

# ESPINAS Y FLORES



## *Program*

*GARY JAMES, WORLD-EXPLORER AND BONAFAIDE  
SUCCULENT PLANT ENTHUSIAST*

## *Plant of the Month*

*THE JOY OF SEED*

*BY, MARK FRYER*

*The Newsletter of the San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society Inc.  
Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America*

*Volume 39 Number 4  
Saturday April 9th  
1:00 PM Room 101 Casa Del Prado  
Balboa Park, San Diego CA*

# Presidents Message

March 20, 2005

Someone recently mentioned to me that the three rainiest months of the year here in San Diego are January, February, and March. Supposedly, in terms of "average rainfall", January is usually the wettest, followed by March (second), and February (third). Reflecting on the amount of precipitation we received in February, one has to be at least slightly cautious about the potential for more now that so many of our favorite plants are beginning to rest or wake up for the months ahead. While these unusually heavy rains have spelled disaster for some plants, others have thrived in the abundant water and look better than ever. Note to self: water the winter growers more often during typically dry years!

Our March meeting was well-attended in spite of being the first sunny Saturday after so many wet and rainy weekends we've all been enduring lately. We also had some pretty stiff competition from the Quail Gardens annual "Plant-Stravaganza!", but still had an enthusiastic turnout.

Kelly Griffin gave an excellent program about his recent trip to South Africa, with some amazing photography and most excellent monologue. Pam Badger and Jeff Harris combined the plant of the month categories into a "Meet the Member" mini-program, which turned into a sort of informal round-table of succulent plant cultiva-

tion. Personally, I really liked the "Inside the Actor's Studio" format, it seemed to really invite audience participation. A huge thanks to everyone for all the great information disbursed at the meeting!

Speaking of "audience participation," now is the time to start planning for our annual June Show and Sale. Tom Knapik, Terry Parr, Lee Badger, and Allen Clark are our show chairs for this year's event and I'm quite certain they will be happy to sign you up for any of the copious needs we have in bringing an event of this size together as painlessly as possible in the coming weeks. Our board members are working up some very interesting ideas for this year's festivities.

Thanks to one of our more active standing committees, our library is getting a much-needed overhaul, including the cleaning up (and out!) of our storage areas in Room 104. Expect a status report and news in the coming months!

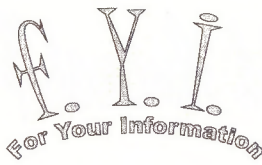
In April we'll be treated to a program from Gary James, a world-class world-explorer and bonafide succulent plant enthusiast.

Plants of the month this month will be ANY cactus flowering and ANY succulent flowering, let's fill up the brag plant table with flowers this month!

I look forward to hearing and seeing you all April,

Mark D Fryer

Cover: Misc. seedlings through the lens of Mark Fryer



Brag table winners 3/12/05:

Cactus:

- 1st : Mark Fryer / *Astrophytum* cv. "Onzuka"
- 2nd: Peter Walkowiak / *Mammillaria* sp.
- 2nd: Juergen Menzel / *Glandulicactus uncinatus* v. *wrightii*
- 3rd: Chris Miller / *Mammillaria microhelia*
- 3rd: Mark Fryer / *Turbinicarpus beguinii*

Succulent:

- 1st: Juergen Menzel / *Euphorbia philipsiae*
- 2nd: Rudy Lime / *Pelargonium cotyledon*
- 2nd: Peter Walkowiak / *Achemea* sp.
- 3rd: Jeffrey Harris / *Ornithogallum* sp.
- 3rd: Jeffrey Harris / *Pelargonium patersonii*

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*"The sense of justice springs from self-respect; both are coeval with our birth. Children are born with an innate sense of justice; it usually takes twelve years of public schooling and four more years of college to beat it out of them." -- Edward Abbey*

# Wild Animal Park

## Baja and Old World Succulent Gardens

By, Pam Badger

**O**n Sunday, January 23rd, I finally made it up again to help out in the Gardens. It was a beautiful morning in the San Pasqual Valley, and there is nothing like getting up there early to see the plants in the early morning light, listen to the birds, and get

started on those weeds before it gets very warm. It is a thrill to see the fantastic job Chris Miller, Jurgen Menzel, Bert and Nancy Elder, and all the other Volunteers have

done to create this jewel of a garden. It has been years since I traveled to Baja, but wandering these gardens brings it all back - and

then some!

The Boojums (*Idria columnaris*) are amazing and lush then usually seen in Baja - there are even seedlings coming up, which Jurgen carefully weeds around.

The great rains we have had and the great warm

weather of the last two weeks has all the plants very vital and alive - including the weeds!





**So if you also are feeling a little guilty about leaving all the work to others, contact Chris and get out there for a few hours, bask in the beauty of the place, and pull a few weeds - you will be glad you did!**



# The Library Corner



**T**his is a new section of the newsletter that we hope will be a monthly event. You may have noticed that the SDCSS Library has relocated during our meetings. It is now located in the back corner of the room. It ended up there quite by accident. The individuals moving it from room 104 decided they didn't want to push it any further so they stopped right after they got through the door. It has worked out much better for all of us in the new location.

We have a new set of Librarians and a Library Committee. Phil Bunch and Phil and Jan Kent are the Librarians. Allen Clark and Chris Miller round out the Library Committee. We have already had a few clean out sessions, sorting out the existing books, cleaning up the storage areas and updating a new database. We have 3 rolling bookcases and they are now sorted into general plant books, specific plant books and periodicals. We also have some stationary bookcases that will be our next challenge. The specific plant books cabinet will be the one open at meetings, but if you have a special request, check with the Phils and Jan to see if we have it.

The SDCSS Board approved two motions at the last board meeting. The first one states that all book purchase requests will go through the Library Committee, which will develop criteria to make the purchase decision with. The committee will also make all the book purchases. The second motion was to approve a budget for the committee for books and supplies. The budget will be managed by the treasurer. All book donations will also be handled by the Library Committee.

We will soon be putting books out for sale and on the Benefit Drawing Table as we thin out the library. We have several copies of older general plant books and other books that really don't need to stay in the library. We will also be performing an audit to verify the database and ensure a correct accounting of the library property.

Again, we are still at amnesty for anyone wanting to bring back overdue books.

# Taking a shot at tequila

*Temecula man transforms landscaping project into high-end liquor*

**By Daisy Nguyen**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

February 26, 2005

TEMECULA – J.B. Wagoner initially planted blue agave around his 25-acre property to solve a landscaping dilemma. The low-maintenance plants were a cheaper alternative than the water-loving citrus or avocado groves that dot the hills of this Riverside County town.

After years of research and experiments, he is now using the agave to produce tequila and hopes to cash in on the growing popularity of the distilled spirit.

"I figure in the worst case, I'll have a nice landscape," Wagoner, 44, said of his decision to plant nearly 1,000 agaves around his home and at another nearby property about four years ago. "In the best case, I'll create a new market for American-made tequila." But tequila is as sacred to Mexico as champagne is to France. International trade laws forbid use of the name tequila unless it's made from blue agave in the Mexican state of Jalisco.

Wagoner, who claims to be the first maker of blue agave liquor in the United States, is upfront about the distinction.

He labeled his liquor Temequila, after the city of Temecula where it's produced, and put an American flag design on a 750-milliliter bottle that is scheduled to hit the market in April. The \$58-a-bottle price tag is aimed at sophisticated consumers who are driving the luxury spirits industry.

"We've already gotten a surprising

level of demand for the product from people looking for something new and different," he said. "Any place that will carry top shelf tequila like Patron, we expect to be there."

Tequila consumption increased 5.8 percent in 2004, with Americans downing 8.5 million cases – or a billion dollars worth of tequila, according to the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States.

While tequila sales ranked sixth behind vodka, rum, gin, brandy and scotch, high-end tequila brands – costing \$19 to \$27 a bottle – saw big growth last year at 15.4 percent. Sales for super premium brands, which cost \$27 or higher, increased by 5 percent.

"High-end liquor is driving the spirits business," said Shawn Kelly, a spokeswoman for the council. She said the trend is driven by the stronger economy, re-emerging "cocktail culture" and new laws in several states that allow liquor stores to stay open longer.

"People are drinking less beer and more vodka, whisky and rum," said Tom Pirko, president of Bevmark, a beverage consulting firm in Santa Barbara. "It's a great time to be in the spirits business."

Pirko warned that Wagoner will face challenges in trying to gain a share of the market.

"Authenticity is a real issue," he said. "Tequila is made in Mexico by people who have made it for many years. You're buying authenticity in that bottle. It's really difficult when you try to transport that heritage across borders and cultures."

Wagoner, a quietly confident man who runs a staffing company by day, ap-

peared unconcerned.

"I don't see this as a competitive threat," he said. "I'm targeting a small segment of tequila connoisseurs.

There are some 50 different kinds of tequilas from Mexico, but there's only one that's 100 percent agave tequila, made in the USA."

Wagoner saw an opportunity when he bought his property six years ago. He read about an agave shortage created in the 1990s, when tequila's popularity soared. He learned that the plant takes up to 10 years to mature and turn sweet.

He also realized the volcanic soil, climate and moisture in Temecula

was almost the same as the agave growing region in Jalisco. Wagoner spent six years learning to grow and

process the plant, which involves fermenting its sweet nectar into wine then distilling it into liquor. His experiment began in a crock pot and has evolved into a bigger operation involving stainless-steel fermentation tanks to make silver tequila and oak barrels to make the golden-colored Reposado variety.

In his sleek kitchen, Wagoner also has been trying to flavor the liquor with tangerine, grapefruit, lavender and even coffee.

Now, he's mixing some of his own

agave with some imported from Mexico as he waits for the rest of his plants to mature. To aid the supply, he's hoping to recruit local growers to convert their avocado or citrus groves into agave fields.

"I need more agave than I can produce," he said.

So far, he said several people have expressed interest.

Until now, the plant has been grown in America mainly for ornamental purposes. But Wagoner says agave could become a viable alternative for avocado growers in California, who are seeing prices drop as imports of Mexican-grown avocados expand.



New regulations by the U.S. Department of Agriculture allowing Mexican avocados into 47 states year-round became

effective Jan. 31. The program will be expanded into California, Florida and Hawaii in two years.

"The price of my avocados have slipped away pretty good," said Tam Watkins, who has a 20-acre avocado grove in Temecula and is looking into growing agave.

"We're looking to grow something else that won't consume too much water, but we need to know whether it'll be feasible to grow agave," he said. "Am I going to profit from it? How successful is he going to be?"



# The Joy of Seed

By, Mark Fryer

**R**aising cactus and succulent plants from seed is one of the easiest and most enjoyable aspects of our hobby, one that should really be practiced more by all who share in the interest and fascination of these specialized plants.

Getting started isn't difficult or expensive, and requires much less space than most other propagation techniques. For example, when I first began raising cactus from seeds I simply used the top of my refrigerator for sprouting the little plants.

The key to getting a good initial sprouting of most seeds is simply keeping them in an 'even' environment. Keeping temperature, light, and water at regular levels during the first few weeks after planting will usually insure a healthy crop of seedlings. There are no shortage of species both cacti and succulent which require some more specialized techniques to germinate readily, but the vast majority of cultivated cactus and succulent plants are relatively easy to sprout and grow on.

What to plant them in? Anything! Seriously, I've seen everything from borderline concrete mix to open, fluffy coir/perlite mixes yield virtually the same results in terms of germination of some species. Sometimes, when one has only a very few seeds to sew of a particular species, simply placing

the seeds between the folded halves of a damp paper towel inside a zip-lock baggie for a few days will cause the seeds to germinate. The key is to understand a particular plant's needs in terms of moisture, temperature, heat, and light. What's in the soil mix is typically secondary to most seed's ability to germinate, unless there are harmful bacteria or bugs determined to compost your little shells of hope. At the nursery, we use our standard planting mix, usually screened to fines (doesn't dry out as fast), and then we cover freshly planted seeds with a layer of chicken grit (#12 gravel with rock-flour sifted out) to a depth usually equal to the dimensions of the seed itself. Larger seeds are actually buried ever so slightly and covered with more gravel than some of the smaller seeds.

There are probably as many different techniques as there are people who enjoy the practice of sprouting seeds, both professionally and as a hobby. Beginning with the basic ideas outlined above, one can then begin to experiment with different regimes of temperature, light, heat, and moisture.

There are a large number of species that sprout better during certain times of the year. A substantial number of South African succulent species, for instance, are considerably more eager to germinate as we move into the fall/winter months than they are eager to germinate during the

spring/summer. There is no hard and fast rule, however, as some species will do better when temperatures are warmer and the days are getting longer (as opposed to the other way round). One of the many benefits of a group of fellow enthusiasts like the San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society, are the human resources around you at a typical meeting. Speak up and ask questions if you're looking for specific advice about what's worked where and for whom.

After a couple decades of playing around with setting fruits, harvesting and planting seeds of various succulent plants, I have had the opportunity the past few years to try and focus my passion in the commercial realm as a viable business. I have been exceptionally blessed with a position at a wholesale cactus and succulent nursery founded by two men who have legendary seed-raising skills and experience.

It has only been during my brief tenure as a commercial grower that I have been able to see and practice first hand the results of decades of selection on certain species, some of the specialized techniques of succulent-plant pollination and seed-collection, and the end-results of certain experimentation with hatching up batches of various plant species. The only conclusions I can arrive at are that I am still thrilled at the first germinating seeds in any given batch of seedlings, and that I am consistently humbled by how little I know about the secrets these plants possess in their pollination and germination behaviors.

So where will you find seeds for

sale or trade or barter? All over the place! We have our own seed-exchange here at the SDC&S Society; contact Kelly Griffin if you would like to get involved. Here are my two favorite domestic sources:

Mesa Garden  
PO Box 72  
Belen, New Mexico 87002  
Tel. 505-864-3131 Fax. 505-864-3124  
<http://www.mesagarden.com/>  
Email: [cactus@swcp.com](mailto:cactus@swcp.com)

CSSA Seed Depot  
3015 Timmy  
Clovis, CA 93612-4849  
Tel. 559-292-5624  
<http://www.cssainc.org/seeds2003.html>  
Email: [sueh@csufresno.edu](mailto:sueh@csufresno.edu)

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Fryer  
March 22nd, 2005



# Upcoming Events

## 2005

**April 3-4** : 2005 Colorado Cactus and Succulent Society Show & Sale at the Denver Botanical Gardens

**April 2**: Master Gardeners San Diego Home Gardening Seminar for more info call 858-694-2860

**April 9,10th**: 9am-5pm; South Coast CSS, plant show & sale at South Coast Botanical Garden; contact Dick Hulett at 310-832-2262 (E-mail [petplants@sbcglobal.net](mailto:petplants@sbcglobal.net)); Carol Causey at 310-675-5843; Jim Hanna at 562-920-3046 or [aloecats1@aol.com](mailto:aloecats1@aol.com). This is a unique artistic non-judged show with multiple displays.

**April 16** : CSSA Board Meeting at Huntington Botanical Gardens

**April 29**: Lake Hodges Native Plant Club annual Spring Gardens Tour for more info call 858-487-6661

**April 24th**: South Bay Epiphyllum Society Show, South Coast BG; 310-831-1209

**April 30th-May 1st**: Sunset C&SS show & sale; Veterans Memorial Ctr, Culver City 310-822-1783

**May 15th**: 10-5 Huntington Gardens Plant Sale, 1151 Oxford Road San Marino, CA

**May 15th**: Epiphyllum Society Show & Sale, LA Arboretum 310-831-1209

**May 21st: 1-4, 22nd: 9-4** Gates C&SS show & sale, Jurupa Mtn Cultural ctr; Glen Avon CA; 909-360-8802

**May 21**: First Annual Encinitas Garden Festival and Gardeners Marketplace. Info: [arosado@ci.encinitas.ca.us](mailto:arosado@ci.encinitas.ca.us)

**June 4,5th**: San Diego C&SS Summer Show & sale, Balboa Park 619-477-4779

**July 1 - 3** : CSSA Annual Show and Sale at Huntington Botanical Gardens

**August 5 - 11** : CSSA 31st Biennial Convention, Scottsdale Plaza Resort, Phoenix, Arizona Host Club: The Central Arizona Cactus & Succulent Society  
Special Rate for Rooms \$89 per night (Normally \$300)

Convention Chairman, Duke Benadom Program Chairman, Leo Martin e-mail:

[leo1010@attglobal.net](mailto:leo1010@attglobal.net) Confirmed speakers already include Sheila Collette, Chuck Hanson, John Lavranos, Mark Muradian, Gard Roper, Guy Wrinkle.

**August 20, 21st**: Intercity Show & Sale, 18th annual; LA Arboretum 626-798-2430, 818-998-9306

**Sept 3rd**: 21st Annual Succulent Symposium; Huntington Gardens

**Sept 4th**: CSSA Board Meeting, HBG

**September 25th**: Long Beach C&SS Annual Auction; 18127 So. Alameda St, Compton CA

**October 15,16**: San Gabriel C&SS Winter show & sale; LA Arboretum; 301 N. Baldwin, Arcadia, CA

## 2006

**January 14** CSSA Board Meeting, Ahmanson Class Room, HBG

**April 15** CSSA Board Meeting, Ahmanson Class Room, HBG

**June 30 - July 2** CSSA Show and Sale, HBG

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Secretary: Christine Tratnyek (619) 461-0737  
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Terry Parr (619) 460-9111  
Herb Stern (619) 223-9134

### **Standing Committees & Sub Committees**

Conservation: Joey Betzler & Kelly Griffin  
Education & Exhibits  
Brag Table: Kay Quijada  
Plants of the Month:  
Lee Badger & Jeff Harris  
Summer Show: Tom Knapik, Jeff Harris &  
Susan Hopkins  
Winter Show: Ed DeLollis  
History: Terry Parr  
Liaison  
Balboa Park Desert Garden: Susan Hopkins  
CSSA Affiliate Rep: Kelly Griffin  
Quail Botanical Gardens: Phyllis Flechsig  
San Diego Botanical Garden Foundation:  
George Plaisted  
San Diego Floral Association:  
Elizabeth Glover  
San Diego Wild Animal Park Baja California  
Garden & Succulent Collections:  
Chris Miller  
Library: Tom Birt & Phil Bunch

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Plants: Michelle Heckathorn & Sara Schell  
Seeds: Kelly Griffin  
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Annual Sales: Tom Birt  
Auction & Holiday Plants:  
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Benefit Table: Lee Badger  
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Jeff Harris & Joe Kraatz  
Monthly Supply Sales:  
George & Jerry Plaisted  
Publicity: Tom DeMerritt & Stan Yalof  
Programs: Kelly Griffin  
Reception: Ethel Standish  
Regalement  
Monthly: Lee Badger, Rudy Lime &  
Stefy Mangold  
Picnic: Laura & Tom DeMerritt