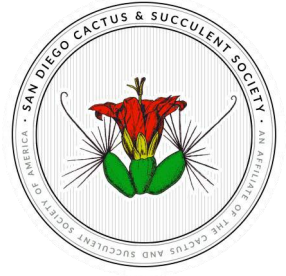


# ESPINAS Y FLORES



VOL. 60, No. 08  
AUGUST 2025

NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN DIEGO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY  
AN AFFILIATE OF THE CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY OF AMERICA



ALOE CASTILLONIAE // AUGUST SPEAKER // MEMBER SECTION //  
JULY BRAG TABLE RESULTS // ...and more



## ON THE COVER

*Aloe castilloniae* hybrids by Kelly Griffin

Photo by Kelly Griffin

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## UPCOMING SDCSS SCHEDULE

### UPCOMING MEETING

August 9th

### NEXT UPCOMING MEETING

September 13th

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

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Monthly Regalement	Sandy Wetzels-Smith
Picnic Regalement	[open]
Coffee in the Garden Coordinator	[open]

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

July was great meeting! Sincere thanks to Pat Bryan for her in depth dive into Beaucarneas and to Mark Fryer for sharing his cactus adventures in Argentina and Chile. Both talks were not to be missed. Lots of great information and excellent photos, perhaps the best seen! It was a well attended meeting and we had to set up more chairs to accommodate everyone which is always a good sign!

We appreciate all the fine vendors that showed up too and shared their plants and pots with us. They are a double blessing by allowing us to add to our gardens and also support the club at the same time.

Our next meeting will feature a first time talk for SDCSS from Oakes Austin. He is a newer grower that hails originally from the east coast, Massachusetts. He has been working with Steven Hammer at the Spheroid Institute in Vista Ca. assisting in growing and propagating some incredible succulent plants. I look forward to hearing his growers perspective talk and seeing what new things he will bring to us!

The plant of the month talk will focus on my adventures, experience and creations with Aloe castillonae from Madagascar. (Article in this issue).

I hope we have a similar great turnout and I look forward to having to add more chairs!

There will be a sign up for the upcoming Succulent Plant Symposium at the Huntington Botanical Garden. It will take place on Friday August 29th at HBG. I believe this is the forty second Succulent Plant Symposium. It is an all day event and everyone is invited. [Find the link to the event here.](#)

The Succulent Plant Symposium is a great experience and while attending, you will have the opportunity to tour the gardens on break and/or pass on a speaker ~ if so inclined ~ to venture deeper and explore the botanic garden more.

This event is not free but SDCSS would like to encourage our dedicated club members to attend so we are, as we have done in the past, covering entry to this for you if you have made a contribution to our club functions as both a reward and an incentive to continue to do so. So what qualifies for this? A lot! Plant of the Month, Chairperson of a committee, Brag table, Raffle, BOD, Officer etc. If you want to go, and you are a contributing member, we want you to go too! So please just ask us. Chances are good for you. You might have to take a few photos



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

and let us know about it but sharing is caring!

Please do not sign up on this SDCSS list if you are unsure or just thinking about it. We don't want to incur the expense to the club on a maybe. There will likely be some opportunities to car pool to this event but you should organize that among interested parties.

The club picnic is coming up in October. Saturday October 11th to be exact. We do need help in both the organization and planning to make this event happen. We are tentatively planning to have it at Kate Sessions Park. If you are interested in helping out, let one of us know at the August meeting.

Finally, there is a very important issue that we all need to pay attention to and to address. That is the pay parking situation in the park. It is slated to start in September or October, hopefully it doesn't. We need to understand it, find work arounds and then advocate not just on the clubs behalf but for ourselves. Admittedly, paying 5 bucks to walk the park is likely no big deal to most one time a year visitors but for our club and it's volunteers and our customers that spend hours at our shows and sales, this is so substantial and has the potential for

such a negative impact on our bottom line. The changes to our attendance at both the general meetings and at our shows and sales could be devastating. We need everyone to sign in, we need everyone to show up and be counted and we need your help and efforts for us to figure out a path forward.

My very best to your all and see you in August!

*Kelly Griffin*

July 25, 2025

## UPCOMING GUEST SPEAKER



**AUGUST 9<sup>th</sup>  
SPEAKER  
OAKES AUSTIN  
“HAWORTHIA  
PROPAGATION.”**

## ABOUT OUR SPEAKER TOPIC

Oakes will be giving a talk about Haworthia hybrids and Haworthia propagation, and will have interesting Haworthias for sale as well.



collection and make some truly interesting hybrids. This talk will briefly touch on some of the Haworthia propagation techniques you can easily do at home, and will then showcase some noteworthy plants.

## ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

**Oakes Austin** grew up in Massachusetts and became interested in growing and breeding cacti and succulents from the age of six. For the last seven years, the genus haworthia has been a major part of that obsession. After moving to California to work for Steven Hammer, he has had the opportunity to work with a world class haworthia

## PLANT OF THE MONTH PRESENTATION

As always, we'll kick off our meeting with the Plant of the Month. This month, **Kelly Griffin** will regale us with cool stories about *Aloe castillonae*... get the full experience by reading the article in this issue!

**[SEE YOU ON AUGUST 9, 2025!](#)**



## ALOE CASTILLONIAE

# ALOE CASTILLONIAE

## ARTICLE BY KELLY GRIFFIN



Hybrids created with *Aloe castilloniae*  
KELLY GRIFFIN

In the plant world, we have from time to time been treated to a brand-new find and excited proclamations of “new” species. Sometimes this “new discovery” is a poorly-defined splitting of something we already know while in other cases it is just so unspectacular that it becomes quite clear as to why no one noticed it before. However, every once in a while on rare occasions, these revelations are truly incredible. I can think of a handful of these phenomenal finds, including the new *Dudleya* species to be named from San Diego County and the curiously fluffy dwarf *Agave*, *Agave albopilosa*.

But the focus of my discussion in this article is about a very cute and compact *Aloe* from Madagascar, *Aloe castilloniae*, where I have seen both it in nature and through the horticultural hybridization work I have done with it.

*Aloe castilloniae* was first described in 2006. It was named to honor the wife of Bernard Castillon. I am not entirely certain that Mr. Castillon has seen the plant in habitat. That part is likely to remain unclear. Many of the plant “finds” Castillon has made were found by his son or by Malagasy people that he paid and hired to look for plants. The book he wrote on the Aloes of Madagascar contains a great number of pictures and limited information. While it has a significant number of errors, this is not a book review here but rather just a caution to you, don’t believe everything you read just because it is in print! More on that later! What I do know is that several of his plant descriptions have been of plants that are no doubt super special but they are not necessarily representative nor typical of the species as a whole. Both the type plant of *A. castilloniae* and the type plant of *Aloe spinatriagreaggata* are not representative of the predominate forms of these species growing in nature.

The first material I had of this species was a clone that had been distributed by Mr. Castillon to John Lavranos. This clone was propagated and initiated at the Xeric Growers Tissue Lab in Bonsall. I was enamored enough with this little plant (even the somewhat less impressive smooth clone) that in 2009, while I was planning my second plant trip to Madagascar, I made a

## ALOE CASTILLONIAE

point to try to include seeing this species in habitat. I contacted Mr. Castillon seeking habitat site information. The reply I received from him was an uninformative email detailing absolutely no location information but rather outlining the dangers of travel there. Fortunately for me, as many of you might guess, the email did not deter me whatsoever. I knew the general location and suspected it would be found on vertical limestone, so the logical assumption was that it grew where the plateau meets the plain that extends to the sea. The plants were likely fog-fed as the marine moisture pushes into the cliffside. The problem with that is that this geological feature runs inland along the coast for miles. Fortunately, my good friend Petr Pavelka had found it while exploring and was kind enough to suggest the best point to look for it.

*Aloe castilloniae*, it turns out, was not terribly difficult to find. It occurs in an

area where some truly incredible plants also occur. The difficulty was in getting to this very remote place, in addition to a short hike and a climb up an escarpment which only added to the adventure. The bonus was that this *Aloe* grows sympatrically with two species of *Alluaudia*, *Alluaudia montagnacii* and *A. dumosa*, which are both spectacular species of that genus. *Aloe castilloniae* grows in shallow pockets of the limestone cliffs and it can trail down in a pendent fashion some two to three feet. An interesting feature about this plant is its growth habit. It retains the older leaves for a long time and I don't mean just a dead sheath—these leaves remain active and alive. It gives the appearance of a spiky rope or chain not unlike the familiar ropelike *Hoya carnososa* cultivars that are common in the houseplant trade. It produces fairly normal sized flowers for an *Aloe*, but it is the flower spike itself that has been reduced to next to nothing. The flower spikes in nature measure three to five inches, and perhaps up to eight to ten inches with generous care in cultivation.

On a subsequent trip made in 2011 I had the pleasure of traveling with Jeremy Spath, Walker Young, and Brian Kemble. We visited this locality and managed to find a very small amount of seed. We grew that out and there was—not unexpectedly—a fair degree of variation with the



*Aloe castilloniae* in flower

KELLY GRIFFIN



## ALOE CASTILLONIAE



*Aloe castilloniae* (center) and some hybrids made using this species

KELLY GRIFFIN

different clones. The flower color is usually red or red with yellow tip, but one seedling we grew produced yellow flowers (this plant was not of cultivated or hybrid origin). Several years later, these plants allowed for the introduction of a really stunning clone (propagated in-vitro) commonly referred to as “AP Clone 2”. It has bright green leaves and contrasting burgundy teeth. “AP Clone 1” was a spiky brownish form which was the first spiky form that was

commercially reproduced, and this was preceded by the “smooth” clone that was grown at Xeric Growers and others. In reverse order, if you are counting, that is three clones established through micropropagation technique and that multi-clone introduction should allow for this plant to be widely produced from seed in the future. This of course will allow for even more varied plants to be available for collectors. Atman’s Specialty Plants has produced Clone 1 and Clone 2 in very large numbers and that is a good thing. I would not count on that continuing, as they can drop production sometimes to zero with a moments notice. Regardless, these introductions should stay in cultivation for some time given how easy these are to grow and how attractive they are. I should note that, with most Aloes, it generally takes two to tango; having only one clone makes sexual reproduction difficult and doubtful if attempted with just one clone. It leaves you wondering, did you get it to self-pollinate, or is the resultant a hybrid?

Another note—the first clone that was asexually mass-produced, referred to here as the “smooth one,” was the original type plant. I am not sure why that specific plant would have been the one chosen, as the “smooth” trait not only seems to be a recessive one, but it is a less-interesting form. Most plants in habitat were more prickly with prickles occurring mainly in the center of the leaves. I would say “smoothness” occurs in about 5% of the mixed seedlings. I suppose, now that I have multiple smooth clones I could breed specifically for that trait, but I think my inclination is to go towards the toothiest ones and amplify that characteristic.

On my third trip to this location I took another group of people and that trip resulted in yet several other new clones also being introduced in spite of the promise of no collecting! I can offer that this was more than a decade ago, and the collection aspect and our views of it have continued to evolve. I can categorically state that no plants were removed from habitat, a small amount of seed was collected from the wild, and seed-grown plants were produced. I have been growing this plant since about 2008 and I have used this species to make many interesting hybrids. The initial ones were simple and cute, but they are



## ALOE CASTILLONIAE

comparatively drab when side-by-side with the hybrids being produced today in my breeding program some 17 years down the line. Such are the tribulations of a hybridizer!

Keeping within the context of the species with my breeding selections, I have worked on several different areas including variegated forms, different flower colors, toothier forms, and size variations. I will show some of these at the August meeting. I also have some interesting stories from my travels to see these plants in the wild that I will share and all within the limited 15 minute time frame! It should be a thing of beauty!

I close with this. While pulling this together, I consulted what was written about this plant in my plant book library and did several internet searches which invariably ended up giving me AI summations. I was astounded how deep the AI went, but it absolutely chokes on being accurate and favors errors in print when it has conflicting information. There are many people that write books but far fewer that go to the trouble to see plants in nature repeatedly before they do! First-hand knowledge is the best! I hope you enjoy my take on this little plant.

See you in Balboa Park on August 9th!

**KELLY GRIFFIN**



Some hybrids made using *Aloe castilloniae*

**KELLY GRIFFIN**

## MEMBER SECTION

We're excited to feature a section of haiku poetry, inspired by our Plant of the Month, by member Emily Weaver! As always, thanks to Emily for this awesome contribution.

### CASTILLONIAE

cliff-dwelling cluster  
Madagascan star aloe  
recurved, rough, with teeth!

EMILY WEAVER

### ! NEW ! OPEN VOLUNTEER ROLES!

#### Get involved!

Looking to take your leadership role in the club to the next level? You're in luck! We've got some great new positions open for interested members:

#### GREETER

Our club greeter is the friendly face of the club—great for someone who attends our meetings beginning-to-end and doesn't mind a seated/ less-physical role.

#### SHOW CHAIR COMMITTEE

Be a part of our amazing yearly shows! We're expanding this role to a committee to reduce the workload.

Email [membership@sdcss.net](mailto:membership@sdcss.net) if interested!



The SDCSS monthly newsletter welcomes and appreciates essays, photography, artwork, and similar contributions from its members.

If you have a contribution related to cacti and succulents that you'd like to share with the club, please let us know, and you could see your work in a future issue.

We'd love to hear from you!

Contact the editor: [eyf.editor@gmail.com](mailto:eyf.editor@gmail.com)

### CLICK TO VISIT US ONLINE!





MEMBER SECTION



A gorgeous 12-year old seed-grown cacti in full bloom

SHOUQIN HUO

MEMBER SECTION

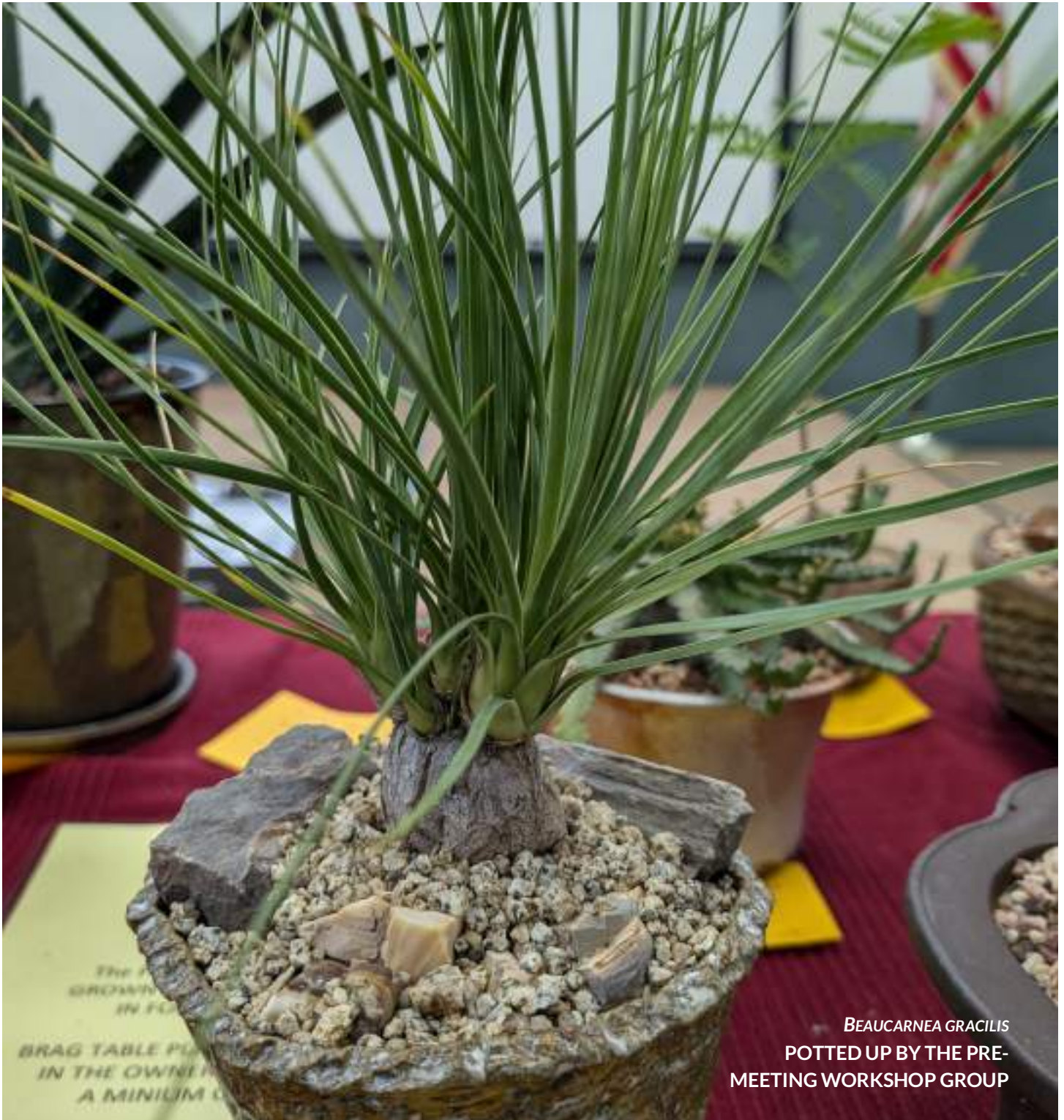


More beautiful blooms! (a photo deserving of a full-page! –the editor).

SHOUQIN HUO



## JULY BRAG TABLE



*BEAUCARNEA GRACILIS*  
POTTED UP BY THE PRE-  
MEETING WORKSHOP GROUP

**SDCSS members shared a stunning table of plants at the July Meeting's Brag Table!**

Wow, what a month for the brag table! Thank you for bringing in your incredible plants, and thanks to [Mark Fryer](#) for reviewing this table from our members (and thanks to Jared for taking pics while I was out). We'll see your best plants again at our August meeting!

BRAG TABLE // NOVICE SUCCULENT



1ST: *EUPHORBIA GRANITICOLA* CREST

VICKI HOFFMAN



**BRAG TABLE // NOVICE SUCCULENT**



**2ND: AGAVE SP.**

**STEVE JOHNSTON**



**3RD: ECHEVERIA MINIMA**

**EMILY WEAVER**

**BRAG TABLE // NOVICE SUCCULENT**



*AEONIUM SP.*

STEVE JOHNSTON



*ANACAMPSEROS RUFESCENS*    GEORGIA KENNEY



*GASTERALOE 'MIDNIGHT'*

VICKI HOFFMAN



BRAG TABLE // INTERMEDIATE SUCCULENT



1ST: *EUPHORBIA AWASHENSIS*

JARED PETKER



BRAG TABLE // INTERMEDIATE SUCCULENT



2ND: *ELEPHANTORRHIZA BURKEI*

CHUCK RAMEY



3RD: *EUPHORBIA STELLATA*

MELANIE HOWE

BRAG TABLE // INTERMEDIATE SUCCULENT



*HAWORTHIA 'DESERT ICON'*

CHUCK RAMEY



*BURSERA SIMPLICIFOLIA*

CHUCK RAMEY



*EUPHORBIA GENOUDIANA*

WENDY GOLDMAN



**BRAG TABLE // INTERMEDIATE SUCCULENT**



*CEROPEGIA BOSSERI* 'BLACK DRAGON'

ALISON BALDWIN



*EUPHORBIA CLANDESTINA*  
MIRIAM PARENT



*SANSEVIERIA* 'DRAGON WINGS'

JARED PETKER



**BRAG TABLE // INTERMEDIATE SUCCULENT**



*BEAUCARNIA GRACILIS*

PRE-MEETING WORKSHOP GROUP



*ALOE MICROSTIGMA*

MIRIAM PARENT



BRAG TABLE // ADVANCED SUCCULENT



1ST: *UNCARINA PELTATA* DWARF SELECTION

PETER WALKOWIAK



BRAG TABLE // ADVANCED SUCCULENT



2ND: *SARCOCAULUM PENICULINUM*

PAM BADGER



3RD: *UNICARINA ROEOESLIANA*

PAM BADGER



BRAG TABLE // ADVANCED SUCCULENT



*PSEUDOBOMBAX SP.*

PAM BADGER



*EUPHORBIA CYLINDRIFOLIA SSP. TUBERIFERA*

PETER WALKOWIAK



*EUPHORBIA CAPSAINTEMARIENSIS*

PETER WALKOWIAK



*FICUS SP.*

TINA ZUCKER



BRAG TABLE // NOVICE CACTI



1ST: *MAMMILLARIA SP.*

STEVE JOHNSTON

BRAG TABLE // NOVICE CACTI



2ND: *ECHINOPSIS SUBDENUDATA*

EMILY SHUFFIELD



3RD: *ECHINOPSIS SP.*

STEVE JOHNSTON



BRAG TABLE // INTERMEDIATE CACTI



1ST: *GYMNOCALYCIUM STELLATUM* VAR. *ASTERIUM*

ALLEN CLARK

**BRAG TABLE // INTERMEDIATE CACTI**



2ND: *Oreocereus* sp.

MIRIAM PARENT



3RD: *Gymnocalycium stenogonum*

ALLEN CLARK



**BRAG TABLE // INTERMEDIATE CACTI**



*PUNA BONNIEAE*

**ALLEN CLARK**



*GYMNOCALYCIUM VATTERI*

**ALLEN CLARK**



*GYMNOCALYCIUM RITTERIANUM* 2 COLOR FORMS

**ALLEN CLARK**

**BRAG TABLE // INTERMEDIATE CACTI**



*GYMNOCALYCIUM SAGLIONIS*

**ALLEN CLARK**



*GYMNOCALYCIUM PFLANZII ALBIPULPA* **ALLEN CLARK**



*ASTROPHYTUM MYRIOSTIGMA*

**CHUCK RAMEY**



**BRAG TABLE // INTERMEDIATE CACTI**



*LEUCHTENBERGIA PRINCIPIS*

**CHUCK RAMEY**



*GYMNOCALYCIUM MIHANOVICHII*

**CHUCK RAMEY**



*FRAILEA BUENEKERI*

**CHUCK RAMEY**

**BRAG TABLE // ADVANCED CACTI**



**1ST: *COPIAPOA HASELTONIANA***

**BRIAN SHEPHERD, PREVIOUSLY DON PATTERSON**



BRAG TABLE // ADVANCED CACTI



2<sup>nd</sup>  
PLACE

2ND: *ECHINOPSIS HYBRID VARIGATED*

PETER WALKOWIAK



3<sup>rd</sup>  
PLACE

3RD: *COPIAPOA LAUI*

PETER WALKOWIAK



**BRAG TABLE // ADVANCED CACTI**



*GYMNOCALYCIUM MULTIFLORUM* CANDY & JERRY GARNER



*GYMNOCALYCIUM BRUCHII* CANDY & JERRY GARNER



*GYMNOCALYCIUM NEUHUBERI*

CANDY & JERRY GARNER



**BRAG TABLE // ADVANCED CACTI**



*GYMNOCALYCIUM SP.*

CANDY & JERRY GARNER



*GYMNOCALYCIUM CARDENASIANUM*

CANDY & JERRY GARNER