

# ESPINAS Y FLORES



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

**Volume 38 Number 11  
Saturday November 8th 2003 1:00 PM  
Room 101 Casa Del Prado, Balboa Park**



# Presidents Message

October 19, 2003

**A**s I write this we are enjoying the great San Diego fall weather of warm days and cool mornings. The winter growers are beginning to wake up and put on leaves as the summer growers put on a last burst of growth.

Our October meeting was a great one and very well attended with close to 90 members and guests signing in and several new members signing up - welcome! John Trager is quite a draw and it became obvious why as he delighted us with slides of his most recent trip to South Africa. Though we have had many programs on Africa, each speaker brings his or her unique perspective, and John's superb photography and extensive knowledge made for a beautiful perspective, indeed! Thanks John for another wonderful program...

Tom Knapik made an interesting presentation on Bromeliads for Succulent of the Month. Although some may still argue that these are not succulents, there is no denying that these plants are lots of fun and fit in very well with cactus and succulents. Thanks to Tom for his informative and inspirational discussion. Terry Parr was unable to attend the meeting so Mark Fryer stepped in to discuss the genus *Gymnocalycium* on which Terry had written an article. Both did a good job of acquainting us with this genus which is so fun to grow for its beautiful blooms. Thanks to Terry and Mark!

We did not get many entries for our tee-shirt contest, but there is still time. The board will be meeting after the November meeting so if you have a design you would like considered, please get it to a board member ASAP. Remember, this is going to be for our June Show and Sale and should have that information (June 5&6, 2004.)

I had the opportunity to get up to the Wild Animal Park yesterday and see all the work our volunteers have been doing. What a great job! Chris Miller, Jurgen Menzel, Tom DeMerritt, Bert and Nancy Elder have been putting in a "Trojan effort" to keep down the weeds, install new plants, water, and really give shape to the Old World Succulent garden. Be sure to check it out when you visit the Park this fall. They can always use more hands as well, so now that the weather is cooling down - be sure to contact Chris about this worthwhile volunteer opportunity.

We will be having our annual Holiday Party in lieu of a meeting on December 13th starting at noon. This is always great fun so save the date. We are planning some surprises so don't miss out! Look for details in the next newsletter. We will have all the information at the November meeting, so come prepared to sign up...

See you on the 8th! Pam Badger  
[pambadge@earthlink.net](mailto:pambadge@earthlink.net)



## Program

Woody Minnich on Brazil

### Cactus of the Month

Rhipsalis by Pam Badger

### Succulent of the Month

Pelargonium & Sarcocaulon by Rudy Lime

## CSSA Promotional Article (2003 #2)

The **2003 CSSA Convention** held in St. Louis in June is now history. It was a resounding success. Two days of talks were devoted to succulents and two to cacti. The excellent array of speakers ranged from local to international authorities, and from returning old time favorites to new speakers not previously heard at a convention. Thanks to Leo Martin for arranging such an interesting program. A spectacular selection of plants (and pots in which to house them) was available in the sales area. Thanks for the hard work of all the vendors in making these items available. **The Rare Plant Auction** raised over \$5400 for the **CSSA Research Fund**. The midweek break for field trips featured several excursions, the most popular being to the Missouri Botanical Garden with a brief visit to their fantastic library and herbarium collection. The venue for the convention, the **St. Louis Airport Marriott** was convenient and comfortable with a friendly and highly efficient staff. The local organizing committee from the **Henry Shaw Cactus Society** is to be congratulated for all their efforts insuring a smoothly run convention.

Upcoming CSSA events include two overseas trips to view our fa-

# Rhipsalis

## A Gondwanic Genus

By Pam Badger

**R**hipsalis are a diverse group of mostly epiphytic cacti with over 60 species. They make a wonderful addition to any collection as they make beautiful hanging baskets and prefer shade, thus filling a niche for cactus lovers. I grow them on the patio amongst tropical plants, giving them a good soak weekly in the summer and much less often in the cool, damp months. They flower readily with small, mostly cream colored blooms along the margins, later forming small, abundant fruit, mostly cream to white, some pink to red.



For years I have talked about Rhipsalis not only as a lovely, easy to grow genus, but promoting them as

holding a key role in the evolution of cactus, and the only endemic "Old World" cactus. I do not remember where I got this idea and had no idea how controversial this idea is until I began research for this article.

The evolution of most plant families is fairly clear and documented with fossil evidence which traces their lineage. Cacti are a different story because the locations where they thrive are not suited to the formation of fossils. Thus, the evolution of cacti is a speculative sport only recently made slightly less so with the advent of molecular biology - which is helpful but far from conclusive in these matters. The main objection to the hypothesis that Rhipsalis holds a key role in the evolution of cacti comes from molecular biology which does not show Rhipsalis as being particularly primitive (which it certainly would have to be to make this theory work), although it doesn't provide much evidence for it being an advanced genus either. So for now we can continue to enjoy the speculation.

Let me start with a quick review of geologic history. 225 million years ago all the land masses on earth were stuck together in one giant "supercontinent," named Pangea. This continent gradually broke into several smaller supercontinents, and very gradually, over hundreds of millions of

years, drifted, breaking into the smaller continents along their way, to become the continents we know today.

"Godwana" was the name of the super-continent which eventually broke up into Africa and South America, and was home to the first cacti - Rhipsalis.



The way the theory goes, Rhipsalis evolves from a tree climbing, semi succulent Pereskia species at a time when Africa and South America were still Godwana. This unknown, ancestral genus becomes epiphytic in the process losing its leaves and becoming ever more succulent. This is either a species of Rhipsalis or its immediate progenitor. *R. baccifera* appears at an early stage in the evolution of the genus and spreads rapidly through the tropical rain forests of West Godwana but not so widely into East Godwana, possibly because of the formation of a seaway between the two portions of the supercontinent. The American and African/Madagascan populations of *R. baccifera* eventually become geneti-

cally isolated and begin to diverge - so that they are now classified as separate species.

Some populations of the *Rhipsalis baccifera* group in the New World forsake an epiphytic habitat for one on the ground. *R. baccifera* itself can be either epiphytic (tree growing) or epilithic (rock growing) and is therefore "preadapted" for such a change in lifestyle. These, now ground dwelling South American populations form the stock for most of the Cactoideae, but the eastern population, isolated in E. Africa and surrounding islands, proves to be a cul-de-sac of evolution. The genus is now represented in the Old World by only three species which were originally classified as subspecies of *R. baccifera*, but are now considered unique species. These include: *R. mauritiana* from tropical Africa, Madagascar, Seychelles Islands and Sri Lanka; *R. erythrocarpa* from E. Africa, and *R. horrida* from Madagascar. All other species are from the Americas.



# Some Additional Information On Pelargonium & Sarcocaulon

By Jeff Harris

The majority of species of Pelargonium and Sarcocaulon come from South Africa and Namibia, though they are found in other parts of the Old World, too. Pelargoniums differ from their relatives, the Geraniums, by the shape of their flowers and seeds. Pelargonium flowers have two upper petals that differ in shape from the three lower ones (zygomorphic). Geraniums have equally shaped flowers (actinomorphic). Sarcocaulons also have actinomorphic flowers.



*Pelargonium camosum*

This, very succulent species grows well in the ground and makes a handsome landscape plant, adding nice touches of green and small pale flowers all spring and summer.



*Pelargonium pulverulentum*

A good caduciform species - this seedling in a 3" pot is about ready to be transplanted.

Pelargonium leaves are generally deciduous, the leaves falling when the plant goes into dormancy. That is usually in summer. Remember, it doesn't really matter when summer starts, in June (northern hemisphere) or December (southern hemisphere).

Succulent pelargoniums are not frost hardy; many do well in less-than-direct light.

Personally, I've not (yet) killed any Pelargoniums or Sarcocaulons,

which makes me a virtual virtuoso, in my reckoning. But seriously, folks, all that I know I have learned from Rudy. I don't have a particular soil mix, just the regular 3 parts pumice/2 parts decomposed granite sand/1 part organic matter. I water the Pelargoniums very little, if at all, in the summertime. Sarcocaulons, however, as a test this year, I began to water and they've responded fabulously. I used to think they were, like their relatives the Pelargoniums, summer-dormant, but my *Sarcocaulon herrei* seemed to enjoy water all summer long, as did the *S. crassicaule*. I kept the water off of the Pelargoniums during the summer, and began watering in late September. As of this writing (late October) the *P. alternans* is beginning to show some growth.

Within the Geranium Family there are considered to be five genera:

- o Geranium
- o Pelargonium
- o Erodium
- o Monsonia

Sarcocaulon - some of the plants we call Sarcocaulon have been transferred to the genus Monsonia, but like many changes in taxonomy, they are just names. What is important is the plant(s). Shakespeare said, in one of his Sonnets, "Neither a Splitter nor Lumper be". Sounder advice has rarely been given.



The Pelargoniums have a wide variety of leaf shape and color - adding variety to the succulent landscape.



*Sarcocaulon vanderietias*  
A seedling on it's way to becoming a Bonsai.

Some Internet web addresses that have information on Pelargoniums and Sarcocaulons:

- [www.desert-tropicals.com](http://www.desert-tropicals.com)
- <http://igsrobin.info> (the information site for the International Geranium Society)
- <http://www.connectexpress.com/~pliek/kio/page1.htm>
- <http://www.gpdessert.com/Fat%20Plant%20Photos.html> (lots of other great Fat Plant photos here)
- <http://users.iafrica.com/c/ca/capeflor/pelargon.htm>
- <http://pelargonium.info/gclinks.html>



beauty - neither of which applies to Rhipsalis.

I hope you have enjoyed this quick look at this fascinating genus with its controversial history. As a lover of geography, I am always interested in how plants come to grow where they do, and welcome any discussion on this subject.

Though this theory makes great, good sense to me, apparently there are people who account for the presence of Rhipsalis in the Old World to a variety of other factors including dispersal by birds, "rafting," and dispersal by humans. Though if you think about it for longer than a minute, these do not seem very probable. First the birds. Birds migrate north to south and visa versa, not west to east, as they would have to to disperse seed from South America to Africa. Rafting - the idea that plants and animals drift with currents to be dispersed in far away places - also does not make sense here, as there are no prevailing currents from S. America to Africa, let alone East Africa where the populations of Rhipsalis in Africa occur. The dispersal by humans is also highly unlikely. Such a dispersal would have had to take place very early for the amount of genetic diversity found between the Old and New Worlds, and people were not traveling or immigrating from S. America to E. Africa. And though humans do tend to drag plants all over the globe, this is generally due their economic importance or stunning

Sources:

When the Cactus Came Down from the Trees Dr. Phil Maxwell, New Zealand Cactus and Succulent Journal 2/99

[rhipsalis.com](http://rhipsalis.com)



favorite plants in habitat organized by the **Field Trips Committee** chaired by Dan Mahr, one to **Madagascar** and one to **Chile**. The Madagascar trip in May, 2004 was originally scheduled for May 2002 but had to be postponed owing to political unrest in the country at the time. The Chile trip is scheduled for October/November 2004. It is my understanding that the Madagascar trip is full and the Chile trip nearly so. Being able to be a participant on one of these trips is one of the many benefits of CSSA membership.

Plans for the **2005 CSSA Convention** to be held in **Phoenix** in August of that year are already well under way. The venue is reputed to be a fabulous resort facility available to use for a very reasonable price (August is off season in Phoenix, three guesses as to why, but, of course, cactophiles don't mind the heat). The array of field trips to be offered on field trip day is so impressive that it's going to be very difficult to decide which to register for. More on the Phoenix Convention in future articles as plans develop.

One of the most important issues facing CSSA is that of membership and how to increase it. We now have a **Membership Committee** composed of board members and others whose task it is to address this issue. It is, of course, true that the more members we have, the more benefits we can offer the membership. Yet we have not been able to increase our membership significantly for a number of years. It's up a bit in convention years, down a bit in off years. I would have thought that the tremendous improvement in the quality of our Journal and Newsletter under the editorships of Myron Kimnach and Carol Clapp respectively, would have had a more positive effect on membership. At any rate, the committee is kicking around a number of ideas for increasing our membership, and we are open to any suggestions that might occur to readers of this article. I've always been convinced that a natural target audience for increasing CSSA membership is those affiliate club members not currently enjoying the benefits thereof. Hence, this series of articles extolling the benefits of CSSA membership that periodically appear in affiliate club newsletters. Anything that affiliate club presidents, affiliate representatives, newsletter editors, etc. might be able to do to promote CSSA membership among your club members would be greatly appreciated by our society.

Bob Barth  
Publicity Chair  
CSSA Board of Directors

# Upcoming Events

## 2003

**October 11–12 Central Florida C&SS Plant Sale** in conjunction with the Botanical Gardens at USF in Tampa, Florida, off Fowler Avenue. 10am to 4pm. Contact Vicki Hunter at 1-800-226-2527 ext. 448

**October 17–18 9th Xeriscape Conference: *Water: Our Future ... Our Legacy.*** Our two confirmed water keynoters are: **Dr Peter Gleick** and **Amy Vickers**. **Dr Gleick** is President of the Pacific Institute and author of *The World's Water 2002-2003*. He will open the conference on Friday with a report on the global water situation. **Amy Vickers**, of Amherst, Mass., is author of the *Handbook of Water – Use and Conservation* and will keynote the Saturday session. We have also invited **Governor Richardson** to kick-off the conference on Friday morning. Other confirmed speakers include: **Dr Katherine Gleason**, Chair of the Landscape Architecture Department, Cornell University, who has excavated ancient gardens in the Mediterranean to reveal their structure for utilization of water; **Tom Swetnam**, Director of the Tree Ring Lab at the University of Arizona; **Mike Kernodle**, former USGS hydrologist who studied New Mexico water availability; **Doug Bennett**, formerly with Albuquerque Water Conservation Office and now implementing conservation measures in Las Vegas, NV; Additional speakers will be announced soon. For more information visit our web site. Register early on our secure web site—<http://www.xeriscape.nm.com> (All major charge cards) At the Albuquerque Convention Center and Exhibit Hall. Fee for the 2-day conference will remain \$100.00. This fee includes program materials, lunch both days and access to the exhibit hall where we plan on about 100 booths/exhibitors! Mail registration to Xeriscape Council, PO Box 14311, Albuquerque, NM 87191. More details from Scott Varner—e-mail: [scott@xeriscape.nm.com](mailto:scott@xeriscape.nm.com)

**October 18–19 Orange County C&SS Show and Sale**, Fullerton Arboretum

**October 18–19 San Gabriel Valley C&SS Show and Sale**, LA Arboretum.

## 2004

**January 17:** CSSA Board Meeting at Huntington Botanical Gardens

**April 17:** CSSA Board Meeting at Huntington Botanical Gardens

**May 3 - 5:** **Sonoran V Conference** at Inn Suites Hotel (formerly the Ramada Inn) Theme will be BAJA. Speakers and workshops. Tentative plans include Friday night pre-conference dinner, speaker and opening of the plant sales area for all members and conference participants. Conference opening will be on Saturday morning for registrants. Show and Sale open to public. Silent auction, raffle and a special dinner on Saturday night featuring recipes utilizing cacti, succulents and other desert plants. Number of registrants will be limited to 100.

**June 11 - 13:** **Mid-West Conference** Hosted by River City C&SS and Mid-Iowa C&SS.

Travel Lodge, Council Bluffs, Iowa. Details: Kathy Bokelman 402-592-1355 or e-mail her at [Kathy@katbroker.com](mailto:Kathy@katbroker.com)

**July 1 - 3:** **CSSA Show and Sale** at HBG (Note: HBG closed on July 4) Entrance to HBG is free on July 1, 2004.

**August 20 - 22:** **14th Eastern C&S Conference** at the DoubleTree Guest Suites in Plymouth Meeting PA. Hosted by the Philadelphia C&SS. While you're there, enjoy Longwood Gardens and Morris Arboretum, world-class museums and a brand new baseball stadium. For more info contact Co-chairpersons, Rita Hojnowski 856-227-0599 [ritabhoj@comcast.net](mailto:ritabhoj@comcast.net) or Elayne Toizer e-mail: [atoizer@aol.com](mailto:atoizer@aol.com) or tel: 215-233-2965 **Succulent Lovers, Unite!!!**

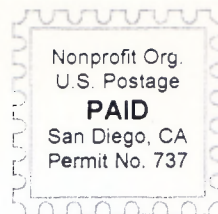
**August 21:** **British C&SS National Show**, Spalding Exhibition Centre, Springfield, Spalding, Lincs, England.

**September 4:** **21st Huntington Symposium** at Huntington Botanical Gardens.

**September 5:** **CSSA Board Meeting**, Huntington Botanical Gardens.

**Mid-October:** **CSSA Tour** to Chile, home to *Copiapoa*, *Eriosyce*, *Eulychnia* and others. See request for applications and itinerary in last issue of *The Point*.

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

Conservation: Joey Betzler & Kelly Griffin  
Education & Exhibits  
Brag Table: Shirley Berry & 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

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

**IMPORTANT NOTICE!!!**  
**NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER IS LATE DUE TO FIRES!**  
**DON'T MISS NOVEMBER MEETING-**  
**11/8/03**

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**PROGRAM for DECEMBER 13, 2003**

*HOLIDAY PARTY - 12:00 NOON*

POT LUCK DESSERTS  
LUNCH PROMPTLY SERVED at 12:30 PM  
SPECIAL PLANT EXCHANGE  
DISTRIBUTION OF GIFT PLANTS TO MEMBERS  
MINI-AUCTION  
(NO LIBRARY and NO PLANT SALES)

WE'RE HAVING A TRADITIONAL HOLIDAY BUFFET MENU:

Roast Turkey  
Sage Dressing  
Mashed Potatoes with Giblet Gravy  
Tossed Green Salad  
Fresh Vegetable Trays  
Cranberry Sauce  
Rolls with Butter  
Coffee, Tea, Soda, Beer, Wine

WE'LL CONTINUE WITH OUR PAST "TRADITION" AND HAVE A POTLUCK  
DESSERT.....so please bring something sweet and delicious

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Please mail your reservation, with check(s) made payable to SDCSS. Mail TO: SDCSS,  
P.O. BOX 33181, SAN DIEGO, CA 92163-3181

Please reserve a Holiday Lunch for Members(s) @ \$11.50 per Member:

MEMBER NAME \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBER NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Please reserve a Holiday Lunch for Guest (s) @\$11.50 per Guest (sorry, no gift plant for  
non-members or members not purchasing a lunch)

GUEST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

GUEST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

The Plant Exchange will be conducted during the luncheon, Gift Plants during dessert.

**Note: We need to have an accurate count for the caterer so help us by making  
your reservation as soon as possible.**