

ESPINAS Y FLORES



PROGRAMS

The Block Garden- Andrew Wilson

Peniocereus- Jürgen Menzel

Herb Stern on the Anza Borrego with a Video

**Michael Buckner on the Water Wise Garden at
Cuyamaca College in Honor of his Father**

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

AFFILIATED WITH THE CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY OF AMERICA

VOLUME 39 NUMBER 8

SATURDAY AUGUST 13TH, 1:00 PM

ROOM 101 CASA DEL PRADO, BALBOA PARK

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Saturday, July 16th, 2005

Hola!

Another fantastic meeting with nearly too many topics to discuss and too many people to visit with to keep up!

Greg Starr's program on Agaves was well done and gave us a great overview of this complex and intriguing group of plants. Chris Miller's talk on her involvement with the hobby and photos of her backyard project were just as well done as we've come to expect from her. Herb's got everyone primed now for one of our most important contributions that we'll give this year, to the Anza Borrego Foundation.

Coming up in August we'll be making another attempt at showing the Anza Borrego Video, Juergen Menzel will be discussing the genus *Peniocereus*, and Andrew Wilson will give us a talk on "A Concrete Block Garden". I'm not sure if we'll have a formal program or not at this time, but if not we can probably fill up enough time with these most excellent speakers and general Q&A!



Mark your calendars now for our annual picnic at the Wild Animal Park on September 10th, and don't worry we'll have more information at the August meeting.

Looking forward to seeing you all there,

Mark Fryer

Cover: *Trichocereus terscheckii*, is the largest cactus in Argentina. This particular photo was taken in the lower Andean foothills of Quebrada del Toro which is famous for the train route called the "Train to the Clouds," from Salta over the Andes to Chile. The train is the 4th highest operating in the world reaching an altitude of over 15,000 feet. One of this planet's beautiful but extreme locations..... Kay Quijada



JULY BRAG TABLE WINNERS

Cactus:

1st - *Gymnocalycium mihanvichii v. friedrichiae*

Peter Walkowiak

2nd - *Gymnocalycium tucavocense*

Peter Walkowiak

3rd - *Lobivia haageana*

Alan Clark

Succulents:

1st - *Echeveria shaviana*

Bev Grant

2nd - *Sinningia tubliflora*

Peter Walkowiak

2nd - *Echeveria sp.*

Bev Grant

3rd - *Eurphobia geradiana*

Peter Walkowiak

3rd - *Pelargonium reniforme*

Rudy Lime

My name is Shari Buckhout and I am the Plant Registrar for the San Diego Zoo. I am contacting you on behalf of our Horticulture Department in the hope of establishing a working relationship by which both of our organizations could benefit.

Although the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park have long been growing a number of cactus and succulents we have only scratched the surface of thoroughly identifying and developing these collections. To date, we have identified and cataloged 99% of our Aloe collection but yet haven't tackled our diverse Euphorbia collection. As you could well imagine this would be a challenging task even if we did have a trained Taxonomist on staff. And over the last 10 years we have acquired a couple of large donations with very limited identifications available. Most recently, we have accepted a very large and valuable donation of cactus and succulents including numerous Aloe & Euphorbia spp.. Since this is quite a large (approx. 400 specimens) and diverse donation we thought your membership might be interested in collaborating with us on identification and organization of this donation for display and maintenance.

For your group this would be an opportunity to practice their identification skills and hone their knowledge of cultural requirements necessary for successful long term care. If you are interested or have any questions, please feel free to contact me or the Horticulturist by email or phone at the following: Mike Bostwick (619) 231-1515 Ext. 4294

email: mbostwick@sandiegozoo.org

Sincerely, Shari Buckhout

Plant Registrar, San Diego Zoo

(619) 231-1515 x4296

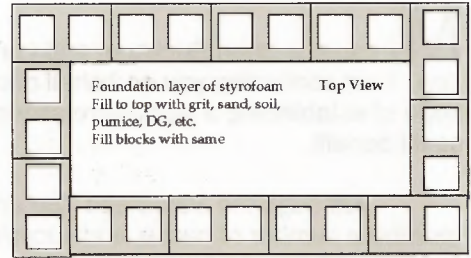
THE BLOCK GARDEN

By, Andrew Wilson

There are two ways most of us grow succulent plants, one is in pots on the bench and the other is in the ground. On the bench we have the plants right before our eyes, demanding much attention. In the ground we see them from further away but they need less daily tending. It is pointless for us to argue which is better for anyone because that is dependent on many factors, ourselves included. Instead, let us take a look at third way of growing them, one that can give us the best of both worlds. I call it the block garden.

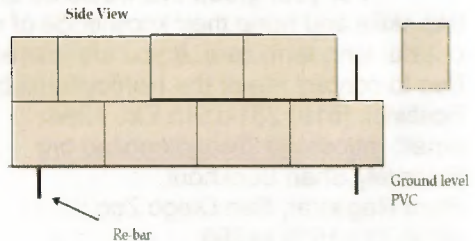
In many people's yards there is a space that gets sun and is not overhung by trees. That is the ideal place for growing our succulent plants, or most of them. If the soil is badly draining it does not matter with block garden; if there is no soil but an unused concrete slab that is just as good. It does not have to be level either but that does make construction a little easier. Let us assume for descriptive simplicity that it is flat. The idea is to build a raised bed out of concrete blocks to a height that allows us look at our possessions without having to stoop or wear intermediate range lenses and yet have the plants free from the scourges such as meales. To make such a bed all we need are concrete blocks (8" wide x 16" long x 8" high), some PVC sheeting, large pieces of styrofoam and a mix of materials such as grit, coarse sand, cracked pots, pumice and, if you have, some soil.

After you have decided the area you want convert into a block garden lay out the PVC. Do this even if you have perfect drainage! The purpose is to prevent the roots of trees from coming up into the bed. Then lay out the blocks, end to end to enclose the area and put on the next layer and continue. No concrete is needed. If the wall height is three blocks high or less that is all you have to do. If it is taller



Drive steel re-bars into the spaces of the blocks, one re-bar about every three feet and at the corners.

After the blocks have been laid in place, weep-holes can be punched at the bottom level of blocks if the blocks do not already have a groove in



their design. After this is done the walled area can be filled. Then lay a layer of styrofoam pieces. The least expensive way to get this material is to scavenge the stuff at any of the places where it is being thrown out. We use so much of it today and recycle so little it is unnecessary to buy it. Go to any electronics store and they will generally oblige. Chop the large pieces down to sizes of no smaller than 3 inches across, either way. Dump this at the bottom up to the height of the first block or, if the wall is three blocks high you can increase this bottom layer. Then you fill the remaining height with a mixture of your own choice. What you need is fast draining material with little or no organic content.

Most cacti and succulent plants, in general, do not need a rich organic material, which will only break down in a few years, causing you to keep filling the bed and possibly impeding the drainage due to debris at the bottom. Inorganic mixes of soil, coarse sand, grit, decomposed granite (DG) and pumice in whatever your preferences are. I have used, by volume, one third of my garden soil, one third of 12 grit sand and one third pumice. An equally good choice would be coarse DG, if you can find it. The same filler as used in the bed can be used in the holes of the blocks to create planting sites on top of the wall.

Cacti and nearly any succulent plant I've tried will thrive in this light, well aerated, fast-draining mix. Whether to fertilize or not is not critical, particularly if you have included some garden soil or DG, both of which have their own nutrients. Aloes may want some but I use virtually nothing. Watering is not needed except in summer

and then once a week is adequate for most plants on account of the much greater root-room than they would have in a pot. In the wall pockets, some plants may desire more.



Cheiridopsis umdausensis in January. Planted in the concrete block cavity it spills over the sides. Species like this do not want much moisture and the concrete blocks provide sufficient moisture depth in summer heat and very fast drainage even in heavy winter rains.

Among the advantages of the block garden over the potted bench or the planted bed we include: (1) less attention needed for water or fertilizer; (2) fewer pests – especially meales or spiders; (3) no repotting; (4) small plants can be seen much more easily than in regular planted-out condition. Add to this its ability to provide a colorful, perennial presence. It may not suit all tastes as there will be fewer plants

per square foot than on a container-bench and there will be fewer reasons to spend time caring for or fussing with them. Also, the plants growing will become larger and more handsome than when potted, an additional reason fertilize seldom. Handsome and well-shaped as they grow with more elbow-room, they cannot be brought to the brag-table for a single show. However, growing in such a light mix they can be dug out quite easily without significant root damage if you decide to revert one to a container specimen and then show it off!

The block garden makes an attractive feature of your garden year-round. It is much more attractive than a container-filled bench and better suited to displaying small cactus and succulent plants than planting out can give. It is not expensive, nor a huge amount of work to create. Give it a shot!



(below)

Block garden in March. Included here are *Aloe pictifolia* (front left), *Othonna haworthii* (center rear), *Pelargonium fulgens* (front right) in addition to *Pachyphytums*, numerous *Mesembs*, dwarf *Euphorbias*, *Gasterias* and *Crassulas*.



PENIOCEREUS

By, Juergen Menzel

Even if most of them are rather shrubby plants I feel a special affection for all cacti with tuberous roots. No matter whether they are *Micropunia*, which were the topic of my talk in 2003, *Wilcoxia* from Mexico, *Pterocacti* from Southern Argentina or those called *Peniocereus*, which I want to present this time.

The genus *Peniocereus* (Berger) as understood by Britton & Rose, is only found on the Pacific side of Mexico, from Sonora to Chiapas, with one exception which grows in Southern Arizona. In general the plants of this genus have very thin, long stems, tuber- or carrot-like roots and large white fragrant night blossoms. They usually grow under bushes or in shrubs, which give support to their long



Peniocereus Jungle



Peniocereus rosei (showing tuber, mature and juvenile growth)

stems. Due to the gray to purple-brownish colored inconspicuous stems they are very difficult to make out in their 'host'-plant unless they are showing their big and bright red seed pods or are flowering. However, then one can rather smell than see them in the dark.

I will divide the species of this genus (in the old narrow sense) into two major groups:

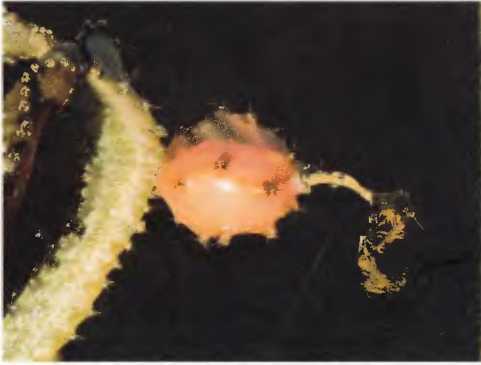
1.) Those which are indigenous to Southern Arizona, Sonora and Sinaloa. These plants have thin, 3-4 angled wooden stems:

P. greggii with ssp., *johnstonii* and *marianus*.

2.) Those which are native to areas close to the Pacific coast of Mexico, from Sinaloa to Chiapas:



Peniocereus maculatus (flower)



Peniocereus maculatus (fruit)

2a.) the stems of these plants have (2)3-6(7) ribs and stay angular (though, not necessarily with the same number of ribs and kind of spination) even when mature, i.e. ready to bloom:

P. castellae, *cuixmalensis*, *macdougallii* with ssp., *maculatus* and *occidentalis*.

Peniocereus marnierianus, which exists only as a single clone in the Botanic Garden 'Les Cedres' in France and is still due to be rediscovered in habitat.

2b.) These are plants with dimorphic stems; when young they have 3-6 an-

gled stems which become clearly thinner and round when they get longer, mature and ready to bloom:

P. fosterianus with ssp., *rosei* and *tepalcatepecanus*.

The species of group 2a/b tend to grow juvenile branches at the tip of old ones, which easily brake off and root.

Today *Neoevansia striata/diguettii*, *lazaro-cardenazii* and *zopilotensis*, *Wilcoxia viperina* and *Nyctocereus chontalensis*, *guatemalensis*, *oaxacensis* and *serpentinus* are also lumped into and regarded as *Peniocereus*. Most of those are native to Southern Mexico and tropical Central America. They all have longish and rather thin stems with 7-13 ribs and tuber- or dahlia-like roots. Some of them are blooming in the daytime, though, with reddish to purple flowers (former *Neoevansias*).



Peniocereus rosei (flower)

Due to the lack of seeds offered propagation is mainly done by cuttings. Cultivation is not complicated when using porous soil, keeping plants

rather in semi-shade than in full sun and watering them sparingly. Soon though, the stems have to be supported with sticks or a trellis.

Literature:

H. Bravo-Hollis: Las Cactáceas de México, volume I, 1978.

E. F. Anderson: The Cactus Family, 2001.

<http://www.desert-tropicals.com/Plants/Cactaceae/Peniocereus.html>



Peniocereus cuixmalensis
(with flower)



Peniocereus zopilotensis



Peniocereus castellae



Peniocereus guatemalensis



Peniocereus guatemalensis (fruit)

THE AFRICAN TREE

By, Kay Quijada

On a recent trip to southern Africa, Joe and I visited Namibia's Impalila Island. The island is reached only by boat from Kasane, Botswana, and is the only place in the world where 4 countries - Namibia, Zambia, Botswana and Zimbabwe - meet. The Island is located near the meeting place of two large rivers, the Chobe and the mighty Zambezi. The watery wonderland of Impalila, (also spelled Mpalila,) is surrounded by beautiful river channels lined with reed and papyrus marshes, and is rich with wildlife. Our lovely lodge was built around 2 remarkable baobab trees, *Adansonia digitata*.

We were told there was a very grand baobab tree growing on the island accessible only by foot through the island's woodlands. Early the next morning, properly armed with water canteens by our guide, we started our hike to the tree. It was very warm, and we were only too happy to stop now and then to enjoy the rich birdlife flitting about us.

We saw dozens of interesting birds, including the beautiful Lilac-breasted Roller, Namibia's national bird. More than 2 hours later, we had the old baobab tree within sight. The hike had been worth every sweaty step to see this magnificent tree. Enormous it was; we could only guess the diameter of the tree. The large roots that showed above ground ran over 120 feet from the base of the tree as they disappeared into the woods.

Our guide told us the tree was estimated to be over 2,000 years old. We watched as our young guide climbed up the tree and out of sight. The baobab was used many years ago by an invading South African Army as a lookout post. Steel rods were imbedded as climbing aids up the trunk of the tree, and there were scars of old bullet holes and machete marks on its wrinkled bark. We were told elephants eat the bark, and fruit bats pollinate the big white 24-hour blooming flowers. People manufacture paper products from its spongy wood. Animals and people compete for the protein-rich fruit and seed pods, and the leaves are cooked and eaten like spinach. We took too many photos and happily walked away, amazed at what we'd seen.



Adansonia digitata

UPCOMING EVENTS

2005

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 Confirmed speakers already include Sheila Collenette, 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



2005 SDCSS Show & Sale Trophy Winners

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Reception: Ethel Standish
Regalement
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Suzie White

The due date for all articles, notices, etc. will be the meeting preceding the intended issue (approximately one month ahead of time). The due date for letters, "brag table" winners and the "Presidents Message" will be one week later. All submissions are to be made to the Editor.