

VOLUME 57 • NUMBER 01 • JANUARY 2022



ESPINAS Y FLORES



FICUS PETIOLARIS

BONUS ARTICLE: ALOE VAOMBE • VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

SAFARI PARK UPDATE • WINTER SHOW AND SALE & more!

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

**ON THE COVER**

Ficus petiolaris

Photo by Al Klein

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SDCSS SCHEDULEJanuary in-person meeting: **January 8TH**January speaker: **Kelly Griffin**Upcoming events: **SDCSS Winter Show & Sale, Feb 12-13****EXECUTIVE BOARD**

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Brag table	Denise Huntsman-Griffin & Susan Hopkins
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Annual Sales	Chris Miller
Auction & Holiday Plants	Kelly Griffin
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Monthly Plant Sales	Jim DeForest & Melanie Howe
Monthly Supply Sales	Gerry Plaisted
Benefit Drawing Table	Allen Clark & Chuck Ramey

Programs	Kelly Griffin
Reception	Susan Hopkins & Candy Garner
New Member Orientation	Patricia Bryan & Jay Crowley
Monthly Regalement	Kathy Clark & Sandy Wetzel-Smith
Picnic Regalement	[open]
Coffee in the Garden Coordinators	Julie Dixon & Chuck Ramey

LIAISONS

Balboa Park Desert Garden	Susan Hopkins
CSSA Affiliate Rep	Rick Bjorklund
SD Botanic Garden	Phyllis Flechsig
SD Botanic Foundation	[open]
SD Floral Association	Jeanette Dutton
SD Zoo Safari Park, Baja & Old World Gardens	May Fong Ho
Palomar CS Society Liaison	Brita Miller

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings! When you read this it will be 2022—Happy New Year! Despite the ongoing pandemic I am looking forward to a busy year with SDCSS and all of you.

I hope you enjoyed a happy and peaceful holiday season. I was very pleased to be able to continue my Christmas tradition of visiting the Zoo on that day - I had not visited in almost 4 months (unprecedented for me) and was delighted to see all the plants vibrant and glowing after our recent rains. My favorite place in San Diego, outside of my own garden, is the Africa Rocks exhibit where i am very familiar with many of the plants.

A very exciting new addition is "[Self Guided Botanical Tours](#)." This includes 13 different tours about various plants that are labeled with name and reference numbers. Most important to us at SDCSS are the Aloe and Africa Rocks Botanical Tours. If you haven't been to the Zoo in a while—make plans to visit and see all the Aloes in bloom.



various tour Aloes

Our December meeting was very fun though different from the past. Jeremy Spath's talk on Agaves was amazing with great pictures and maps, we were all left with greatly expanded understanding of this genus. And the demonstration of how to "core an Agave" was great; he took a knife to a beautiful specimen of *Agave attenuata variegata* and though this looks painful, it is for the greater good - more of these beautiful plants. The auction went well and we were able to send a sizable donation to the CSSA Conservation committee. Thanks to all who participated by bidding and all who donated plants, including Western Cactus Growers and Al Kline. Also a big shout out to Sherman Blench for all the beautiful centerpieces she created for the silent auction—I love the one I got!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONT.)



Jeremy Spath's Agave coring presentation in December

We are gearing up for our **Winter Show and Sale**—it will be a 2 day event for the first time! We invite all of you to volunteer for this fun opportunity to mingle, be of service and learn. Mark your calendars for February 12 & 13—we will have volunteer sign up sheets at the January meeting. If you are not sure about what to volunteer for, ask Susan Hopkins, our ever present greeter at the table on the way in—she is Volunteer Coordinator; or contact me at pambad1@mac.com for details. If you are interested in selling plants or other related items at this event, contact Chris Miller at c.miller@cox.net for details.

Speaking of the January Meeting, it looks to be a good one! In addition to our Main Speaker Kelly Griffin, Al Klein of Botanic Wonders will be doing a Plant of the Month talk, there will be a Brag Table and Plant Exchange Table, as well as our always-popular Benefit Drawing.

Save the Date - January 23 for the return of Coffee in the Garden! Rick Bjorklund is hosting—his garden is not one you want to miss. See further details in this newsletter.

Very best wishes for a healthy, prosperous, and peaceful 2022.

Pam Badger

December 26, 2021

SHARE YOUR PASSION!

Have you ever read the *Espinias Y Flores* Newsletter 'Plant of the Month' article and thought - "I could do that!" Why participate by writing a piece for our **Plant of the Month** feature?

You don't have to be an expert! Pick a genus or species that interests you, do a little research, find or take a few pictures and create an article to share with the club!

Alternately, create a **5-10 minute slide show** to present at one of our upcoming meetings, or do a photo essay for the Newsletter—or both! We would love to see your plants.

Contact Pam Badger: pambad1@mac.com

SDCSS ONLINE

FACEBOOK:

www.facebook.com/sdcss

TWITTER:

[SanDiegoCactus](https://twitter.com/SanDiegoCactus)

INSTAGRAM:

#sdcss

WEBSITE:

www.sdcss.net

THE SAN DIEGO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY'S
WINTER SHOW AND SALE

Sat Feb 12 & Sun Feb 13, 2022

The annual SDCSS Winter Show and Sale returns this year for a 2-day event!

Bring your best show plants to be professionally judged and to win prizes,
and enjoy a sale featuring many succulent plant sellers and potters.

TIMES & DATES

SATURDAY

9am–11am	members only sale (membership card required)
11am–4pm	sale open to the public
10am	show room opens

SUNDAY

10am–3pm	show and sale
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setup on Friday Feb 11th from noon–6pm in room 101, or Saturday before 10am

LOCATION

Show: Room 101 of the Casa del Prado Balboa Park

Sale: patio between the Children's Theater and Casa Del Prado

Safety

Mask protocols will be enforced in enclosed Show and Sale areas. The show will follow Covid-19 safety measures set in place by Balboa Park, as well as any mandates required by the State of California.

Additional info

As in previous years, bring a box or bag to hold your purchases.

We look forward to seeing you!

SDCSS JANUARY SPEAKER



Join us Saturday, January 8th for our meeting and speaker Kelly Griffin, speaking on **Socotra: the island of endemics, revisited, revised and unseen.**

Our speaker: As a function of his work at Altman plants, Kelly Griffin is charged with finding and creating new and different plants. Kelly's hybrid aloes and agaves are well known in the industry. Kelly is a manager of Succulent Plant Development for Altman Plants. His inclination has been towards Agaves, Aloes and Echeverias, but there are many more plants that have garnered his attention. As part of his life's work, he has created and introduced many succulents ~ of course, Agaves, but also other succulent cultivars for the garden and patio.

Our program: "I had an opportunity to see this satellite protectorate island of Yemen a decade ago and I am going to be revisiting there very soon. (fingers crossed!) It is quite a distance (like 500 miles) from Yemen and is actually quite isolated so the plants that grow there are really spectacularly unique. I look forward to showing and sharing the bizarre and beautiful flora and fauna of Socotra!"

See you at the meeting on January 8th!

**The SDCSS abides by Balboa Park rules and the CA Mask Mandate—
masks MUST be worn indoors at our meeting at ALL times.**

Thank you so much for staying safe!

APPLY TO THE NEW SDCSS LIBRARY COMMITTEE

With the loss of Don Hunt, the current Library Committee is in need of a Chairperson and some new blood. I have rewritten the Job Description for the Committee, rather than just the Chair. There are several aspects to the Library Committee besides checking books in and out of our Library. While that is what the members see, there is much more to be done. I feel that the many facets of the job require a group to get it done. The types of things that need to be done include managing the databases, procuring new material and preparing it for being checked out, managing the collection, pulling items out of the collection during inventories and selling the items at our meetings. We also receive collections from time to time and they must be dealt with. Currently we have a person who is willing to do the research for adding new items, someone who can check items in and out and possibly someone to maintain the databases.

We need a Chair to lead the group and others to check books in and out. We also need people who are interested in managing the sale of the books to club members. I will continue on the committee as an advisor. Please let me know if you are interested. I will be available at the Jan meeting to meet with you at 12:30 or at the break. Please contact me at 619-990-2051 or c.miller@cox.net.

JANUARY COFFEE IN THE GARDEN WITH RICK BJORKLUND**SUCCULENT GARDEN PARTY AT RICK AND KEVIN'S PLACE**

4728 Allied Rd, San Diego, CA | Sunday, January 23rd 2022 | 10am to 2pm | (619) 229-1125

Our last garden party was in January 2020 so we are looking forward to hosting, seeing all of our friends again, and making new ones. If you haven't attended before we have a large collection of succulents and cacti, all over our lot which is just under $\frac{1}{4}$ acre. There are many kinds of succulents, some small and others larger, including Agave, Aloe, Crassula, Kalanchoe, Echeveria, Othonna, Mesembs, Adromischus, Gasteria, caudiciforms, and many others, including Kevin's Haworthia hybridizing efforts, with some Bromeliads, Tillandsias and bulbs mixed in. Most plants are labeled but if the name is not clear please ask us so labels remain in place. In the last year many of our agaves bloomed, and finally this year Agave 'Jaws' is in spike after dominating the front yard for many years. Many of the Aloes should be in bloom and if you are here in the afternoon the Mesembs usually begin blooming around 1pm or so. As in previous years, we will have homemade appetizers and desserts as well as beverages, and will have some plants and garden related items for sale (cash only please).

RICK BJORKLUND



CONGRATS TO THE SDCSS VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR!



DONNA RODEN

As our new secretary, Donna has expanded the role of this position—organizing our records, asking questions that have made us look at important issues regarding meeting government requirements and compliance to them. She has cleared up a tax issue, put our 501c3 compliance on the front burner, and handled whatever needs we have thrown at her. She has worked with our new treasurer to ensure a smooth transition. As our new representative of the Botanical Society, she has worked with them to straighten out our schedule for the meetings and sales. As a regular member and volunteer, she has participated fully in all our meeting, shows and sales; from set up to breakdown Donna is there to take care of whatever needs comes up to insure that we have a successful event.

CHRIS MILLER

KELLY GRIFFIN

Over the last twenty years Kelly's role in SDCSS has expanded with the needs of the organization. He has been President, Vice President, and director. He has been a huge part of why our shows are successful, helping organize the shows, arranging for judges and judging himself. During the pandemic he has arranged speakers, tested the programs the day before, and participated fully in the Zoom meetings. Now that we are back to real-time meetings, he is arranging the speakers, opening his home to them, and ensuring their success at our meetings. He has been working with the Botanical Society on our schedule for next year. He also sets up the rental of the canopy for our sales. In past years, he has arranged the gift plants for the holiday party and arranged for the live auction plants with Western Cactus. His relationships with the CSSA and people in the succulent plant community have added tremendous value to SDCSS.

CHRIS MILLER



FICUS PETIOLARIS

MEXICAN ROCK FIG

by Al Klein

typical bark of
Ficus petiolaris

Al Klein

Ficus petiolaris is another of my favorite caudiciform type plants. Even at a young age, this tree can produce a swollen stem with a lot of character. I first discovered his plant back in the 1970's. They were seedlings in a 3" pot, and already had a nice swollen trunk. I immediately bought several of them and experimented growing them in indoors and outdoors. I was quickly impressed that they were so adaptable and easy to grow. There are two other species which are closely related to Ficus petiolaris, Ficus palmeri, and Ficus brandegeei. Some botanists feel that they are just varieties of the same species. In my opinion there is significant difference between them to be considered two distinct species. They all originate from Baja Mexico. If grown in the ground these trees can grow large. I have grown most of my plants in containers, which stunts growth. This stunting eventually produces very interesting trunks and roots, which makes them great bonsai candidates. The leaf of Ficus petiolaris has pinkish-red veins, while F. palmeri and F. brandegeei leaf veins are light green. All three species make excellent bonsai specimens. I have over ten special plants in my personal collection. I can't get enough of both types!



Ficus petiolaris, ten years in same pot!

Al Klein



large specimen with roots on dead wood

Al Klein

Botanicwonders



Ficus palmeri bonsai

Al Klein

Botanicwonders



very old stunted plant with deformed trunk

Al Klein

Both, *Ficus petiolaris* and *Ficus palmeri* are easy to grow. They will grow best in part sun to shade. Plants in full sun will produce smaller leaves and have a tendency to "cup". In the shade plants produce large flat leaves with a nice "tropical" look. If you want your plants to grow large, plant them in large pots with well draining soil. Protect from frost. I have grown most of my plants "hard" in small pots. These plants are not your typical succulent, in small pots they will need to be watered regularly to prevent wilting. Fertilize regularly to promote good growth. I trim my plants at least once a year during their short dormancy period in the winter. I also strip off any leaves during this time. Regular hard pruning will also encourage multiple branching from the caudex which will lead to interesting character for your specimen. This seems to give them a boost of new growth and vigor. All three species are best grown from seed. *Ficus* produce figs for fruit. Unfortunately, without the proper wasp for pollination, which we do not have, they will not produce seeds. They can also be grown from cuttings, however in my experience cuttings will not produce a swollen trunk. I hope that you will consider this wonderful species for addition to your collection!

AL KLEIN

leaf comparison, *Ficus palmeri* and *Ficus petiolaris*

Botanicwonders

Al Klein

BAJA GARDEN & OLD WORLD SUCCULENT GARDEN UPDATE

A LOT TO BE GRATEFUL FOR Many thanks to the donors and volunteers who make the Baja & Old World Succulent Gardens great places to showcase cacti and succulents.



A 6 year old baobab,
Adansonia kilima from Africa
(from San Diego Zoo) –
just imagine 100 years from
now :)

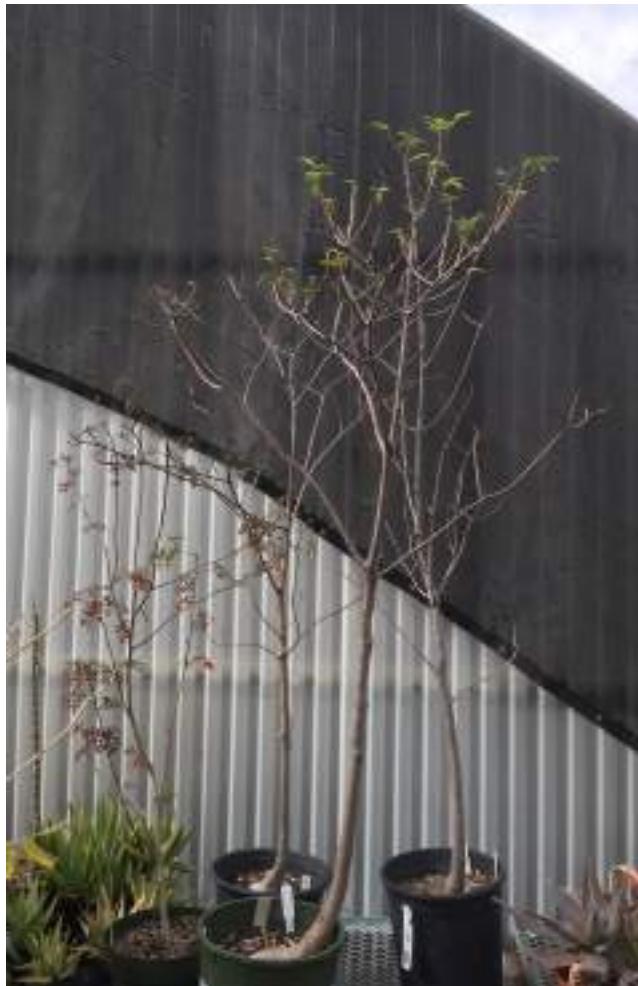


Several 5' tall spears of *Sansevieria kirkii* var. *kirkii*
'Superclone' (from Christine Vargas)



Eve's Needle Cactus - *Austrocylindropuntia subulata* crested (from Sandra Wetzel-Smith)
at Under 'See' Garden

BAJA GARDEN & OLD WORLD SUCCULENT GARDEN UPDATE



Another 3 baobabs from Madagascar
waiting for warmer weather before planting
(from San Diego Zoo)



Flats and flats of Gasteria (from Mitch Hubbard)—
these will go into OWSG, Safari Park, and SDCSS
Show & Sale



Many flats of African bulbs (from Ken Blackford)

If you want to
donate or volunteer,
please email
mayfongho@yahoo.com

or text
(760) 233-3948

Photos and article
by **M. F. Ho**, with
permission of the San
Diego Zoo/Safari Park.

Aloes as a genus are a varied group containing well over 500 species. The variation of this genus is taken to an extreme on the large “red island” country that is Madagascar. I have had the good fortune to travel there extensively on four separate occasions. Here I share just a glimpse into one particular Aloe species that I have encountered there.

ALOE VAOMBE

JANUARY BONUS ARTICLE: ALOE VAOMBE



typical crimson Aloe vaombe blooms Kelly Griffin

Aloe vaombe is so named for the native name for this plant in Malagasy. It is a medium-to-large stately tree Aloe that has wide and channeled shiny leaves which can blush quite red with bright light and in times of drought. It is normally a single solitary plant, and it is unlikely that you will grow it from a pup or offset, and it is significantly more likely that an individual plant of this species will have been grown from seed. This is an important fact that I will come back to. I have a nice plant in my yard that is now above the rain gutters on our one-story ranch house. Given decent treatment (that is—good sun and adequate water) and when planted in the ground, you can expect six inches to up to a foot of growth per year. It normally is a mid-winter flowering Aloe, blooming for us in the northern hemisphere in late December to early January. *Aloe vaombe* most typically has deep red flowers. During our cool wet winter weather, the summer-stressed red leaves green up considerably, which makes for a very Christmas-y color scheme given the combination of red and green.

I have mentioned “typical,” so if you suspected that I might have been hinting at an *Aloe vaombe* that is atypical, you would be correct. When I first started working for Rancho Soledad Nursery, we grew out a batch of collected seed of *Aloe vaombe*. There was perhaps some variation in flower color, but mostly flower tones of red. We selected two of the very reddest flowered plants and plants that seemed to be mostly devoid of leaf fungus spotting, and we used these two groups of plants as our stock seed plants. This gave way to a very fine group of seedlings that, for the most part, had the two parent characteristics we wanted (bright red flowers and disease-free), yet were still within the parameters of the species. Termed “high grading,” these were not truly hybrids, but rather selected forms of the same species combined.

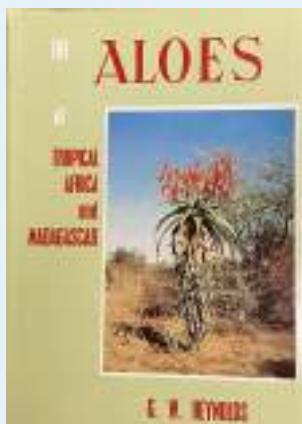
We had one variegated plant that came up, and we used that plant when it flowered as one of the seed pod stock plants in production and it, in turn, produced a number of variegated seedlings. I am not certain that this attention to detail has continued in the subsequent years there, but that work I believe has contributed to the plants we see in gardens now. I have seen several full-grown variegated plants in gardens, and some really bright fire engine red ones as well.



a variegated Aloe vaombe in bloom

Kelly Griffin

JANUARY BONUS ARTICLE: ALOE VAOMBE



Aloe vaombe, showing its bright red flowers, is featured prominently on the cover of the 1966 Reynolds book **The Aloes of Tropical Africa and Madagascar**. Even the relatively more recent comprehensive Aloe book, **Aloes The Definitive Guide**, which was published in 2011, only cites this species

as having crimson red flowers. During my first two visits to Madagascar, I observed plants of this species in the area north of Tulear. On my first trip, I could not tell for certain the flower color because that time of year was not their blooming season. As these bloom in July and August in the southern hemisphere, it wasn't until my third trip that I had the chance to see many of them in bloom in the wild. As I have stated, they are typically red flowered, but of course you only know that when they are actually in bloom.



Aloe vaombe in habitat

Kelly Griffin

On this third trip, in the very far southwest part of the island, we found a population that had a greater degree of flower variance, with orange-flowered and even a few yellow-flowered plants. While these are still representative of the species, they do look markedly different. What is significant is that the plant is only described as having red flowers, with no mention of any variation

occurring. The yellow-flowered Aloe in this case is definitely a recessive trait, and the orange perhaps less so. Perhaps the orange is a combination of the reds with yellows, and thus showing incomplete dominance. We saw only a few plants that had yellow flowers; I would guess perhaps less than ten were seen.

I recall that when I showed my first picture of the yellow-flowered *Aloe vaombe* to world-renowned plantsman John Lavranos, he was so impressed with the beauty of this Aloe. He suggested that I had a new species, but of course he had not seen all the plants all together, nor had he observed the consistency that these plants had expressed with the more typically known form. As pretty as it is, it is merely a blond from a mostly brunette family.



canary-yellow Aloe vaombe in bloom

Kelly Griffin

I managed to gather some seed from a known yellow-flowered plant in that population. Disappointedly, most of the plants from that collection that I still own have now flowered either red or a shade of orange. To my elation, this December, a yellow one finally bloomed!

JANUARY BONUS ARTICLE: ALOE VAOMBE

red and yellow *Aloe vaombe* comparison

Kelly Griffin

canary-yellow *Aloe vaombe* in bloom

Kelly Griffin

I suspect that there are other yellow-flowered plants out there, as a good number of the plants from this collection went out to general sales accidentally, so perhaps we shall see a few more around town? The trick to making more will be to find an additional yellow, or perhaps go back to the yellow with orange, with the hopeful assumption that the recessive gene will produce another yellow. We shall see with time.

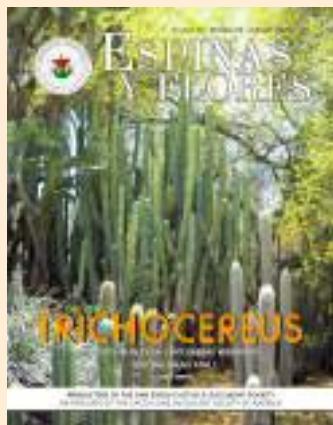
The thing I like the most about all the flower colors of this species is that they are bright, clear, solid colors. This isn't a dull red—it's a brilliant red. It isn't a soft orange—it's a striking orange. It isn't a straw yellow—it's a glowing canary yellow.

The existence of other flower forms is of great interest particularly in regard to this attractive landscape Aloe. It is not a difficult plant to grow, and should be incorporated into more gardens. With some work, it will be something to see *Aloe vaombe* in wider cultivation and—with some good luck—in all the flavors.

Stay tuned!

KELLY GRIFFIN

2021 EYF COVER GALLERY



See you in 2022!