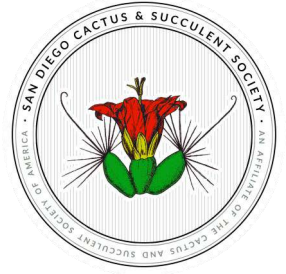


# ESPINAS Y FLORES



VOL. 59, No. 01  
JANUARY 2024

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



CORYPHANTHA PYCNACANTHA // DEMYSTIFYING WINTER GROWERS  
2024 WINTER SHOW // 2023 HONOREES // ...and more



**ON THE COVER**

*Cylindropuntia bigelovii*, Joshua Tree NP  
Photo by Pam Badger

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

President’s message pg 3 // 2023 Honorees pg 4

Upcoming speaker pg 5 // Upcoming events pgs 6 - 7

Demystifying Winter Growers pgs 8 - 11

2024 Winter Show revised categories pg 12

*Coryphantha pycnanantha* pgs 13 - 18

Member section pgs 19 - 21 // 2023 Cover gallery pg 22

**UPCOMING SDCSS SCHEDULE**

**1ST MEETING OF 2024**  
January 13th

**WINTER SHOW AND SALE**  
February 10th

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

<b>President</b>	Pam Badger
<b>Vice President</b>	Chris Miller
<b>Secretary</b>	Olga Batalov
<b>Treasurer</b>	Ken Brown

<b>New Member Orientation</b>	Patricia Bryan & Jay Crowley
<b>Monthly Regalement</b>	Sandy Wetzel-Smith
<b>Picnic Regalement</b>	[open]
<b>Coffee in the Garden Coordinators</b>	Julie Dixon & Chuck Ramey

**DIRECTORS**

Pat Bryan, Luis Gonzalez, Jen Greene, Kelly Griffin, Dean Karras, Georgia Kenney, and Jared Petker

**LIAISONS**

<b>Balboa Park Desert Garden</b>	Susan Hopkins
<b>CSSA Affiliate Rep</b>	Rick Bjorklund
<b>SD Botanic Garden</b>	Phyllis Flechsig
<b>SD Botanic Foundation</b>	Lynn Elliot
<b>SD Floral Association</b>	Jeanette Dutton
<b>SD Zoo Safari Park, Baja &amp; Old World Gardens</b>	May Fong Ho
<b>Palomar CS Society Liaison</b>	Brita Miller

**COMMITTEES & SUBCOMMITTEES**

<b>Conservation</b>	Herb Stern
<b>Brag table</b>	Denise Huntsman-Griffin & Susan Hopkins
<b>Plant of the Month</b>	Pam Badger
<b>Summer/Winter Show</b>	[open]
<b>Historian</b>	Jerry Garner
<b>Grants</b>	Jerry Garner
<b>Library Committee</b>	Luis Gonzalez
<b>Exchange Plants/Seeds</b>	Michelle Heckathorn
<b>Annual Sales</b>	Chris Miller
<b>Auction &amp; Holiday Plants</b>	Kelly Griffin
<b>Show Auction Manager</b>	[open]
<b>Monthly Plant Sales</b>	Chris Miller
<b>Benefit Drawing Table</b>	Allen Clark & Chuck Ramey
<b>Programs</b>	Kelly Griffin
<b>Reception</b>	Susan Hopkins & Candy Garner

**MEMBERSHIP, BUSINESS, & PUBLICITY**

<b>Membership</b>	Olga Batalov
<b>Business Manager</b>	Donna Roden
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	Der-shing Helmer
<b>Webmaster</b>	Jared Petker
<b>Publicity</b>	Christie Lathrop

**CONTACT SDCSS**

membership@sdcss.net

**CONTACT EyF EDITOR**

eyf.editor@gmail.com

Opinions expressed in articles and editorial comments are solely the opinions of the author or the editor, and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the SDCSS, the board of Directors, or the organization as a whole. All material submitted to the *Espinas y Flores* for possible publication may be edited in form and content and shared on the club’s social media with attribution. All material contained in the *Espinas y Flores* may be reprinted by other non-profit organizations unless permission is expressly denied in a note accompanying the article. Reproduction in whole or part by any other organization without the express consent of the editor is prohibited.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**G**reetings and Happy New Year! I just returned last evening from a road trip which took me to Texas and back, seeing many beautiful places along the way and meeting my two sweet great nieces, ages 3 1/2 and 9 months. I rented a small motor home and camped out at Picacho Peak in AZ, Palo Duro Canyon in Texas, and wrapped up the trip watching the full moon in Joshua Tree National Park. Lots of great walks amongst the amazing desert plants. Look for some pictures elsewhere in this newsletter.

It was wonderful to see so many of you at the 2023 Holiday Party! I always enjoy this event and think this year was one of the best ever! The gift exchange table was packed with a fantastic selection of plants and many people came away with big smiles—thanks to all who participated in this fun activity. The gift plants and live auction selections were all wonderful and varied; thanks to **Kelly Griffin** for putting it all together and to those who donated plants, including Western Cactus (**Ed Delollis**), Botanic Wonders (**Al Klein**), Peter Walkowiak, Altmans Plants (**Kelly Griffin**), and Gnosis (**Dean Karras**). Special Thanks to **Gary Vincent** for his ever-popular hand-made bird houses, and **Sherman Blench** and **Miriam Parent** for such festive table decorations. Besides the table decorations, many fun (and funny) items were donated to the silent auction; thanks to **Chuck Ramey**, **Candy Garner**, **Donna Roden**, **Lynn Elliot**, **Rick Bjorklund**, **Tricia Bostard**, **Chris Miller** and **Ken Blackford** for

your generous donations. And, what is a party without libations? Thanks to **Herb & Anna Stern** for providing and tending the wine bar! All in all it was a wonderful day. A final thanks to those who were there to the end cleaning up—I can't remember who all was there, but the place looked great by the time we left.

My favorite part of this annual event is the opportunity to recognize members who have made considerable contributions to our organization and this year I was pleased to recognize **Tina Zucker**, our Zoom master, and **Dean Karras**, show coordinator as **Volunteers of the Year**. **Michelle Heckathorn** was awarded a **Life Membership** for her many years of service tending the exchange table at meeting and regularly doing Plant of the Month presentations. Thanks again to you all for what you do!

January will be an important meeting with all our regular activities as well as important information about the February Show and Sale! we have made some changes and considerations about plants to be shown - putting a strong emphasis on Winter growers so be sure to show up on January 13 and get the info!

Best wishes, be well,

*Pam Badger*  
December 27, 2023



2023 HONOREES



Volunteer of the year  
Tina Zucker

Volunteer of the year  
Dean Karras



2023 Life member  
Michelle Heckathorn

## UPCOMING GUEST SPEAKER



## JANUARY 13 SPEAKER

## PHILIPPE DE VOSJOLI

“PACHYFORMS: AN INTRODUCTION TO SOME OF THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY PLANTS ON PLANET EARTH.”

## ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Philippe de Vosjoli has raised caudiciform and pachycaul plants on and off since the 1970s when he first saw specimens of ant plants (Hydnophytum and Myrmecodia species) at Jerry Horne’s nursery in Florida. In the 80s, while in graduate school, he partnered with Richard Wagner in a part-time business in Massachusetts that specialized in unusual plants, including caudexed succulents they imported from Africa. After moving to California in 1985 to pursue his interest in developing methods for keeping and breeding amphibians and reptiles, he attended several of the southern California cactus and succulent shows, which reignited his interest in these plants. As an author and publisher of a magazine and over 40 books on the husbandry and propagation of amphibians and reptiles, he decided to try his hand at writing a plant book on caudiciforms and pachycauls titled “*Pachyforms*”, which became a category bestseller. During that time, he also befriended Rudy Lime, a pioneer of SOMA (Succulents as a Medium of Art, a term coined by Rudy) and they worked together to co-author the book “*Bonsai Succulents*”. He has just finished a new expanded edition of “*Pachyforms*”, which will be available at the meeting.

## ABOUT OUR SPEAKER TOPIC:

“I coined the term ‘pachyforms’ to describe plants that develop proportionately large and thick bodies, species that include caudiciform (forming caudex-like bodies) and pachycaul (thick trunked/body) succulents. Because many of these plants look otherworldly and like living sculptures, they have become increasingly popular in recent years, often making up a significant portion of cactus and succulent shows and ranking among the best investment plants. In fact, just adding the term ‘caudex’ in an online plant description will increase the number of views or clicks in social media groups and digital marketplaces (whether the plant develops a caudex or not).

“My talk will focus on the physical and botanical features of these plants and aspects of their ecologies that are important for their cultivation but not widely known. That knowledge can increase long-term success and produce plants with characters that more closely resemble plants in nature. In addition to plants in cultivation, I plan to show plants in the wild photographed by Rob Skillin, a significant contributor to the expanded edition of *Pachyforms*.”

[SEE YOU ON JANUARY 13, 2024!](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

## JANUARY COFFEE IN THE GARDEN

**Who:** Rick Bjorklund & Kevin Hosmer    **When:** January 20 from 9 am – 4 pm

**Where:** 4728 Allied Road, San Diego    **Phone:** 619-417-5008    **Note:** Cash only, please

We are excited to finally host a Coffee in the Garden / Succulent Garden Party again after a long hiatus due to the pandemic. Our garden is often a congested laboratory as Rick is an avid collector of unusual succulents and cacti and leading to rearranging to fit in new acquisitions while Kevin selectively hybridizes (Haworthias, dwarf Aloes, Agaves) and plants most any seeds available!



It's been a busy time in the garden recently. Except for the raised beds in the rear, almost every area has been remodeled. Out front, there is now a sea of echeverias and relatives beneath palo verde 'Desert Museum', a grouping of mostly toothless blue *Agave titanota*/ *A. oteris*, and variegated adolescent *Agave ovatifolias* 'Killer' and 'Jack Frost'. A cluster of young *Agave vilmoriniana* 'Stained Glass' should mature into a multi-headed clump which can be a spectacular way to grow them. They should ultimately bloom with multiple spires of spiraling flowers along each towering inflorescence. Anticipated cool, rainy weather should incite a number of bi-colored aloes to bloom in January including *A. cryptopoda*, *A. lutescens*, and 'Vulcan's Fire', along with a growing collection of yellow and pink flowered *Othonnas*, and various mesembs (mostly afternoon bloomers). Other winter growers are waking up, including *Aeoniums*, *Kalanchoes*, and *Crassulas*. The garden includes many other genera of succulents, many of which have interesting and sometimes unique architectures. There are larger cacti plantings both in the front and rear with many interspersed South African bulbs. Most plants are labeled so visitors can identify plants they may wish to add to their own gardens. There will be likely be a guest speaker/vendor and plants for sale.



We hope you drop by to chat about gardening and plants, party with fellow attendees and us, and have some beverages and Rick's homemade appetizers and desserts!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

# SAN DIEGO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

## WINTER SHOW & SALE: FEBRUARY 10, 2024

BALBOA PARK, CASA DEL PRADO, ROOM 101 & PATIO

The show is FREE and open to the public!

### SHOW HOURS

Bring in Plants: Friday noon - 6pm, Saturday 8am - 10am

Show open for viewing: Saturday 10am-3pm

### SALE HOURS

Members only: Saturday 9am - 11am (please bring proof of membership)

General public: Saturday 11am - 3pm

## GET INVOLVED IN THE WINTER SHOW

Did you enjoy our June Show and Sale? Are you ready to step up and take a more active role? **Chris Miller**, our VP and Chairperson of the Sale, is looking for an assistant / trainee. Chris has been running the sale for 20 years and has it down to a science, which is why our sales go so smoothly. She is looking for someone to train and begin learning this position. Chris is a great mentor and is looking for someone with good organizational and people skills to eventually take over and carry on for a few years.

If interested, please contact Chris: [c.miller@cox.net](mailto:c.miller@cox.net)

## UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFO

Don't miss out on important news from us!

Over the years, many of our members have changed their emails and mailing addresses. We'd like to update our catalog of membership info to have all of your correct emails and addresses for reaching out to you in the future. This easy survey takes just moments to fill out.

Thanks for helping us keep your records up-to-date!

[PLEASE VISIT THIS LINK TO GET STARTED](#)

## WINTER GROWERS

# DEMYSTIFYING WINTER GROWERS

BY DEAN KARRAS



*Dudleya pulverulenta* in the snow

“Many years ago my mom, who lived in Minnesota, bought a small cactus while on a vacation to California. She kept the cactus in a small pot in the windowsill of her kitchen. She followed the weather in Phoenix, Arizona, and whenever it rained there she watered it.” Thusly someone recounted to me at our club’s Show & Sale last June, after asking me for care instructions on a specific cactus I was selling. Evidently, the answer I gave was not concise enough for her liking. I find this anecdote amusing for many reasons. Despite its simplistic and flawed logic on many levels—not least of all the assumption that Phoenix’s precipitation patterns somehow represent an optimal watering regimen for all cacti regardless of origin, because, you know, Arizona=cacti—the endearing naivete of this idea nonetheless speaks to a thoughtful insight on knowing when to water a particular plant. Where does the plant originate from? And when does it experience precipitation or moisture in its habitat of origin?

When I began growing cacti and succulents as a hobby 16 years ago, as with most beginners, my growing protocol was to treat all of the succulent plants in my collection with the same care; pot them all in a well-drained mix, expose them to ample sun (half-day plus), water them weekly when it was hot (or check to see that the soil is mostly dry between waterings), and be relatively stingier with water in the cooler months, with a dry rest in winter. At the time I was living in the East Bay Area, an extremely forgiving climate for growing most plants owing to its moderate temperatures regulated by coastal currents and atmospheric moisture. The plants themselves told me what little more information I needed for their care: the size and rate of growth of each plant would dictate which pot to use and how often to repot.

In the winter I always carefully tucked my succulents under covered patios and eaves or packed them near my windowsill inside to wait out the winter months dry before I would resume watering them in the spring. That’s because when I was still a



## WINTER GROWERS

neophyte in the cult of succulent growing hobbyists not so many years ago, I was ignorant about the existence of winter-growing succulents. Those (unbeknownst to me at the time) "winter growers," which I managed not to kill by depriving them of water during their seasons of active growth, always failed to grow and perform well for me. It was only after I discovered the relevance of understanding seasonal growth periods for specific groups of succulent plants that I was finally able to have my winter-growers not only survive, but thrive. Since my epiphany that a not-inconsiderable number of succulents grow most actively during the cool winter period, I have continued to study and refine my understanding of which succulents fit this category.

Let's first discuss the easy cases: those that exhibit telltale signs of active winter growth after summer dormancy. Some winter-rainfall plants exhibit fairly dramatic indications that they are waking up and are ready to enter their active cycle of growth, granted adequate moisture. For drought-deciduous pachycauls, like those represented by *Pachycormus discolor* and *Fouquieria columnaris* from the northern portion of the Baja peninsula, or the *Tylecodon* species from South Africa, these plants will



*Dudleya edulis*

spontaneously produce leaves after sometimes months of sitting leafless. A lot of geophytic bulbs from western South Africa behave similarly, emerging from underground (or above-ground bulbs, often raised for dramatic effect in cultivation): e.g., *Boophane*, *Brunsvigia*, and *Amaryllis*. Some typically summer-deciduous succulents, especially when young, can be kept with leaves and growing year-round when granted judicious but not excessive summer irrigation, a touch of shade, and respite from hot greenhouse conditions; for example, *Dioscorea elephantipes* frequently behaves this way as a seedling, or grown indoors as a houseplant.

However, many other "winter growers" are much more difficult to distinguish than the aforementioned. Perhaps frustratingly, there is no easy-reference list one can consult that I personally consider to be accurate in all or even most instances. As Fred Dortort remarks in *The Timber Press Guide to Succulent Plants of the World*, "Knowing where a particular succulent plant originates provides two significant insights into its needs: its growing season and its range of acceptable temperatures. This knowledge makes it possible for a grower to decide, for example, whether there is any point in trying to cultivate it outdoors." (p. 23-4, 2011). Although Dortort is elliptically referring to cold hardiness, here he is also speaking about succulent hardiness and adaptability in a broader sense too, taking into consideration which plants will not only tolerate the wet winters of our Mediterranean climate here in coastal California, but actually prefer moisture during the cool season. However, "Simply knowing the country of origin is not

## WINTER GROWERS

sufficient”, since many larger counties have varied climates. For example, “In Eastern South Africa rain generally falls in summer, while in the western part of the country it rains in winter.” (ibid.) Therefore, knowing where a plant originates from and cross-referencing that information with the location’s seasonal moisture patterns can help you make the determination as to which succulent plants are winter growers even where the “cheat sheet” lists fail. For nearly every rule about which succulent genera are winter vs. summer growers there are exceptions, asterisks, and caveats to these generalizations. I will proceed to share a few personal observations on this matter, although I endear the reader to alternately get some dirt under their fingernails, as well as consult reference books on the habitats their beloved succulents hail from, so as to compile their own observations on the matter.



*Dudleya pulverulenta*

Although I invariably see Sempervivums listed as warm-season-growing succulents, in an inland climate that experiences hot summers like mine, I give them a bit of a break from regular summer water and more shade during the hottest months. This is where considerations of altitude also come into play; not all succulents are desert plants, and even some that hail from high-elevation deserts where hot days essentially never occur. But most Sempervivums are alpine plants, subsisting off of snow melt in the spring. I have observed certain higher-elevation cacti, such as opuntiods from the South American altiplano (*Maihuenia poeppegii*, e.g.) behave in a similar manner, preferring more shade and less water during the hottest months of the year despite their high-elevation adaptation to

intense UV radiation.

Haworthias, which are not infrequently listed as “winter growers”, have always performed best for me given moisture predominantly in the spring and fall. I have occasionally heard plants like this, including certain mesembs, referred to as “transitional season growers”, performing best with relatively dry rests given in winter and summer alike. Of course, nearly any rule we write will still include outliers: *Haworthiopsis koelmaniorum* (= *Haworthia k.*), hailing from further northeast South Africa than many other Haworthias, keeps splendid company with the heat-loving *Astrophytums* in my greenhouse, and demands ample watering in the hottest months.

Even some of our beloved warm-season-growing succulents unquestionably look their best during the cooler months of the year. Owing to their fairly harsh and barren habitats, many succulents bloom during or adjacent to their dormant periods to take advantage of increased pollinator activity during cooler months of the year. The vast majority of *Aloe* species bloom during the cooler months regardless of their active growth season or provenance, as do many species of *Mammillaria* cacti. Flowering habits alone are therefore insufficient to determine

## WINTER GROWERS

active growth phases of a given plant. Although most Aloe species hail from summer rainfall climates, many are opportunistic and relish our winter rainstorms. The converse does not hold true: in hot inland climates especially, some of the aloes from winter rainfall regions suffer from excess summer irrigation, preferring little to no supplemental moisture once established in the ground (including but not limited to *A. pillansii*, *A. comosa*, *A. falcata*, *A. karasbergensis*, *A. dichotoma*, *A. melanacantha*, and *A. erinacea*). Much to my amazement, years into growing many species of Aloe from seed, I have yet to find a comprehensive list of which species ought to be considered winter growers. The inexpensive and superb book *Guide to the Aloes of South Africa* (1996) by Ben-Erik Van Wyk & Gideon Smith, which is actually intended as a field guide, nonetheless offers brief cultivation notes on many species as well as indispensable distribution maps of the species in the wild.

I'm inclined to consider all *Dudleya* species to be winter growers, even those hailing from the Sonoran and Mohave deserts such as *D. saxosa* and *D. arizonica*, as any species I've cultivated including these will germinate at cool temperatures and tolerate substantial winter moisture. However, I learned a great trick from Nick Basinski, a long-time enthusiast of that genus, when he gave a fantastic presentation to the Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society, that nonetheless further splits the genus into two rough categories. He noted that coastal *Dudleya*s look better year round and are more tolerant of warm-season moisture than their desert-dwelling counterparts, owing, no doubt, to the fact that practically all coastal *Dudleya* species receive a substantial portion of their annual moisture from coastal fog condensation throughout the year, including the warmer months.

To perhaps state the obvious, winter active succulents—like their warm-season-growing counterparts—should be repotted during their active growth phase (winter), ideally during the first half of their growth cycle, so they are fully rooted into their new medium as warm season dormancy approaches.

To conclude, I encourage you to do yourself (and your plants!) a favor and do more research into the native climates and habitats of your succulent plants. I have found that, much like closely watching the plants in your collection grow and bloom, it will not only help you take better care of your plants, but add another dimension of appreciation for their many diverse forms and adaptations. Warning: side effects may include a desire to go visit amazing xeric plant habitats.

Now, go prepare some of your best winter growers for our upcoming Winter Show & Sale on February 10th. See you there!

Do you still have lingering questions about your winter-growing plants? Email questions to:

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

by January 10, and we'll post selected answers in next month's edition of EyF.

## REVISED WINTER SHOW CATEGORY LIST FOR 2024

DIVISION I: CACTI (CACTACEAE)	
Name	Class
Ariocarpus	1
Astrophytum	2
Aztekium, Epithelantha, Obregonia, Ortegocactus, Pelecyphora, Strombocactus	3
Coryphantha, Escobaria, Neolloydia	4
Turbincarpus (Gymnocactus), Stenocactus (Echinofossulocactus)	5
Echinocereus	6
Echinocactus, Ferocactus, Hamatocactus, Leuchtenbergia, xFerobergia	7
Mammillaria with hooked spines	8
Mammillaria with straight spines	9
Pediocactus, Sclerocactus, Thelocactus	10
Melocactus	11
Blossfeldia, Coleocephalocereus (Buiningia), Discocactus, Frailea, Uebelmannia	12
Copiapoa	13
Gymnocalycium	14
Acanthocalycium, Echinopsis, Lobivia	15
Eriosyce (Horridocactus, Neochillenia, Neoporteria, Pyrrhocactus)	16
Parodia (Notocactus)	17
Rebutia (Sulcorebutia, Weingartia)	18
Matucana (Submatucana), Oroya	19
Opuntoids: Austrocylindropuntia, Consolea, Cylindropuntia, Grusonia, Miquelopuntia, Opuntia, Pereskia, Pterocactus, Tephrocactus, Tunilla, etc.	20
Columnar Cacti: Arrojadoa, Bergerocactus, Browningia, Carnegiea, Cephalocereus, Cereus, Cipocereus, Cleistocactus, Espostoa, Micranthocereus, Myrtillocactus, Neobuxbaumia, Oreocereus, Pilosocereus, Pachycereus, Peniocereus, Stenocereus, Stetsoinia, Trichocereus, etc.	21
Epiphytic Cacti: Disocactus, Epiphyllum, Hatiora, Hylocereus, Lepismium, Rhipsalis, Schlumbergia (Zygocactus), Selenicereus, etc.	22
Other Genera - Any Other Cactus	23
Cactus, Seed-Grown by Exhibitor	24
Crested & Monstrose Cacti	25
Variegated Cacti (with 50% or More Variegation)	26

DIVISION II: SUCCULENTS	
Name	Class
<b>AIZOACEAE (MESEMBRYANTHEMACEAE)</b>	
Lithops	27
Conophytum, Lapidaria, Dinteranthus	28
Other Mesembs without prominent roots or trunks: Faucaria, Pleiospilos, Titanopsis, etc.	29
Other Mesembs with prominent roots or trunks: Aloinopsis, Mestoklema, Trichodiadema, etc.	30
<b>AGAVACEAE</b>	
Agave, Yucca	31
Calibanus, Beaucarnea, Nolina	32
<b>APOCYNACEAE</b>	
Adenia, Pachypodium	33
Adenium	34
Stapeliads with succulent stems: Hoodia, Orbea, Pseudolithos, Stapelia, etc.	35
Caudiciform Stapeliads: Fockea, Gonolobus, Petopentia, Raphionacme, etc.	36
Ceropegia, Hoya, Dischidia	37

DIVISION II: SUCCULENTS	
Name	Class
<b>ASPHODELACEAE</b>	
Aloe - species	38
Aloe - hybrids	39
Gasteria	40
Haworthia (Haworthiopsis, Tulista), Astroloba	41
ASTERACEAE (COMPOSITACEAE): Leptosyne (Coreopsis), Othonna, Senecio (Kleinia), etc.	42
BROMELIACEAE: Cryptanthus, Dyckia, Hechtia, Tillandsia, etc.	43
<b>CRASSULACEAE</b>	
Adromischus	44
Aeonium, Greenovia	45
Cotyledon, Tylecodon	46
Crassula	47
Dudleya	48
Echeveria	49
Graptopetalum (Tacitus), Pachyphytum, hybrids (xPachyveria, xGraptoveria)	50
Kalanchoe	51
Sedum, Sedum hybrids (xSedeveria)	52
Sempervivum (Jovibarba)	53
CUCURBITACEAE: Cephalopentandra, Corallocarpus, Dendrosicyos, Gerrardanthus, Ibervillea, Kedrostis, Momordica, Xerosicyos, Zygosicyos, etc.	54
DIOSCOREACEAE: Dioscorea	55
Sansevieria (DRACAENACEAE)	56
<b>EUPHORBACEAE</b>	
Euphorbia medusa types	57
Euphorbias with leaves and spines	58
Euphorbias with leaves and no spines	59
Euphorbias with spines and no leaves	60
Euphorbias with neither leaves nor spines	61
Enadenium, Monadenium, Jatropha, Pedilanthus, Synadenium	62
GERIANACEAE: Monsonia, Sarcocaulon, Pelargonium, etc.	63
PORTULACACEAE (MONTIACEAE, DIDIERACEAE, ANACAMPSEROTACEAE, TALINACEAE): Anacampseros, Alluadia, Avonia, Ceraria, Didieria, etc.	64
Succulent Bulbs: Albuca, Boophane, Boweia, Bulbine, Haemanthus, Ledebouria, Massonia, Veltheimia, etc.	65
Other Caudiciforms: Boswellia, Bursera, Commiphora, Cyphostemma, Dorstenia, Ficus, Fouquieria, Ipomoea, Moringa, Operculicarya, Pachycormus, Pseudobombax, Pyrenacantha, Sesamothamnus, Sinningia, Uncarina, etc.	66
Other Genera - Any Other Succulent	67
Succulent, Seed-Grown by Exhibitor	68
Crested & Monstrose Succulents	69
Variegated Succulents (with 50% or More Variegation)	70

DIVISION III: OTHER	
Name	Class
Dish Gardens (Two or more plants in the same pot)	71

Thanks to Dean Karras and Tina Zucker for updating our winter show categories!

## PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE



# CORYPHANTHA PYCNACANTHA

...OR IS IT?

BY JEN GREENE

## CORYPHANTHA!

A genus you may or may not have heard of—they're native to Mexico and even up into the Southwest US. In recent years, some species have become highly desirable, particularly those that have monstrose characteristics. *Coryphantha elephantidens* is one that is quite popular for its large, fleshy growth, with an *enermis* variety winning a Judge's Ribbon at our last summer show (see right)!

Personally, I've always wanted a big monstrose *Coryphantha elephantidens*, as I've seen some exceptional funky specimens pictured in the collections of online plant friends.



*Coryphantha elephantidens* v. *enermis* grown by Thorn Oasis

## PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

At one time, these species were all classified in the *Mammillaria* genus. Now, in their own genus, they have a notable difference: these bloom from their newest growth (first year growth), at the crown of the plant, whereas *Mammillaria* bloom lower down, typically in second year growth. Most *Coryphantha* will grow as clumps, slowly spreading into clusters of small-bodied cacti. The plant at the center of this article pups readily and is filling its pot at a rate that is very gratifying. For many of us growing show plants or the rarer species, we're used to a slow growth rate and that plants of a winning size and shape are often a decade or more old. With *Coryphantha*, you can often cultivate an impressive clump in just a couple years—much more attractive to those of us with short attention spans.

## WHAT SPECIES IS IT?

A lot of introduction for what should be a single species - but as I was researching for this article, I discovered that my *Coryphantha* may not be the species I thought it was.



First blooms with the plant I kept - from the top, you almost can't see the body of the plant!

I first purchased the cactus as part of a wholesale order from a local grower 3 years ago, and fell in love with them after seeing them bloom. I held on to one and have nurtured it since, being rewarded with repeated blooms all through the warm months of the year.

I bought it, and have been selling occasional pups from that first plant, labeled as *Coryphantha andreae*.

Googling that species name for this article uncovered that the species name is no longer used - instead, they should be *Coryphantha pycnacantha*. Looking that up, however, showed a cactus with a very different growth habit than my plant. From there began a spiral down an internet rabbit hole!

If you'll humor me, I'll take you along. This was a great experience in looking up sources and trying to determine what is accurate (or not!).

## CORYPHANTHA PYCNACANTHA?

This species has a relatively large range, through Oaxaca, Mexico and up into Pueblo. A synonym for the species is *Coryphantha calipensis*, at least for this variety, which can also be referred to as *Coryphantha pycnacantha var. calipensis*.

But as I just said, looking this up...it didn't seem quite right. I often reference the website [lifle.com](http://lifle.com) as a starting point for researching cacti and succulents, and if I'm lucky, there's substantial information and photos on a species that's new to me. On Lifle, I saw [this photo](#) used to show "the typical central spines of an older plant as well as the flower".

Um... My cactus's main plant body looks about the same age, but mine looks like this:



## PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

In the Llifle photo, the growth of the tubercles points upright, resembling a pineapple as described on the page. It's also described as having dimorphic growth: young forms have a "purely radial-spined youth stage with short tubercles, but develops central spines and long tubercles as it ages."

Those central spines were what threw me off as I was researching. My plant doesn't have those! Looking closely at the photo, you can see the large central spine sticking out like a reverse rhino or unicorn horn from the tubercles. My plant just has the furry aeroles and curving spines that look like simply larger forms of the smaller plant growth.

## CORYPHANTHA ELEPHANTIDENS?

Okay, what other options more closely resemble what I've been growing the last few years?

The species *Coryphantha elephantidens* didn't seem quite right—when I'd first researched it, the main species [shown on Llifle](#) has pink flowers and a lumpy appearance.

But then...I discovered the subspecies! And felt a little silly: Llifle describes this as "among the best-known cacti", which was news to me.

[This plant](#) is what's shown as *Coryphantha elephantides ssp. bumamma*.

This could almost be a clone of my plant! Lucky me - I have a *Coryphantha elephantides*, just like I always wanted all along!

Now knowing the probable latin name, I could better look up similar plants, and found far more resembling my own.

This subspecies of *elephantidens* is native to a smaller area of southwestern Mexico, near Guerrero. Practically speaking, the two species I thought my plant might be have nearly identical care. *Coryphantha pycnacantha*'s range overlaps and borders the range of *Coryphantha elephantidens ssp. bumamma*, so this shouldn't come as much of a surprise. The main difference is where they are typically found; as far as I

can find, the *C. pycnacantha* is typically in foothills and among gravel, where *elephantidens* is more common among grassland and scrub.

You might be asking why I limited my sources here just to Llifle—if you were to google *Coryphantha andrae*, you'll certainly find plenty of other sites that show plants that look similar to mine. When I first looked up care on the plant, I saw [something 'close enough'](#) on Dave's Garden, which I'm sure others also reference. In the last year or two, other websites have started to pop up, with better sites [regurgitating the same generic information](#) or posting [care information that's dubious at best](#). I'm even guilty of having [photos referencing the wrong latin name on my own website!](#)

Google isn't automatically a provider of correct information; it's just providing you the most popular websites or photos that are associated with what you typed in the search bar. If plenty of people are using the wrong name, Google will show you plenty of information related to that incorrect name.

This is one of the biggest challenges as you get into less common species: how do you trust that what you've looked up online is accurate or true?

Personally, I try to rely on pages that provide source material, which Llifle's website does. You can find the books referenced and look up the same information used to provide these plant descriptions! Seeking input from more experienced growers also goes a long way, as they'll help you examine your plants more closely and better confirm if something is or isn't what it was originally labeled as.

I'll note with some humor that the several times I've brought my *Coryphantha* in for judging in the winter and summer shows, I've had no comment from the judges on my incorrect name for the plant. I can't blame them! I can't say that I've seen them shown often, so it's reasonable to think the judges did the same thing I did: "Sure, that sounds about right, I've probably just not seen this species before."

*article continues after gallery*

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE





## PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

All of this to conclude: research! Check out books from the club library! And make sure when you research online that you're checking for (reputable) sources. Be willing to learn that you might be wrong. It's just a plant, after all. I don't think my cactus is upset with me for labeling it incorrectly all this time. ;)

I'll bring my *Coryphantha* with me to our January meeting for you to take a closer look yourself. I invite others with *Coryphantha* to bring yours in so we can collectively compare and see how accurate our latin names are. In my research, it sure appears to be that this genus is labeled incorrectly just as often as it's got the right name—let's figure ours out!



## GROWING CORYPHANTHA ELEPHANTIDENS

These are summer growers that rapidly gain size and pup readily when kept warm and provided ideal conditions. Their roots are fibrous, and they'll appreciate a pot just a little bigger than the body of the cactus. I've found terra cotta azalea pots to work very well, choosing pots with a diameter 1 to 2" larger than the cactus itself. They don't need a particularly deep pot, and do better in the shallow azalea pots as it allows the roots to fill the pot without risking rot at the bottom.

They can be sensitive to overwatering, and if you know you're a chronic over-waterer, using a highly porous soil is your friend. I have mine potted in 50% pumice and 50% cactus & succulent soil, which allows for rapid drainage and for the roots to dry relatively quickly.

During the hot summer months, they'll enjoy regular water. With the fleshy body, you can use that to gauge the water needs: it'll deflate slightly as it gets thirsty, and you just need to give it a good drench in the evening and it'll plump right back up again. I try not to water mine too intensely from above to preserve the wooly growth, which I love to see.

In spring, when the cacti are first waking up, I'll give them a dilute feed with a balanced fertilizer once or twice while the days are only in the 70s or 80s. As the daytime highs start to climb, I'll increase the frequency to every other time I water. I keep my *Coryphantha* in my greenhouse, where summer highs are 125F quite often, so I water every week to two weeks from June through about mid-September. The rest of the year is as-needed, dropping to nearly none in winter. When it's below 50 at night, I keep my *Coryphanthas* of all species dry, same as my other cacti.

To encourage the best growth and wool development, it needs at least some direct sun exposure. I have grown mine both inside and outside my greenhouse, and make sure that no matter where I place it, it's shaded during the hottest part of the day. It doesn't need to be full shade! Just dappling from a tree's foliage, or the shade from the bars of a shelf unit can be enough.

If it helps, try to remember their growth habit in the wild: somewhat hidden under grass, in the shade of larger boulders, or under shrubs. They get lots of light, but they're also protected from the heat and intensity of midday sun.

Delightfully, these cacti have huge, showy flowers and they'll give them to you in large clusters and all through the warm months. Mine will start (cont'd)

## PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

blooming in spring, and I'll keep seeing flowers all through summer and into early fall.

*C. elephantidens ssp. bumamma* produces yellow flowers with a hint of pink on the outer petals. I'd describe them as big and showy, but they're apparently smaller than the main species, which produces large, soft-pink blooms.

*C. pallida ssp. calipensis* also produces large yellow to white-yellow flowers, although they seem to have less of the reddish pink tint to the outer petals. They have red stamens, and seem to have a redder center to the bloom than the elephantidens does. Having said that, my sample size is small and limited to what's posted on Llifle, so that could be incorrect!

They seem to be self-fertile, as mine produces fruit several times a year with seed that appears viable (dark and looks similar to seeds I've ordered online). It'll be my first year sowing my own seed, so ask me in spring how my seeds did! The fruits are greenish hued, and pop out of the wooly crown when ripe. They look like Mammillaria fruit on steroids in terms of size, but the color seems more like the cactus has produced fruit several times a year with seed that appears viable (dark and looks similar to seeds I've ordered online). It'll be my first year sowing my own seed, so ask me in spring how my seeds did!

The fruits are greenish-hued, and pop out of the wooly crown when ripe. They look like Mammillaria fruit on steroids in terms of size, but the color seems more like the cactus has produced a tumor that's falling off than an actual ripe fruit.

The wool at the top is extremely attractive to mealybugs, so keep a careful eye on your cacti to be sure the mealybugs aren't hiding. I grow several wooly cacti, and I'll check them at least once a month by using a flat acrylic paint brush to "brush" the cacti and check under the wool against the flesh of the plant. This can fluff up the wool to make it look like a little sheep, but you have to be careful not to overdo it! It's very easy to just brush the wool right off.



Mealybug, up-close and personal

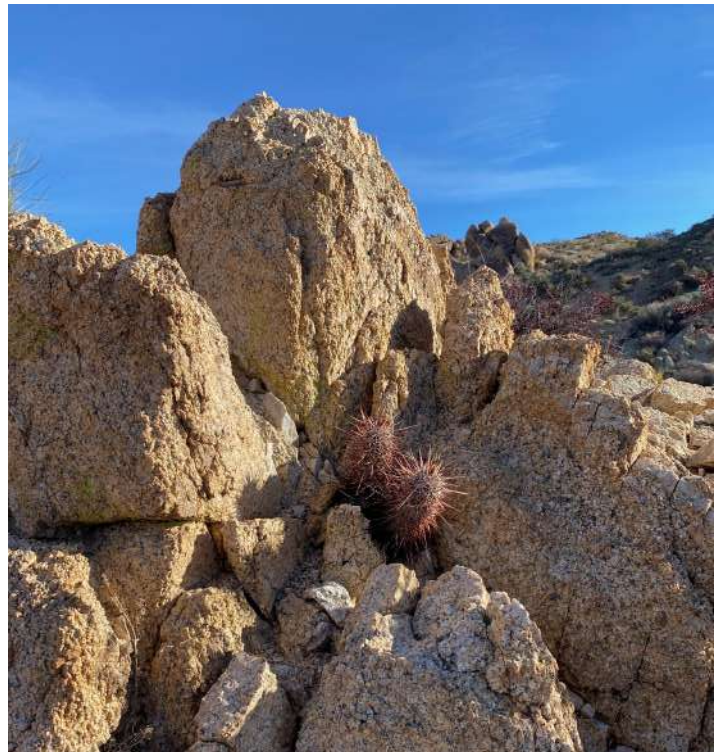
Simpler and less pretentious than brushing your cactus is to use a set of dull-tipped tweezers to carefully check under the wool and against the tubercules. Less fun, though.

I prefer to treat mealybugs with a combination of treatments: systemic, to catch the bugs that are surely hiding under the wool and won't be reached by a spray, and with spray pesticide that specifically mentions mealybugs on the label. I use Bonide pellets sprinkled over the soil on the pot to provide the systemic pesticide, and repeat both the pellets and spray every two weeks for at least 3 treatments.

You may notice in the mealybug photo some yellowing of the flesh of the cactus where I pulled the mealybug from. It can resemble sun-bleaching from getting too much sun, but what you should look for is the yellowing to occur under the wool. That's a major sign of mealybugs, or some other pest, hiding under the wool and eating at your plant. Where there's wool, the mealies are less likely to show as the little white powdery things on the stems of the cactus, so by the time you see them it's often quite an infestation. Check your cactus regularly!

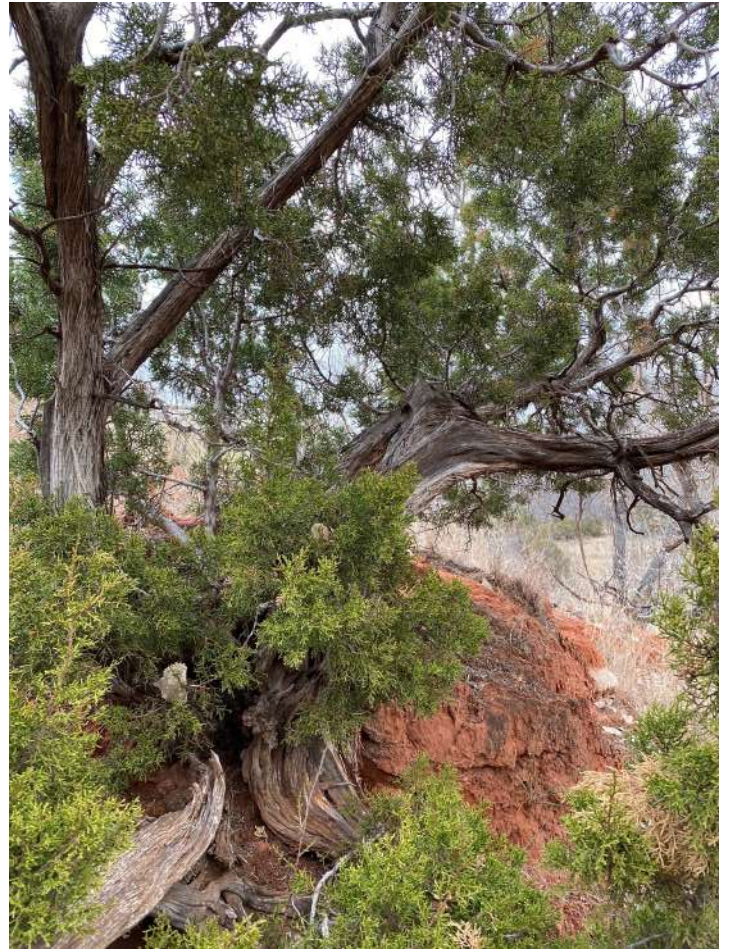
I hope you enjoyed following along with me on the journey of discovering the true Latin name for my plant, and embracing how easy they are to grow! This cactus is one of my all time favorites, with funky tubercules, lots of fluffy wool, and giant sunshine-y flowers that'll bring a smile to your face all summer.

MEMBER PHOTO SECTION



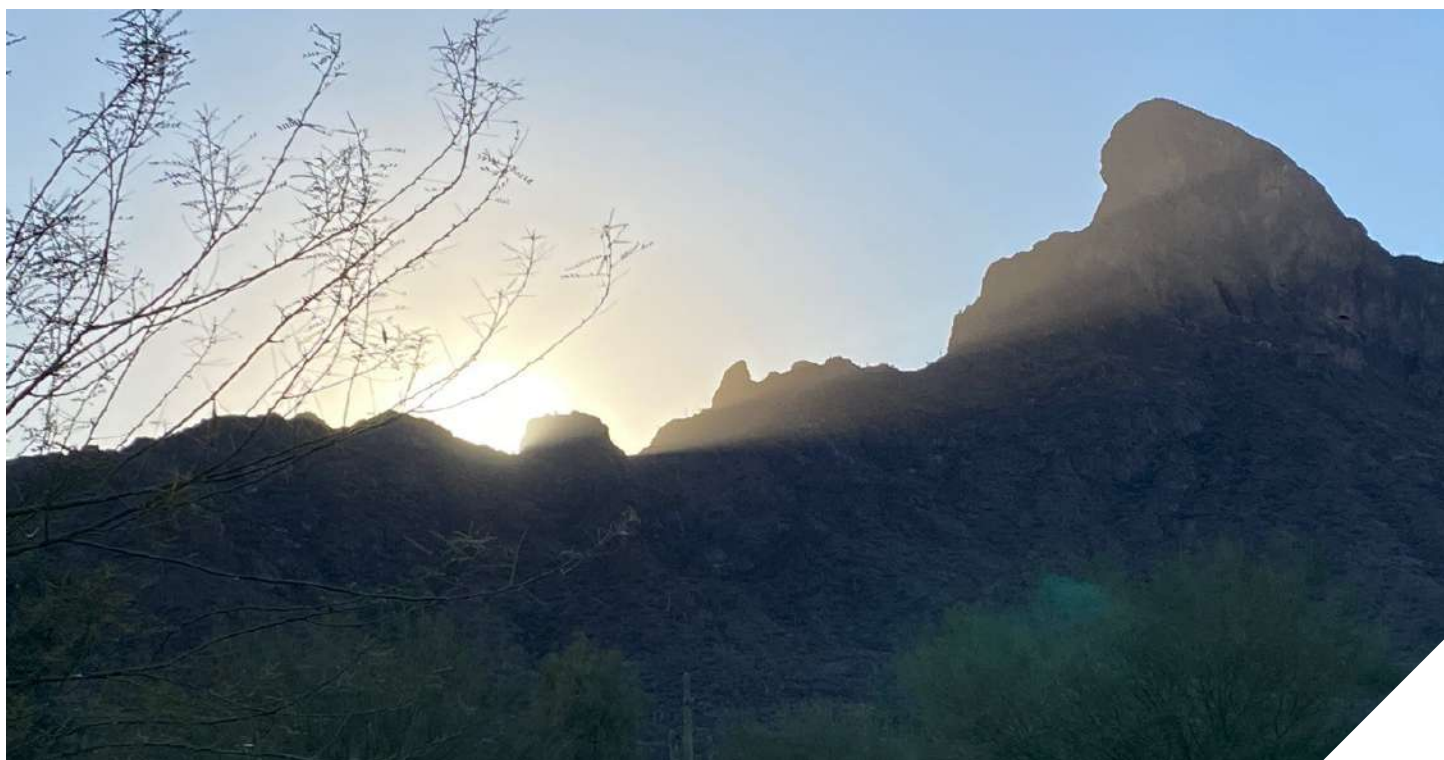
Joshua Tree National Park. The park was very crowded in the areas where the Joshua Trees grow—I ended up camping at the very south end of the park, in the Cottonwood area. It was a beautiful warm day to walk around and discover all of the cactus that grow there. Top: *Cylindropuntia ramossima*, left: *Fouquieria splendens*, right: *Echinocereus engelmannii*. Pam Badger

MEMBER PHOTO SECTION



Palo Duro Canyon, Texas. It gets quite cold here - was supposed to get to 21° the night after I left - so not many cactus. The beautiful ancient junipers are spectacular and the two cactus I saw are obviously very cold hardy. Pam Badger

MEMBER PHOTO SECTION



*Carnegiea gigantea* at Picacho Peak, Arizona

Pam Badger

2023 COVER GALLERY

