPHYLLUMS, AND MANY MESEMBRYANTHEMUMS LOOK TERRIFIC AT THIS TIME OF YEAR. CLEAN THE PLANT & THE POT, AND LABEL IT WITH BOTH YOUR NAME AND THE PLANT'S NAME. NOW BRING IT IN!!! GOOD LUCK!

# ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FIRST ANNUAL WINTER SHOW OF THE SAN DIEGO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

As many of you already know, the SDC&SS is planning a show of winter growing succulent and bulb species. This show will take place on the Saturday of the regular meeting, January 10, 1998. It will be a one day affair, beginning tentatively at 9:00am and ending at 5:00pm, and will be held entirely in our usual meeting room, Room 101 - Casa del Prado, Balboa Park.

The goal and purpose of the show is to acknowledge a multitude of winter growing succulent plants. Now, at long last, many of us will have the opportunity to exhibit many fine species when they are in leaf and actually look more alive than dead. This is particularly true, but not limited to the South African species, such as: pelargoniums, sarcocaulons, tylecodons, cotyledons, etc. The only criteria for an entry plant is that it be a winter grower or a winter flowering plant. This show will also be open to winter growing and flowering African bulbs which otherwise get little or no attention.

Currently the show has been planned as a noncompetitive educational display with the emphasis being placed on presenting the plant, not winning ribbons. Because of the experimental nature of this show, we will not be "judging" the show as is normally done – that is with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Places. However, in the spirit of recognizing the best of the best there will be awarded seven rosettes to seven plants that are deemed "special" or stand out from the crowd.

With such a collection of specimens to evaluate, who else but **Steven Hammer** would be capable of handling such a task? It just so happens that Mr. Hammer, who many know has recently moved to Southern California, has agreed to participate in this event and will at some point during the show day be giving a slide program presentation. (*A detailed schedule of our entire day will be included in the January Espinas y Flores.*) So prepare yourself for one heck of a day!!

A show schedule is currently being put together and will be available as soon as it has been finished. It will probably resemble the June Show Schedule, but with an obvious major emphasis on the winter growing succulents. There will also be plants for sale from various growers, as yet we are not sure if the sales area will be indoors or outdoors. There has also been talk of a plant auction, education exhibits and side talks, and other fun events. So, let's go all you succulent bonsaied shrub growers! Now is the time to show off that wonderful pelargonium that is always without leaf or bloom or any sign of life in June. Show those winter growers in their full glory.

If this is not enough of a temptation – we are also resorting to blatant bribery to help pull in the complacent!! For every five (5) plants that are shown, that person will receive a free Monthly Benefit Drawing ticket to be used at any of the 1998 monthly meetings. So the club is looking forward to **BIG PARTICIPATION**. Just think, if every local member brought in just a few plants, we could have a huge show! Let's do it!!

Questions? Suggestions? Contributions? Please contact Winter Show Co-Chairpersons: Ed DeLollis (760) 945-7892 or Ed Nolan (619) 226-1413.

# CACTUS OF THE MONTH: THE GENUS *PELECYPHORA*

by Greg Wade

*Pelecyphora* as a genus is diminutive, not only in plant size but also in number of species. In this article I will explore the wanderings of the various plants that have (at one time or another) claimed the name *Pelecyphora*.

First, let's have a few definitions and directions. *Pelecyphora* was first described in 1843 by Ehrenberg. The name comes from the Greek words *pelekys* which means hatchet or axe, and *phoros* which means bearing, or *phoreo* which is I carry. Further studies by Marshall (1941), Buxbaum (1974), and Backeberg (1966) all confirm *Pelecyphora* as a valid genus. It is further classified as a member of the Family *Cactaceae*, Sub-Family *Cactoideae*, Tribe *Cacteae*, and Sub-Tribe *Cactinae*. Not all reference agree with the later, one source places it in the Sub-Tribe *Echinocactinae*, however, I am going with the majority opinion.

The general physical appearance of this genus would best be described as having a greyish-green stem that is spherical when young, often becoming cylindrical / columnar / club-shaped when mature. Plants are quite small, growing no taller than four inches with a diameter of no more than two

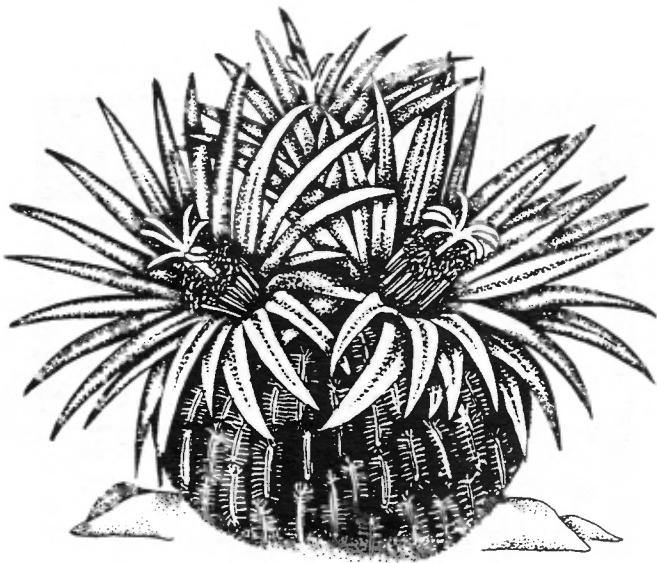
inches. (I have seen plants that are that mature and large only once.) Tubercles protrude about ¼ inch, are arranged roughly in a spiral, are flat on the side, and resemble an axe head when viewed from the top—hence the name. The areoles are narrow and elliptical. Plants are woolly when young and bear many minute pectinate spines. Flowers are about one inch across and come from the apex of the stem. Plants from this genera will be very slow growing and may clump or offset as it gets older.

Next, let's trace all the species that have belonged to *Pelecyphora*. *Turbinicarpus pseudopectinatus* is a former member. It was placed in its present genus by Glass and Foster. Before that, it also wandered through *Normanbokea* and *Strombocactus*, changing names almost as often as Liz Taylor. Judging by its size, shape, spination, and the flower size, shape and point of origin, this species seems a likely candidate for *Pelecyphora*. Some of the differences I have noticed are the flower petal shape which is more similar to *Turbinicarpus*, flowers occur in the winter, and it is solitary, never clumping or branching. There are undoubtedly other variations that I have not yet discovered.



The next plant to consider is *Turbinicarpus valdezianus*—like the *T. pseudopectinatus* it has also been assigned to *Normanbokea*, *Pelecyphora*, and *Strombocactus* as various times in the past. Glass & Foster also placed this one in the genus *Turbinicarpus*. Most commercial growers list this plant as *Turbinicarpus*, but some consider it an *Encephalocarpus*. The only source to place it the that genus is Cactus by J. Borg. The characteristics that placed this species in the genus *Turbinicarpus* are probably the same as *T. pectinatus*.

*Encephalocarpus strobiliformis*, believe it or not, is still considered by some to be a *Pelecyphora*. It has also, in the distant past, thought to have been an *Ariocarpus* (J. Borg). I would like to point out that Borg gets this one right when he places it in its present genus. It does not resemble any of the other present or former members of *Pelecyphora*, although it does clump and the flowers which come in summer are of similar size and general appearance. The tubercles of *Encephalocarpus strobiliformis*, on close inspection, are more reminiscent of *Ariocarpus* or *Obregonia*. I am not sure how this plant ever got into *Pelecyphora*.



*Pelecyphora pseudopectinata*

Finally, we come to the plant that has always been and continues to be in the genus! *Pelecyphora asseliformis* is what must be viewed as the type. It has all the previously listed characteristics given in my physical description. It comes from San Luis Potosi and possible Nuevo Leon, Mexico. The flowers are purple-pink and appear in late spring or early summer. It has a most unusual appearance. Those of us who grow them consider them quite beautiful. To quote Simon & Schuster: "This species is a rarity that every grower would like to have." Several sources pointed to the fact that in Mexico, this plant and *Lophophora williamsii* share the Aztec name "*peyotl*". Quoting again Simon & Schuster, "Since it is considered sacred, it probably contains some hallucinogenic alkaloid." My best thinking on this possibility is that if you (*the reader*) decide to try this out, good luck and I hope you do not suffer any severe or long lasting side effects. There is no telling how strong or poisonous it could turn out to be. I do not plan to test it myself!

Cultivation of these plants is not overly difficult. They want to be kept warm and if exposed to weather that is even cool (*under 45°F*), make sure they are kept dry. I find that they do not like direct all day sun, and instead partial shade or being under a shade cloth. Do not over-fertilize as it will distort growth. Remember, these are very slow growers. When it is hot, I water once a week. Other times I go by "feel", sometimes resorting to just misting if I am not sure about the weather. I use a soil mix that is proportioned for good drainage. Be especially careful with seedlings and young plants. Overall, *Pelecyphora* are pretty sturdy if treated properly right and flower when they are surprisingly small.



Cactus of the Month: *Pelecyphora* by Greg Wade continued . . .

I guess that at this point we will have to conclude that this genus is monotypic—at least for now. If you are looking for these plants through grower's catalogs or at nurseries, be aware that the only one always listed as *Pelecyphora* will be *Pelecyphora asseliformis*. The other three plants could be referenced under *Turbinicarpus*, *Encephalocarpus*, or *Pelecyphora* depending on the nursery. This took me a while to figure out, and I hope it saves you some time and trouble.

I do not know if many of you grow any of these plants, but if you do and could bring them to the meeting, I am certain everyone would like to see them. Please bring any of the plants that I have mentioned, if you can!

References:

- CACTI FOR THE CONNOISSEUR by John Pilbeam, 1987.
- THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CACTI by Cullmann, Götz, & Gröner, 1986.
- THE ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SUCCULENTS by Gordon Rowley, 1978.
- GUIDE TO CACTI AND SUCCULENTS, Simon & Schuster, 1985.
- THE CACTUS HANDBOOK by Erik Hausteijn.
- Cacti by J. Borg, 1937.

**I've learned that you should keep your cactus dry when the weather turns cold.**

*Please send us your "I've learned that . . . 's " for our December issue!*



**TRICK OR TREAT?**

**PLEASE BRING IN GOODIES FOR THE REFRESHMENT TABLE!!!**



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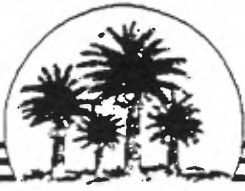
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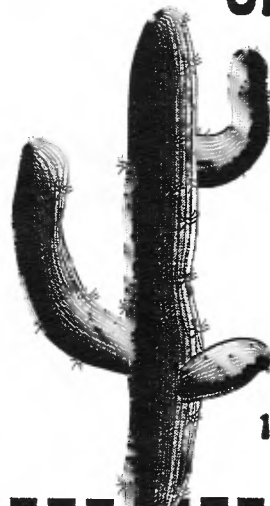
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**PROGRAM FOR DECEMBER 13, 1997  
HOLIDAY BANQUET  
POT LUCK DESSERTS  
DINNER PROMPTLY @ 1:00 PM  
SPECIAL PLANT EXCHANGE  
DISTRIBUTION OF GIFT PLANTS TO MEMBERS  
NO LIBRARY AND NO PLANT SALES**

**HOLIDAY BUFFET MENU:**

**ROAST TURKEY WITH SAGE DRESSING  
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MEMBER NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE RESERVE HOLIDAY DINNER FOR GUESTS @ \$10.00  
( SORRY, NO GIFT PLANT FOR NON-MEMBERS).

GUEST NAME (S) \_\_\_\_\_

The SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13TH MEETING BEGINS AT 12:00 NOON -  
HOLIDAY DINNER TO BE SERVED AT 1:00 - PLANT EXCHANGE DURING  
DINNER, GIFTS PLANTS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED DURING DESSERT.

# SAN DIEGO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society is a nonprofit, hobby organization created to stimulate interest in succulent plants. This society brings together people with a common interest for the purpose of educating the public about the beauty and uniqueness of these remarkable plants, encouraging proper collecting and maintenance of the plants through preservation of native habitats and horticultural propagation, and to foster good fellowship. You are invited to join our society, whether you are an expert, amateur, or a beginner with an interest in unusual plants and flowers.

You will receive our publication *Espinas y Flores*, one of the best cacti and succulent newsletters. We produce 11 issues a year. You will get great articles and keep up with club news for the next year.

Our meetings are on the second Saturday of the month (except June and September) and newsletters are received the week of the meeting. We offer knowledgeable speakers who present educational & entertaining programs; many are world renowned scholars, botanists, explorers and authors. The San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society's Annual Show and Plant Sale occurs the first weekend of June in Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego. A wide range of succulent plants, ceramic pots, and growing supplies are available during most meetings. There is also a plant exchange table and a library. For more information regarding membership, please call Joey Betzler, Membership Chair, at (619) 569-8510.

Yes, I/We wish JOIN or  REJOIN the San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society.

NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_

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CITY, STATE, COUNTRY & ZIP+4: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE/FAX/E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you know that for an additional \$5.00 paid on your membership dues - you can have *Espinas y Flores* delivered by first class mail, instead of bulk mail? Check here  and add \$5.00 to your dues payment, if you are far away you will receive our newsletter faster.

Dues are \$10.00 per person, \$5.00 for each additional person in the same household for (bulk rate USA), add \$5.00 for First Class Delivery (optional). International dues, including Mexico and Canada, are \$25.00 (US funds), additional members as above.

◆ Amount enclosed ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for joining the SDCSS

SEND THIS FORM TO:

SDCSS - Treasurer/Membership, P. O. Box 33181, San Diego, CA 92163-3181



# Succulent of the Month: Haworthia

## An Interview with Bob Kent

by Kelly Griffin

When I was contemplating writing yet another plant of the month article, it occurred to me that if you really wanted to know more about these plants you could easily buy a book or check one out from our great library and it would be much better than anything I could put together. So, instead of the normal fare of Reader's Digest meets Jerry Baker, I thought I would ask someone who really knows these plants, Bob Kent, to allow me to interview him. He graciously agreed. What follows is that interview. I enjoyed this a great deal, as it allowed me to ask some questions that I had not seen addressed in print. I hope it is a good read for you.

What initially got you started in haworthias?

*I got tired of pulling spines out of my hands. Haworthias seemed like a nice, neat genus and a still unknown genus.*

So you basically stopped collecting the things that were a pain and kept collecting things of interest. How long have you been working with Haworthias?

*Ten to twelve years pretty intensively, but twenty years altogether.*

If you had just one species of haworthia to grow, which species would it be?

*I don't really have a favorite. That's really an unfair question as there are so many nice species.*

Each genus seems to have its problem children. What one have given you the most difficulty in cultivation?

*Haworthia nortieri var. globosiflora. It is very difficult and I think the reason is people like me are still not certain of its water requirements. It is a winter grower, but just what part of the winter and how far back into the fall and then on into the spring is uncertain. It needs very strong light. I have finally decided that it doesn't really want a lot of fertilizer.*

*There are other problematic species like Haworthia arachniodea and Haworthia unicolor var. venteri - again this is a matter of watering. They are sensitive to water at the wrong time of year.*

So what happens? Are we talking crown rot? Root loss?

*Root loss. I am never happy with a Haworthia until I have seen its roots. If the roots are good the plant is good.*

When you do have problems with root loss, is it hopeless?

*Not if you get to it in time. If you do not, the rot will travel up the roots to the stem.*

This genus has at one time or another had over 400 names of species and varieties associated with it. How many species and varieties do you recognize?

*I'm not counting. Bruce Bayer is working on a new book, and he is developing a number of new varieties, which is a fair enough thing to do. For example, take Haworthia arachniodea, if you have enough of them you can see a tremendous variation from area to area. New plants are being discovered all the time. Two or three a year, which is a lot. In the past year there have been even more. That is what make the genus so interesting.*

As of late I have been fixing localities to my plants instead of trying to make a plant fit a niche. What is your thought on this as it relates to Haworthia?

*There are a lot of plants particularly the newer ones where we would discuss it in terms of locality. And locality becomes the name. At the same time there is immense variation within populations. That you have one plant of a population does not mean that it is typical. There might not even be a typical form. At the most extreme for an example, Haworthia unicolor var. venteri: in one population that is no more than 100 X 100 you can have plants that are hairy and plants that are completely glabrous growing side by side.*

With regard to the printed material that is available on the subject of Haworthias, namely the Pilbeam, Bayer, and Scott books, since there seems to be some contradictions among these, what reference do you prefer?

*The best book is Bruce Bayer's\*. The Pilbeam book is good, too. It is based largely on Bayer's taxonomy, but he pays significant attention to names people have come to use over the years.*

*[\* Note: Bruce Bayer is coming out with a new book on haworthias next year. It should have all the new ones. Hopefully, he will make a presentation to our society sometime next year.]*

Haworthias are for the most part winter growers, are they not?

*The principle exceptions are the plants that grow in the Transval, which is a summer rainfall area; Haworthia keolmaniorum, Haworthia limifolia, and Haworthia mcmurtryii. Plants that grow near the coast - near the ocean get moisture year round, and can take water at almost anytime of the year; Haworthia coarctata, Haworthia reinwardia, and Haworthia cymbiformis, for example.*

What sort of watering regimen do you follow?

*I water through the beginning of fall, but I match my watering to the weather. In the winter time it is easily two sometimes three weeks apart.*

And what response have you seen with that?

*The plants seem happy is all I can say. So far it has not been enough time. I just started last spring to seriously cut back on fertilizer. I was using too much. I do not think a grower who has a plant in a pot for two - three - four years can follow the same regimen as the nursery who is trying to grow the plant quickly and has had the plant in his possession for only three to six months.*

Well, the goals are different too. At this point you probably do not want a lot more plants. Their goal is to produce as much of the material as possible.

*Yes, where it stands out for example: Haworthia cymbiformis or Haworthia reticulata. With a lot of fertilizer, and these plants are proliferous. When over-fertilized they become even more proliferous. There's nothing more ugly than a proliferous haworthia in a pot. When they are in habitat and they proliferate they grow differently. They can spread out. In a pot they tend to mound up. Haworthias don't want to go up over the edge of the pot and the resultant cluster often looks abnormal and not at all attractive to me.*

I've seen the way they cluster in habitat. They fill all the niches between the rocks, whereas in the planter as you say, they start looking like half of a ball.

*Yes, they want to stay in the pot, within the confines of the pot. They don't like to go over the edges of the pot--it is not attractive.*

You say that you have cut back the fertilizer. What do you use for fertilizer?

*Basically GroLux®. I am also using trace elements. A fertilizer that has only trace elements, and I had been using SuperThrive®. I use it now only on seedlings or when I am transplanting.*

Do you use it more diluted than the recommended rate?

*I don't even think they have a recommendation on the bottle. Usually when you have a liquid concentrate. . . . they say whatever, . . . a tablespoon to a gallon.*

Are you using it through a hose proportioner?

*No, a proportioner would use a lot more water, and I would waste a lot of water and a lot of fertilizer. My wife, Beverly, and I water with a can, it takes us about three hours just to do the haworthias, but each one gets exactly what it needs. . . . Back to proportions, I had been using roughly a teaspoon to three gallons of water. Now I am using a tablespoon to five to six gallons of water, or about a one sixth dilution. Typically the full concentrate would be one tablespoon to a gallon.*

*Bear in mind that I read the ground. The areas where haworthias grow are not particularly fertile. They are often starved for nutrients and my feeling is now a bit of an increase in nutrients is going to make the plant look better, but a big increase is going to produce what I had before and did not like. I believe the roots are happier when they have a little bit less than what they need instead of too much.*

*Haworthia* - An Interview with Bob Kent by Kelly Griffin continued . . .

What is your opinion about material without locality data?

*One thing about locality data for an average grower is that it gives the impression that the plant may be a good plant as opposed to a hybrid, but that is not necessarily always true.*

Do you mean field hybrids are mislabeled?

*Mislabeled. If you are a haworthia nut, you need locality. If you are growing them just because you like them, which is a nice way to deal with them, locality becomes less important.*

*If you really want to understand the plant and know more about it, know its requirements, know its neighbors, you need some sort of locality. The problem with that now is that it becomes dangerous to be precise about locality data. Some people will learn where a plant is and collect it out, that is when the farmer isn't busy plowing the land or the government isn't building subdivisions. So what has happened is that many people have made plants available and have given a vague description of where the locality is intentionally, so that the locality is almost meaningless. It is like saying a dudleya is from San Diego County.*

*Well, it is the value that you place on that material and you and I place a high value on plant material, but most people don't and that is the reality. And it is sad.*

Have you done much hybridizing?

*Yes, hybridizing is a good substitute for not being able to collect or find new plants. I should not put it that way. It is a substitute for not being able to do field work.*

Maybe, you were born on the wrong continent?

*It's an interesting pastime. I have some pretty things.*

I assume you will show me those. I know you have been to South Africa, do you have a story from the field that you might relate to us?

*My two favorite stories concern South African farmers. We would not collect any plants without getting permission from the farmers. Our collecting was always modest, because we had conservation in mind. But in one case, we went to a farmer's house on a Sunday afternoon. It was raining. It was raining real bad. We came to the door and told him he had these haworthias on his land and we would like very much to look at them and take a few. There were three or four of us. In the background we could hear a television set and they had been watching probably a rugby game. He was clearly upset for being called to the door. He looked us up and down, and he said, "Well you are adults. If that's what you want to do, go and get the plants. You're on your own. Don't bother me!"*

You are adults!

*The other story was in an area where Haworthia springbokvlakensis grows. As a matter of fact it grows less than a hundred yards from this farmer's house. We went there, and that particular day the farmer and his cohorts were castrating sheep. He had the proper shears in his hand, as we talked to him. As it turned out, just several weeks previously he or someone on the farm had caught this South African hauling off euphorbias by the sackload. At that point he became so angry that he did not want anybody on his land - even to look at plants. He was very, very displeased with us, and told us to get the hell out. Since he had these shears in his hands, we didn't argue with him. We were literally within one hundred yards of the plants, but never saw them.*

*It strikes me as unfair to portray the farmers this way with these two stories which I think are kind of funny. Most farmers are delighted to see people. These two men are very much the exceptions. We have had cases where the farmers have lent us their car or truck, and said just take the truck, or they have driven us in their truck. These farms are huge. On one farm we drove half an hour in one direction and we were still on the same farm with this fellow taking us around and showing us where things were. So part of the interest, part of the joy, the fun of collecting in South Africa is meeting these people.*



With regards to *Haworthia springbokvlakensis*, don't you think that in a way as long as he doesn't plow it under — isn't it pretty secure if they're guarding it with their shears?

*It depends on what his intentions are for development, I guess.*

*Another time, we were looking for Haworthia emelyae in rugged hillside country with the farmer's permission. We never found emelyae, but we found a completely new species.*

Were you jumping up and down?

*No, the climb was hard and I was the last one up. I did not really find them myself, some other guys found them first, but it is going to be in Bayer's new book. When that comes out, the plant will be available. It is nothing in particular, but it's kind of fun to find something that has not been published. In this particular case, we were only a couple hundred yards from the farmer's house, and he had never seen the plant.*

That doesn't surprise me so much as the other stories, but mainly because a lot of people don't know what they have — what is right in front of them. I know in terms of conservation we always point to other countries for plowing up their natural fields, and yet essentially we're doing the same thing here without really thinking about it. I see areas around my house that used to be chaparral. Sure, they don't have a lot of succulents around them, but just as valuable — they have an interesting flora. Once you plow it, it's gone. I mean, obviously some opportunistic plants will come in and continue to cover the land, but there's some plants that were growing in specific niches, and now the niche is gone.

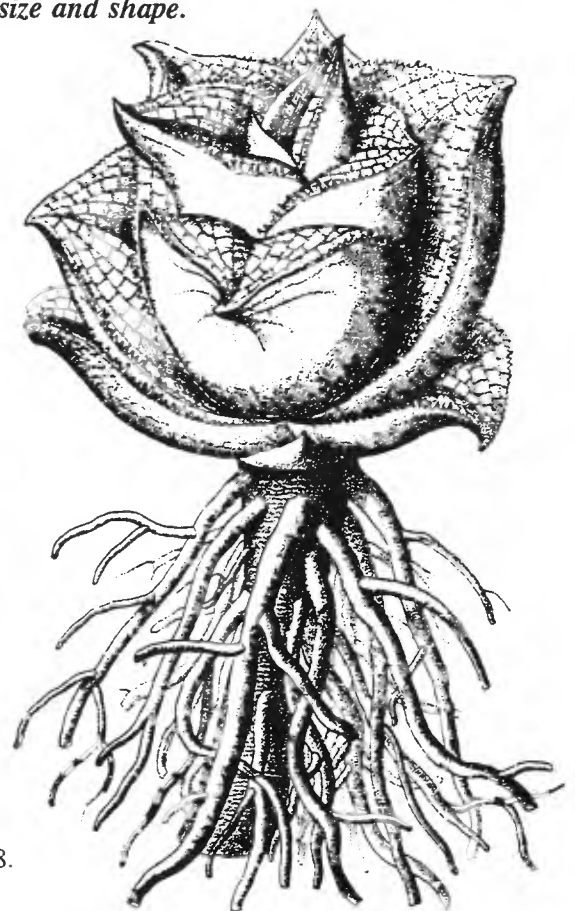
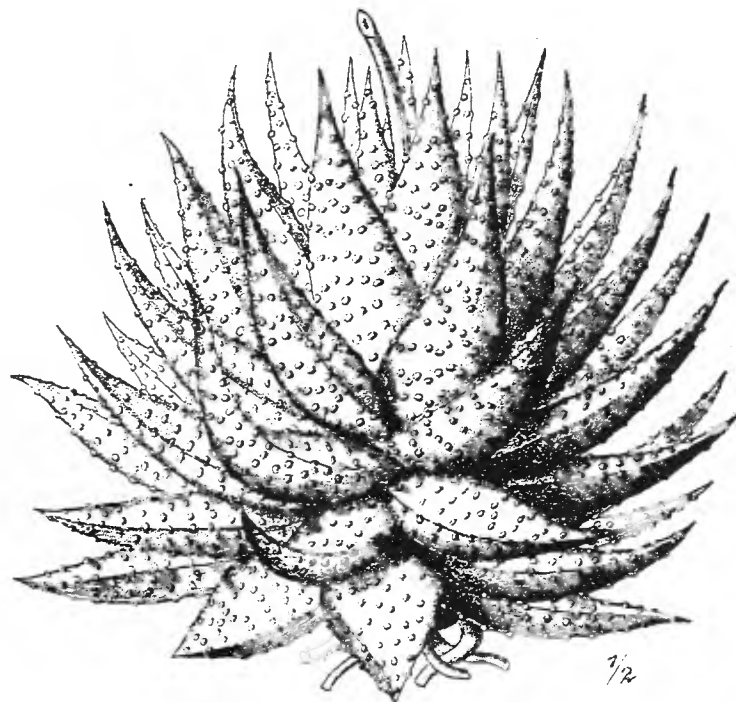
*One of the shameful stories I have heard recently concerns Haworthia uniondalensis (bayerii). Friends of mine were in Uniondale last year and they discovered that road builders had graded right through an area where this plant grows. Just tossed them, half buried them in the dirt. They made no effort to save the plants. And this is a plant that is very attractive.*

Now is that the only place that it grows?

*No, there are many other - I don't know if I should say many . . . There are other populations.*

I've seen plants labeled as "retusa" or giant retusa. Do these represent original collected material, or are these to be attributed to garden origin?

*There is a tremendous variation among retusas. Makes it a little more difficult. Sometimes it's hard to see where retusa stops and turgida begins. Haworthia retusa comes from the area around Riversdale. There are many populations, and a lot of variation in color, size and shape.*



Haworthia illustrations from Berger, *Liliaceae - Aloineae*, 1908.

Is that variation in habitat? Or do you think that we have helped somewhat?

*No, no . . . it's in habitat. Retusas do not change a heck of a lot in cultivation. The main change is that I think they tend to get a little bit bigger, because they have more nutrients. On the other hand, here and there, there are some quite large retusas in habitat.*

So the giant form that you see came from nature?

*I think "Aker's Giant" is the real thing, it's one clone that's just bigger than anything else.*

Unlike aloes, is it true that just about every haworthia can be propagated from a leaf?

*Yes, I think it is difficult to propagate the soft-leafed ones. And there are others among the hard leaf varieties, like Haworthia pumila which are difficult. I think the degree of propagation from the leaves of haworthias has something to do with the growing abilities of the person involved. I'm very, very poor at propagating leaves. On the other hand, I think if I had a greenhouse with some humidity in it, that might change.*

My experience has been that if the leaf can stay alive long enough, before it desiccates, it will produce an offset. That is probably something you have experienced . . . without the greenhouse, you don't have the higher humidity and the leaves dry out before they get a chance to do their thing.

*That is one of my problems. I mostly propagate plants from seed and from basal off-setting. Some leaf work, when I am desperate, but if I can avoid it I will.*

How do you differentiate a complex of plants like *aranaea*, *arachnoidea*, and *bolusii*. Sometimes, I look at pictures of those plants, and honestly, if I grew this one poorly wouldn't it look like this one? Or if I grew this one lushly in shade would it look like the other one? They just seem like such a complex that is so closely related.

*That is where knowing the location comes in handy.*

If you know the locality, you know the plant?

*Almost, almost. What's very difficult as an example, arachnoidea shades into aranaea. There becomes a point where you do not know what you are looking at. There are characteristics that the plant have. In common blooming times can be very important. We mentioned locality which is exceedingly important. There are differences in the plants - how heavy the teeth may be, or how wide they may be. Or the leaf itself - whether it is plain or translucent, as opposed to opaque. These are all important things.*

When you grow them, do you cluster like groups together so you can see the order and the variations between them?

*I try to. I think it is silly not to do it. Certainly species are kept together. If you think in terms of sections, think in terms of related plants. Sometimes it is impossible to keep them together, because the light requirements are different. I find myself shuffling things around.*

You can't arbitrarily draw a line just because they are in this section when they have different demands culturally.

At this point, I was able to see some of Bob's work, as well as some mighty nifty work reportedly performed by humming birds. I cannot possibly relate to you with words the variation that this genus has to offer. The unique crosses have to be seen to be believed. Finally, when you are acquiring new plants for your collections, if you come across a name that you have already and you are about to pass the plant by . . . stop for a moment, and look closely. Many species have tremendous variation. You could just be passing by an even more beautiful plant simply because you already "collected" that name!

I would like to sincerely thank **Bob Kent** for taking the time out and granting me this opportunity to learn as much as I did!

For further reading on haworthias:

**The New Haworthia Handbook** by M. B. Bayer, 1982.

**Haworthias and Astroloba - a collectors guide** by John Pilbeam, 1983.

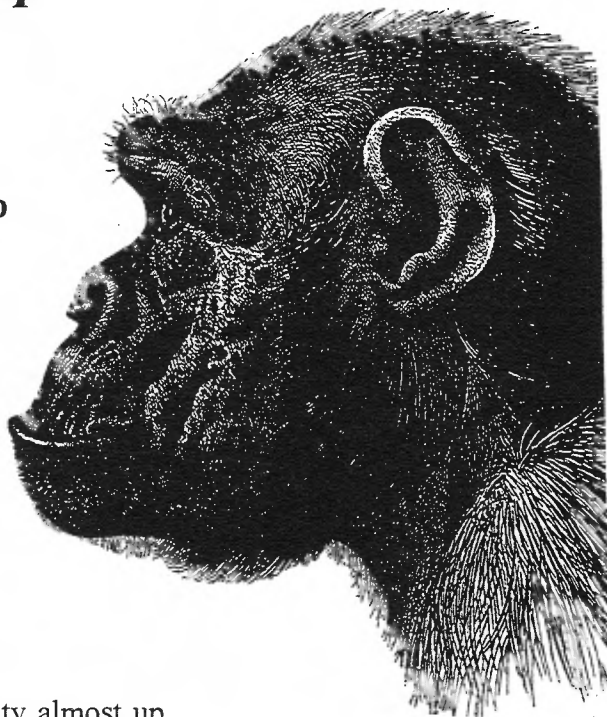
**The Genus Haworthia** by C. L. Scott, 1985.

***Never doubt that a small group  
of thoughtful, committed citizens  
can change the world. Indeed,  
it is the only thing that ever has.***

MARGARET MEAD

## WISE AND OTHERWISE

**by Michael Buckner**



Kate Sessions was a woman of remarkable vitality almost up to the time of her death in 1940 at the age of eighty-two. She was always busy. Besides her nursery work, she did considerable landscaping. She was an active member of the San Diego Floral Association and contributed regularly to its publication, *California Garden*. She was a supervisor of gardening for the San Diego Public Schools, and as late as 1938 held classes in gardening for enthusiastic adult students. She traveled extensively, going to Europe and Hawaii and bringing back seeds and plants unknown to this region. She was a public speaker of note and did much to stimulate interest in civic beautification and home gardens. There was, in fact, not a horticultural activity in San Diego in which she did not take part.

Much of Miss Session's great success was owing, no doubt, to her dynamic personality. She was not a patient person and her tremendous energy made her at times abrupt and overly frank. Despite this, she was admired and loved. She sincerely devoted herself to plants and endeavored to help others plant wisely and well. Through constant toiling in all weather, she lost the femininity and daintiness characteristic of her youth and her back became hunched with much bending, but she never lost her agility or her zest for life.

There was not one quite like Kate Sessions. Although she dared enter a field considered the province of men, she was immediately accepted for her work. Her absorbing passion for plants gave her courage to overcome any obstacle and her knowledge of plant material was remarkable; many came from distant places to visit her and to learn.

A horticulturist traveling today throughout San Diego County is constantly reminded of how much southern California is indebted to this extraordinary woman. The fine planting of *Arecastrum romanzoffianum* (formerly *Cocos plumosa*) in the central plaza of San Diego was put there by her in 1897. The fine old stands of twisted juniper (*Juniperus chinensis* v. *torulosa*) seen growing through the Bird Rock-La Jolla area are hers. Much of the color in southern gardens is her donation to the horticultural scene. She loved richly hued plants and firmly believed that more flowering trees and shrubs should be grown in gardens and as street plants. The brilliant poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is but one of many plants which she brought from afar, and today San Diego is called the Poinsettia City, so exuberantly do these plants grow there. The plants associated with Kate Sessions are legion. Perhaps there could be no better summary of her life than the words written on the plaque placed under the tipuana tree in Pacific Beach: "Her entire life was spent in the search for finer plants."

From SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GARDENS AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY by Victoria Padilla; University of CA Press, Berkely/LA, 1961.



Thus, a word of advice to concerned club officers and members. Unless you start classes for beginners in your club and really feed them information you will have a no-growth, stagnating society. For emphasis I suggest that you count the new members of your club for a given year and then count how many of these pay their membership dues the following year. I would venture to say that you will find a 75% loss! Why? Because you have not offered them anything so they could learn about our kinds of plants. Many of them were shy and afraid to show their "ignorance." They could have learned in a simple class and become wonderful members.

Oh, you don't have time to hold a class. Or, it interferes with the meeting. Well, if you can't work that out you will have a dead society. You can have a class before the meeting or one afterwards. Those that want to learn will come and a good teacher can always be found among your members.

David Grigsby *The Beginner's Column*, *Cactus & Succulent Journal* (U.S.), Vol 57, May-June 1985.



## WISE AND OTHERWISE

'Peyote' is a corruption of the word *peyotl* which in Nahuatl, the mother tongue of the Aztecs at the time of the conquest, means silk cocoon or caterpillar's cocoon. *Peyotl* was one of the divinatory plants of the Aztecs and was regarded as a mediator between these men and their gods. Although most volumes discuss *peyotl* as the cactus *Lophophora williamsii* there are a number of other genera of cactaceae which are known in Mexico as peyote. In *Las Cactaceas de Mexico* we find the following species bearing the name peyote: *Strombocactus disciformis*, *Astrophytum asterias*, *Roseocactus (Ariocarpus) fissuratus* and *Pelecyphora aselliformis*. This is not to say that all of these species are psychomimetics, but alkaloids have been found in all but *Strombocactus disciformis* and I have witnessed the efficacy of *Pelecyphora aselliformis*. Physiological experimentation on all of these would be most interesting. For clarity of discussion and for reason of its known effectiveness in producing hallucinations we will assume *Lophophora williamsii* to be the peyote of common parlance. This species is by no means uniform in its appearance, for the Indians of Mexico are able to recognize four distinct varieties. The active principle is mescaline, an alkaloid which has come to be confused with *mezcal* which is not a psychomimetic and comes from an unrelated genus *Agave*. Eight other alkaloids have been isolated from *Lophophora williamsii* and may play some role in the production of visions.

NARCOTIC PLANTS HALLUCINOGENS, STIMULANTS, INEBRIANTS AND HYPNOTICS — THEIR ORIGINS AND USES  
by William Emboden, The Macmillan Company, NY, 1972.

***Make the universe your companion, always bearing in mind  
the true nature of all creation—mountains and rivers, trees  
and grasses, and humanity.***

In 1931 Kate suffered an illness, due mainly to exhaustion and overwork, and she was laid low for several months, much to her annoyance. As she improved, members of the Floral Association suggested that a dinner in her honor should be given as soon as she had recovered sufficiently. She let it be known she did not want a dinner, but what would please her more than anything was help in establishing an agave and aloe garden in Balboa Park, something she had long dreamed of. The Floral Association adopted the plan enthusiastically, and her recuperation was aided by her knowledge that her dream would become a reality. It was not soon in materializing, however. First it was necessary to select a location in the park. It was finally agreed that a one acre plot would be made available for the purpose at the east end of the park, along Park Boulevard. Kate donated plants from her own collection, and collectors and botanical gardens all over California and Arizona sent donations of rare plants. Kate herself drew the plans for the garden and its rock bordered walks. The work of planting and laying out the garden was supervised by C.I. Jerabek, park horticulturist, but with plenty of help and advice from Kate who spent much time "mothering" the new project so dear to her heart. She was emphatic in insisting, "I'm going to boss every bit of that planting myself."

Even before its dedication, the garden began attracting attention because of its lovely blooms. An article in the *Union* by Ada Perry in June, 1934, told of this new attraction:

*Miss Kate Sessions' aloe and agave garden in Balboa Park entered its first important blooming season this year. The unique planting displays brilliant color that will become more pronounced as the years go by. At present there are 60 kinds of aloes and 40 kinds of agaves and 50 mesembryanthemums. . . . Begun in 1931 by the San Diego Floral Association as a tribute to Miss Sessions, the garden was planned that year by her as she convalesced from a serious illness. Many believe it was this tempting project that encouraged her back to health. she had dreamed of such a garden for years as she believed it an ideal expression of San Diego's unequalled climate. Commissioners of Balboa Park donated the site north of Laurel on Park Boulevard and planting started in 1932. Work has continued and this year brought tangible success. Knowledge of little known plants will come as they grow and flourish.*

The handsomest plant at that time was any agave six feet tall, with a carved statuesque appearance. The brilliantly colored mesembryanthemums were used as a ground cover and along the steep bank bordering the garden on the east.

On March 23, 1935, the garden was formally dedicated, on a day when the mesembryanthemums were a mass of bloom. Mrs. Mary A. Greer, acting for the Floral Association, presented the garden to the city. George W. Marston, in tribute to Kate Sessions, said, "Botanically speaking, I would call Miss Sessions as perennial, evergreen and everblooming."

After the garden was completed, Jerabek said, "The people of San Diego will never know all the scheming Miss Sessions and I did to get enough plants to landscape the garden." On one occasion they transplanted some large date yuccas from the western part of the park. This was down without the consent of John Morley, Park Superintendent, and while he was out of town. When he returned and discovered what had been done, he just shook his head and laughed—after all, Kate had planted the yuccas originally.

As long as Kate lived she kept an eye on "her" garden and insisted that it be properly cared for. After her death it was allowed to grow in disarray and many of the valuable plants died from lack of care. Then a new alignment of the highway meant the end of the garden, the site of which is now a parking lot for the Merry-go-round. But while it lasted it was Kate Sessions' Dream Garden.

KATE SESSIONS PIONEER HORTICULTURIST by Elizabeth C. MacPhail, San Diego Historic Society, 1976.

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