

Espinas y Flores

BULLETIN OF THE SAN DIEGO CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY
Affiliate of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America, Inc.

Volume XXI, Number 1

January 11, 1986

JANUARY MEETING

Saturday January 11, 1986

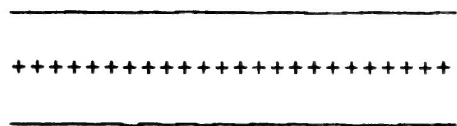
Casa del Prado, Room 101, Balboa Park

1:30 P.M.

PROGRAM

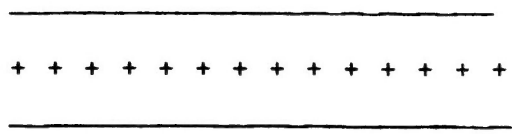
SEYMOUR LINDEN
Somalia

Seymour Linden, the new President of CSSA, and enthusiastic traveler to succulent habitats around the world. He is an excellent grower. He will present his program about his recent trip in September-October trip to Somalia. Somalia is in Eastern Africa on the Indian Ocean. This is sure to be an interesting and educational program.



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Deadline for the February Issue - JANUARY 25 - My best wishes for the coming year.
MARY

Our December meeting worked out very well. There were many contributors to the special plant exchange. Enough food for seconds - delicious too - and many wonderful gift plants to everyone who attended. Hope everyone enjoyed it as much as I did. Thanks to all who made it such a success. Mary

Those who have volunteered to bring refreshments for the January Meeting are:

Susan Shepherd - Ruth Richardson - Mary Aubuchon - Teresita S. Lime
Cathy and Sandy Frost - Sarah Jervey

As you can see this is a very short list. If you feel like bringing something, it would be very much appreciated.

Perlso Lewis at the Reception Table will be accepting money to order name tags at the January meeting. The price is \$3.00.

COMING EVENTS

- Jan. 11 & 12 San Diego Rose Society Pruning Demonstration
Parker Rose Garden Balboa Park - Sat: 9-1 p.m.; Sun: 10-1 p.m. FREE
- Jan 18 & 19 San Diego Camellia Society Mini Show
Casa del Prado, Majorca Room, Balboa Park
Sat: 11-4:30 pm; Sun: 10-4:30 pm. FREE
- Jan 27 Edie Pate from Fresno, CA, a unique designer, will use fascinating woods and innovative containers to demonstrate floral arrangements.
11:30 a.m. luncheon at House of Hospitality, Balboa Park.
1 p.m. program by Edie Pate. Call 232-5762 for reservations.
- Feb. 1 & 2 San Diego Camellia Society 39th Annual Spring Show
Casa del Prado, Majorca Room, Balboa Park
Sat: 1 - 5 p.m.; Sun: 10-5 p.m. FREE
- Feb. 6, 13, Thursday Workshop with Colleen Winchell
20 & 27 Free Floral Crafts Instructions - Open to the public.
Casa del Prado, San Diego Floral Association Library, Room 105,
Balboa Park. Thurs: 10-3 p.m. Information: 479-6433.
-

Welcome to New member - Mid-Iowa Cactus and Succulent Society.



Succulent-of-the-Month

GASTERIAS (Liliaceae)

By Dorothy Dunn

Gasterias, along with Aloes, Haworthias, Bowieas and Bulbines, belong to the Liliaceae family, which also includes such varied and non-succulent relatives as asparagus, onions, tulips and lilies. They were initially classified as Aloes by Linnaeus. The genus currently contains about 100 described species, and stands today as a classic example of taxonomic chaos. Edgar Lamb said of them: "Gasterias have been in cultivation for a very long time and there are many unnamed hybrid plants in cultivation which defy identification." Doreen Court, in The Succulent Flora of Southern Africa, states that "It is very probable that at least three-quarters or more of these specific names will not survive the test of a full-scale field investigation of the group".

Gasterias are native entirely to South Africa, with the center of distribution being the eastern Cape Province. Some complexes occur in the southern Karroo District and northwards to Namaqualand and Namibia, while others range over into Natal and the southeastern Transvaal. In habitat they grow in the shade of other bushes, from sea level up to the cooler mountain slopes.

The generic name Gasteria is derived from the Greek and means "stomach" or "belly". This refers to the swollen, belly-like lower part of the flower tube, which is very pronounced in some species. All species have distichous (two-ranked) leaves when young, and some retain this habit throughout life, as in the G. pillansii complex. For example, in G. armstrongii (thought by some to be a hybrid) this juvenile, or distichous form remains constant, and mature plants of this species are very striking. Botanists call this type of "arrested juvenility" neoteny, a term borrowed from zoology. However, most species spiral with age, and juvenile and mature forms of the same plants can look so different that in many cases different names have been given to the same species - hence the taxonomic confusion.

Adding to this confusion, Gasterias hybridize very readily, not only among themselves but with other members of the Liliaceae, particularly Aloes (x Gastrolea) and Haworthias (x Gasterhaworthia). The usual Aloe parent seems to be either A. aristata or A. variegata, and in some hybrids this is quite obvious.

Gasterias are remarkably tough and drought-resistant. In cultivation they can be grown much like Haworthias, in that they need good drainage and a fair amount of shade. However, they are not as touchy as Haworthias in many respects and do not seem to experience the periodic loss of roots which tends to be an inevitable part of the annual cycle of some Haworthia species. Like Haworthias, they are mainly winter growers. Although quite slow-growing, most species are ridiculously easy to propagate.

Since most of them cluster prolifically, it is a simple matter to remove and root the small offsets, most of which detach from the parent plant complete with roots. Also, all species can be grown from leaf-cuttings, and you do not even need an entire leaf to accomplish this (however, you do need patience - they are slow!). Larger leaf can be cut in half, and each section will root and produce several plants. They can, of course, also be grown from seed, but this is not usually recommended because of the previously-mentioned tendency to hybridize. Hummingbirds love Gasteria, Haworthia, and Aloe flowers alike, and visit all three indiscriminately.

Gasterias seem to be relatively pest-free. The most serious affliction is probably the black spots which appear on the leaves of some species - cause unknown. In size they range from the diminutive and charming G. liliputana through the dark, reptilian beauty of G. batesiana to the very large and imposing G. acinacifolia, whose leaves have been known to reach a length of one meter. Although Gasterias are often overlooked by collectors, being somewhat overshadowed by their relatives the showier Aloes and the more elegant Haworthias, they are nonetheless a worthwhile group to cultivate, and all species are useful either as pot plants or as striking landscape subjects for shaded areas.

Literature consulted:

Barkhuizen, B.P.	<u>Succulents of Southern Africa</u>
Chidamian, Claude:	<u>The Book of Cacti and Other Succulents</u>
Court, Doreen:	<u>Succulent Flora of Southern Africa</u>
Haselton, Scott:	<u>Succulents for the Amateur</u>
Lamb, Edgar and Brian:	<u>Popular Exotic Cacti in Color</u>



CACTUS OF THE MONTH

Discocactus

by Phyllis Flechsig

The first use of the name Discocactus was by Pfeiffer back in 1837; up till then, Discocacti and what are now known as Melocacti had been lumped together under the name Cactus. Both groups are distinguished from all other cacti in having a cephalium on the top of the mature plant, from which arise all flowers and fruits. It is easy to tell the two genera apart: Melocacti all have small, pinkish, day-blooming flowers that barely emerge from the cephalium, and the plants may get quite large with tall cephaliums. Discocacti, on the other hand, all have night-blooming funnel-shaped flowers with a distinct tube, and neither the whole plant nor the cephalium ever grows very large.

Discocacti are flattened globes in shape; only a few species ever cluster, so most are solitary. The spines are often strong and appressed, spider-like, toward the plant. The cephalium--a white, wooly "hat"--may have some bristles poking out of the wool. The flower buds first appear out of the wool in the morning of the day they will bloom, grow very quickly up to their opening time in early evening, then fade away before morning. Some of the flowers are pleasantly scented. Fruits are generally club-shaped, naked, and white, pink, or red.

The late A.F.H. Buining traveled extensively in Brazil in the sixties and seventies, collecting and naming many species of Discocactus--before he died, he had named or recognized 34 species. Yet only a few of these are really distinctive, and that arch-lumper, N.P. Taylor, has reduced that number to five and has been rather sniffy about other new species still being named by Buining's associates.

One species that Buining discovered and named turned out to be one of the most--perhaps the most--distinctive and beautiful of all cacti--Discocactus horstii. Always a very small plant, its short little spines look like the claws of a tiny sea creature, and the flower is as large across as the plant. An interesting feature of this plant is the spongy texture of the spines, as seen under a very high-powered microscope; these spines are able to absorb water into the plant, an ability not known (or at least not proved) for any other species of cactus except some kinds of Turbinicarpus.

More typical Discocacti are those of the D. heptacanthus complex--these have their ribs broken into distinct rounded tubercles, and their spines are thick and more or less appressed to the plant.

D. placentiformis (Taylor includes D. alteolens and D. tricornis with it) has relatively acute ribs, not very tuberculate.

Discocactus (cont.)

Another handsome species is D. araneispinus (lumped by Taylor, along with D. boomianus, into D. zehntneri); it has many thin, spidery, gold spines.

All Discocactus flowers are much alike: funnellform, night-flowering, and white.

The native habitat of Discocacti is the tropical, arid parts of central Brazil, with one species occurring just over the border in Bolivia and one in Paraguay. This area is frost-free, semi-arid, and hot. Winters are dry for six months at a time. Discocacti occur at rather low altitudes, from about 200 to 1150 meters (650 to 3660 feet, more or less). Vegetation is relatively sparse--grasses, cacti, small trees, and shrubs. Some Discocacti grow down in grasses or under shrubs, while others grow in the open, on or between rocks. Root systems tend to be shallow and very wide-spreading.

Some people who have never grown a cactus imagine that they all grow in the desert in pure sand, and need water only when it rains in El Paso or Antofagasta. Well, here for once are a few species, including D. horstii, that actually do grow in pure white quartzite sand in the wild. Descriptions of native habitats of these plants are full of phrases like "growing on steep slopes between rocks," or "growing on bare, hilly, rocky places or in rock fissures." These habitats should give us a clue to growing these plants, which have a reputation for being difficult: a low proportion of organic matter in the soil mix, and practically instant drainage--in short, use what growers refer to as "dirty pumice."

Once you have arranged for perfect drainage, water well in the warm months but leave the roots dry in winter; keep the plants warm in a greenhouse all year. Many growers simply graft their plants to avoid some of the root-rot problems; D. horstii is generally grafted, and will grow much faster than if left on its own roots.

Discocacti are generally propagated from seed.

LITERATURE CONSULTED

- Braun, P. "A review of the genus Discocactus Pfeiffer. Pts. I-VII." Cactus and Succulent Journal (U.S.) 50: 115-117, 190-192, 239-241, 271-273 (1978); and 51: 16-17, 64-65, 138-139 (1979).
- Buining, A.F.H. The genus Discocactus Pfeiffer. Buining-fonds, Netherlands, 1980.
- Schill, R., W. Barthlott, and N. Ehler. "Cactus spines under the electron scanning microscope." Cactus and Succulent Journal (U.S.) 45: 175-185 (1973).
- Taylor, N.P. "Reconsolidation of Discocactus Pfeiff." Cactus and Succulent Journal of Great Britain 43: 37-40 (1981).

PLANTS OF THE MONTH FOR 1986

CACTUS

SUCCULENT

<u>Jan.</u>	Discocactus (P. Flechsig)	Gasteria (D. Dunn)
<u>Feb.</u>	Rhipsalis/Hatiora (R. Latimer)	Cotyledon/Adromischus (D. Dunn)
<u>Mar.</u>	Sulcorebutia/Weingartia (P. Flechsig)	Dudleya (D. Dunn)
<u>Apr.</u>	Baja California Mammillarias (P. Flechsig)	Haworthia/Astroloba (D. Dunn)
<u>May</u>	Notocactus (D. Dunn)	Succulent Begonias/Sinningias (L. Phelps)
<u>June</u>	PICNIC	-----
<u>July</u>	Astrophytum (P. Flechsig)	Jatropha (D. Dunn)
<u>Aug.</u>	Platyopuntia (R. Latimer)	Welwitschia (M. Mooney)
<u>Sept.</u>	Mammillaria rekoi/M. blossfeldiana (F. Thrombley)	Dorstenia/Ficus (volunteer)
<u>Oct.</u>	Arrojadoa (P. Flechsig)	Pachyphytum/Graptopetalum/Tacitus (D. Dunn)
<u>Nov.</u>	Crested, monstrose, & variegated cacti & succulents (D. Dunn)	
<u>Dec.</u>	CHRISTMAS PARTY	



NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

I believe 1985 was a good year, and I would like 1986 to be as good for the Society. My best wishes for a good year for all our members.

I have taken it upon myself, at the urging of several members of the Board of Directors, to restate the standards for some of our activities. I've had to reach far back in our records to find what we have been doing, and some of what I say is strictly from memory. I'll clarify things in the future if I'm wrong anywhere!

The Plant Exchange Table: this table is provided for a free exchange service among our members using ticket drawings. Anyone may bring a plant(s) or plant-related materials for which they will receive one ticket. At the end of the meeting numbers will be drawn and the individual may select one item from the table. After all tickets are drawn, anyone may select from the left-overs in an orderly fashion. The plants or other materials should be in presentable condition (and the person in charge may refuse messes). Plants may be potted, bare-root (put the root ball in a bag) or cuttings. Please, bring good cuttings that would make desirable plants. Don't bring all the trimmings from some weedy type of plant--put them in your trash can at home. Keep the exchange table what it was meant to be--an exchange of desirable items.

The Cactus and Succulent of the Month: our main educational attraction. This is the way I began learning about cacti and other succulents when I joined 19 years ago. The list for the plants of the month are probably elsewhere in this issue--look at it and plan what plants you might bring for this feature of our meetings. I'm still learning and try to bring plants occasionally that others may not know about. No prizes are given, but I believe participation in this part of the program is one of the most rewarding benefits in the Society.

The Bragging Table: it's just that! A plant that is in particularly good form that month is one to be bragged about. I have never found a printed set of rules for this feature, but following are my interpretations of the meaning of the bragging table and its rules. Any member may bring one or two cacti or other succulents for this competition each month. They are usually of show quality. They are plants which are not that month's cactus or succulent of the month. The plants are judged by the Emcee (Madelyn Lee this year) and first, second and third place awards will be given at the judge's discretion. The names of the winners will be published in Espinas y Flores and each will be given an extra ticket for the plant drawing at our Christmas meeting. No matter how many times a member wins during the year, only one extra ticket will be given. This is the only way at the present time that an extra ticket can be earned for the Christmas drawing.

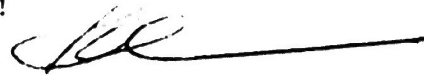
Plant Sales: a service of the Society to provide plants not readily available locally. The person in charge purchases plants and related materials (either outright or on consignment) to be sold at our meetings. We as a Society are not in the nursery business, so don't expect plants that are readily available in the city. Look for the unusual or the exotic! Individual sales are not permitted under Park rules.

Christmas Plants: For many years the Society has given each member in attendance at the December meeting a high quality cactus or other succulent at no charge. These plants ordinarily have a value of over \$5.00 each. The money to purchase them comes from the profits of the plant sales we have. (The entire dues goes to pay for the bulletin you are now reading--no profit there!) Because of the difficulties involved, only those members in attendance get a Christmas plant--this rule was reaffirmed by the Board this past year. Members who actively participate in the work of the Society are given first preference in the plant drawing. I thought this worked well in 1985, and the Board has asked Madelyn Lee to refine the rules for gaining this preference, so look for them. Please notice that holding an office in the Society is not sufficient to gain preference--you've got to work!

Finally, Espinas y Flores is your bulletin! Sometimes it is a little thin. Why don't you write up an experience and send it to the editor. It might be a single paragraph or a page or more. If you have trouble writing it up, I or someone will help you. I know that many of you had interesting experiences last year that others would like to know about--a plant flowered for the first time after many failures, a plant grew for the first time after many failures, a plant didn't die after many failures or you had excellent results the first time you tried a difficult plant. Write it up!

All meetings this year are scheduled for the second Saturday of the month. All except the June picnic will be in our usual room at 1:30 p.m. The show will be Saturday and Sunday, May 31 and June 1 this year.

Have a good year, and participate!


Lee Phelps, President

SAN DIEGO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
CALENDAR YEAR 1986

Annual dues are \$8.00 per single member per year, \$2.00 for each additional member of a household within a family.

-PLEASE PRINT-

NAME; _____ DATE _____

ADDRESS; _____ PHONE (____) _____

CITY; _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Additional members;

NAME; _____

NAME; _____

NAME; _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

Please complete and mail to, Martin L. Mooney, Treasurer, 97 K St.
Chula Vista, Ca. 92011

**SAN DIEGO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY
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Shirley Berry, Jerry Brattmiller, Cathy Frost,
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The San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society is open to all persons interested in growing cacti, other succulents and exotic plants. Meetings are held the second Saturday of each month at 1:30 pm in Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park. Board of Directors meetings are held after the general meetings. Annual dues are \$8.00 per single member per year, \$2.00 for each additional member of a household within a family. Single copies of Espinas y Flores are 60 cents.

Editor
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