

VOLUME 57 • NUMBER 11 • NOVEMBER 2022



ESPINAS Y FLORES

DISCOCACTUS • BECOME A BOARD MEMBER
XMAS PARTY • UPCOMING EVENTS & more!

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



ON THE COVER
Discocactus blooms
Photo by Jen Greene

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SDCSS SCHEDULE

Our next in-person meeting:
November 12th (in person!)
 Next upcoming event:
DECEMBER HOLIDAY PARTY!

EXECUTIVE BOARD

President	Pam Badger
Vice President	Chris Miller
Secretary	Donna Roden
Treasurer	John McCann

DIRECTORS

Olga Batalov, Jerry Garner, Jen Greene, Kelly Griffin,
 Denise Huntsman-Griffin, Dean Karras, Al Kline

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Conservation	Herb Stern
Brag table	Denise Huntsman-Griffin & Susan Hopkins
Plant of the Month	Pam Badger
Summer/Winter Show	Dean Karras
Historian	Jerry Garner
Grants	Jerry Garner
Library Committee	[open]
Exchange Plants/Seeds	Michelle Heckathorn
Annual Sales	Chris Miller
Auction & Holiday Plants	Kelly Griffin
Show Auction Manager	[open]
Monthly Plant Sales	Lynn Elliot & Ken Brown
Benefit Drawing Table	Allen Clark & Chuck Ramey
Programs	Kelly Griffin

Reception	Susan Hopkins & Candy Garner
New Member Orientation	Patricia Bryan & Jay Crowley
Monthly Regalement	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	Donna Roden
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! Night-time temperatures fell well below 60° last night for the first time this season at my place, bringing an end to the growing season of many of my Euphorbias. The exciting thing though, is to see the Dudleyas wake up—even before the light rains we got this week, they were looking more alive and starting to grow. It is so fun to watch the changes in plants throughout the year.



The October meeting was a delight, so many things going on. We had more vendors than we have had since the pandemic started—good to see some new vendors! The pre-meeting workshop on propagating Euphorbias was well attended, and we had a new member give her first Plant of the Month talk—many thanks to **Jodi Visosky**—hope this was the first of many! Dylan Hannon came down from the Huntington with a fascinating talk and some unusual plants for the sale. Always good to see Dylan!

Our November meeting promises to be just as exciting. A wonderful experienced member of our club **Dean Karras** will be giving the main talk on a recent plant adventure, **Jen Greene** will talk about Discocactus, and our awesome VP will give a workshop on propagating Gasterias. So bring your brag plants, come early for plant and pottery sales, and stay late for the plant exchange table!

At the last meeting I mentioned how our coffee break tables used to be laden with a variety of yummy treats and how we would like to go back to that tradition. In the past, we divided the membership by name and requested that a group bring snacks—so for November let's have those with last name A-M bring treats, then in January N-Z. This is by no means a requirement, but if you like to share goodies, please do.

Good news! If you ordered tee-shirts in the latest order, they will be available at the November meeting!

Be well, see you November 12th!

Pam Badger

October 24, 2022

SHARE YOUR PASSION!

Have you ever read the *Espinas Y Flores* Newsletter 'Plant of the Month' article and thought - "I could do that!" Why not participate by writing a piece for our **Plant of the Month** feature?

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!

Contact Pam Badger: pambad1@mac.com

SDCSS ONLINE

FACEBOOK:

www.facebook.com/sdcss

TWITTER: SanDiegoCactus

INSTAGRAM: #sdcss

WEBSITE: www.sdcss.net

SDCSS NOVEMBER SPEAKER

Join us **Saturday, November 12th** for our guest speaker:
Dean Karras: "A Botanical Travelogue of Baja Mexico"

Our Speaker Topic: Dean will present a botanical travelogue of his three expeditions to Baja, Mexico. The presentation will emphasize field observations of the succulent plants we know and love, including cacti, geophytes, euphorbias and kin, other stem succulents, epiphytes, and pachycauls, with a particular emphasis on the genus dudleya. Dean will also discuss how the greater climate, geology, and ecology of the Baja ecoregion collectively shape the unique landscape and the plants that inhabit it.

About Our Speaker: Dean Karras began collecting and growing cacti from seed as a hobby in 2008. He has been a member of the Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society since 2017, and a member of the San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society since 2019, where he now serves as Board Member and Show Chair. Some of his favorite succulent genera are: aloe, agave, dudleya, trichocereus, echinocereus, astrophytum, and ferocactus. Dean is also partial to mesembs, caudiciforms, and xeric bromeliads, although his passion for plants extends far beyond succulents to include organic gardening & permaculture practices, natives, edibles, and ethnobotanically significant plants. He realized his long-standing dream of owning his own nursery to serve the local community when he opened Gnosis Nursery in July of 2020, which he now runs full-time. When not busy propagating and selling plants, Dean can be found exploring and photographing the Desert Southwest and Baja.



See you at the meeting!

PRE-MEETING WORKSHOP & PLANT OF THE MONTH

The November **Pre-meeting Workshop** will feature our VP, Chris Miller, sharing tips on **growing, separating, and propagating Gasterias**.

This month's **Plant of the Month** will be **Discocactus**, presented by Jen Greene.

The Pre-meeting Workshop runs **11:30-12:00** in **Room 101**, and the POM feature will be presented before the November speaker!

CLUB NEWS AND NOTICES

At the November meeting, the membership will have the opportunity to vote on the slate of Officers and Directors who manage San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society. Here is the list of nominees:

Executive Board

President: Pam Badger (incumbent)
Vice President: Chris Miller (incumbent)
Secretary: Olga Batalov (current director)
Treasurer: John McCann (incumbent)

Directors

Jerry Garner (incumbent)
Kelly Griffin (incumbent)
Dean Kerras (incumbent)
Jen Greene (incumbent)
Candy Garner (nominee)
Pat Bryan (nominee)
Jared Petker (nominee)

If you'd like to vote and cannot attend the meeting,
please send your vote via email to May Fong-Ho at membership@sdcss.net

Many thanks to **Al Kline**, and **Denise Huntsman** who have served for the past four year as Directors!
Thanks also to **Donna Roden** who has done an amazing job as Secretary! Donna will be moving to the newly established position as Business Manager after being appointed by the President and approved by the Board.

PAM BADGER



SDCSS Coffee in the Garden!

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 19 8:30 – 2:00

Join us for coffee, tea, homemade goodies and a guided tour of the lovely garden of Melanie Howe!

8151 Doe Point San Diego 92120 (please park on Hillandale Dr not in cul-de-sac)

Club members Brian Shepherd, Sue Thomas, Christine Vargas, and Melanie will be selling great plants and pottery – please bring a box and cash (some vendors accept cards).

For more information please contact Melanie at malosma.mel@gmail.com

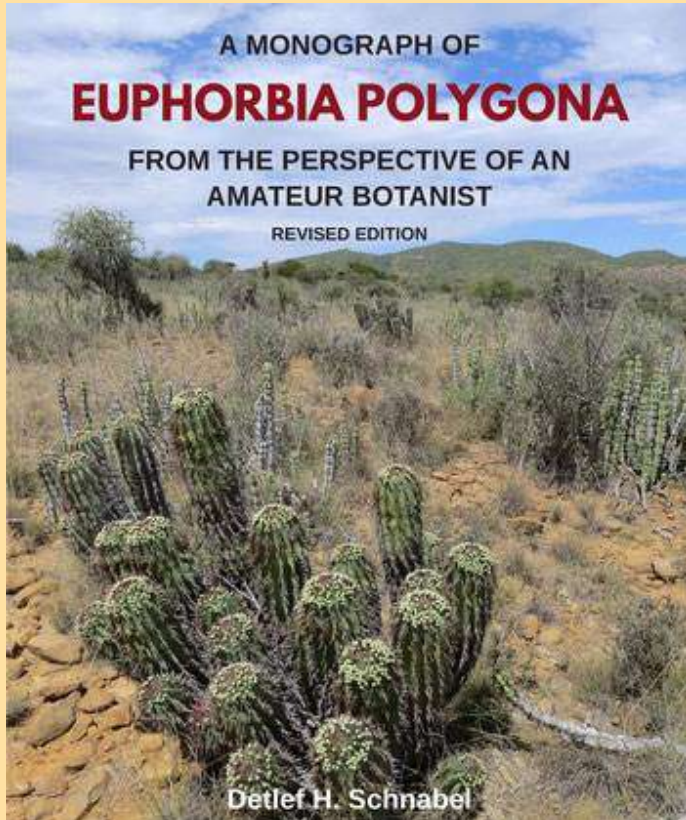
Hope to see you there!!!!



CLUB NEWS AND NOTICES

NEW LIBRARY BOOK REVIEW: EUPHORBIA POLYGONA

Review: “*A Monograph of Euphorbia polygona from the Perspective of an Amateur Botanist*” by Detlef H. Schnabel



New to the library is this beautifully published book by Detlef Schnabel on a species of Euphorbia many of us likely have somewhere in our collection—*Euphorbia polygona*! Detlef has been a frequent flier to South Africa since 1982 and has studied *E. polygona* in habitat fairly extensively. Many of his publications can be found in “*Euphorbia World*,” a triannual journal published by the International Euphorbia Society.

This book covers 12 distinct and natural variations of the “*Euphorbia polygona* species complex” found within South Africa. The main species covered between the covers of this book are currently canonically referred to as *E. polygona*, *E. anopla*, and *E. horrida*. Schnabel generally takes the splitter’s approach at the infraspecific level vs at the species level when it comes to the above taxa. Though DNA-based studies detail otherwise, Detlef believes many of the taxa we believe to be distinct species, such as *E. polygona* and *E. horrida*, are (not so) simply variations of *E. polygona*. In the author’s opinion, this distinction has important implications for conservation policies that may not be doing justice to this plant (and others) in habitat. The author also includes a resolution to the *Euphorbia polygona* “Snowflake” mystery!

With around 100 amazing photos, many in habitat, along with the etymology, description, distribution information and more on each of the 12 varieties of *E. polygona*, I’m sure you’ll find yourself walking around your garden as I did on an adventure to figure out which variations of *E. polygona* you actually have on hand. After spending time with this monograph, I’m sure you’ll come away with a new, or renewed, appreciation for these wonderful Euphorbia!

Our copy of “*A Monograph of Euphorbia polygona from the Perspective of an Amateur Botanist*,” kindly signed by the author himself, can be found in the SDCSS library, and copies are also purchasable directly from Detlef Schnabel at <https://www.euphorbia-polygona.de>.

JARED PETKER

HELP RUN THE BENEFIT DRAWING TABLE!

After several years of heading up the effort at the Benefit Drawing Table, I am stepping down. If you think you might wish to take on this volunteer position, please come and talk with me at the meeting. I’ll tell you how I have been doing it, though you are free to do it in whatever way works for you. Chuck will continue to volunteer at the table. He’s fun to work with.

ALLEN CLARK

CLUB NEWS AND NOTICES

On October 22, our club participated in a fun event in Balboa Park. “**Birds, Bees, Flowers, Trees**” is an annual event sponsored by the Floral Association to which we belong. This was their first event since the pandemic and our first time participating. Our focus was on educating people and getting them excited about succulent plants. Al Klein of Botanic Wonders Nursery and his crew put up an awesome booth to sell plants and provide education. Al made some wonderful placards to go with his plants showing different aspects of different genera. For the younger set, myself and Ariella Mann, a new member, had a booth to teach kids about succulents, show them how to repot plants and make their own little gardens to take home. We talked to lots of people and handed out information about SDCSS.

Thanks to **Al** for the donation of little plants for the kids!



Ariella talking to children visiting the booth



Over 35 people took the quiz: Is it a Cactus or Other Succulent?

holiday party!

December 10, 2022: Our Traditional Holiday Party will be back in full swing this year! Save the date—**December 10**. We will begin gathering @10 AM for socializing, drinks, and checking out the gift, exchange, and auction plants. Start thinking about the plant, or other related item, you will bring for the gift exchange. Remember, the better the item you bring, the sooner you will be able to choose! Cost is \$25.00 members, \$30.00 guests (only members receive gift plants) Sign up at November meeting or online [here](#).

FULL DETAILS IN THE DECEMBER NEWSLETTER!

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE



DISCOCACTUS

crystallophilus

WORDS & PHOTOS BY JEN GREENE

I picked up my first *Discocactus* intending to simply resell them, to be honest. They were described as challenging to grow, finicky, and very sensitive to cold temperatures. I was quickly charmed by their tiny little pseudo-cephalums, small size, and overall appearance.

I hung onto a couple, and was pleasantly surprised to find them to be relatively easy in our San Diego climate. As with anything, your experience may be different – but these are worth a look!

SPECIES BACKGROUND

In looking up this species, it appears to be a geographical or morphological form of *Discocactus placentiformis*. *D. crystallophilus* is the more attractive of the two, in my opinion, with more attractive reddish spines and a slightly more globular appearance. In the wild, these plants often grow in combination with

bromeliads, a sign of their preference for more water during the growing season than you might expect.

These cacti are native to Brazil, specifically the Minas Gerais region, while the species *D. placentiformis* ranges further west and somewhat north.

CULTIVATION REQUIREMENTS

While some internet resources would have you believe that these are a challenging species, in the right climate or given the right conditions, they're not particularly fussy and don't get particularly large. It makes them excellent for container cultivation, and they do well in the same pot for an extended period of time.

My *Discocactus crystallophilus* are currently growing in my greenhouse, and prior to its construction, they were in a small plastic greenhouse from Amazon. I feel

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

the protection from natural rainfall plus the increased heat from greenhouse conditions had a significant impact on my ease of cultivation. Without the increased heat of greenhouse conditions, I suspect water needs are much decreased.



SOIL

These cacti prefer well-draining soil, and in their natural habitat, grow in very rocky soils accompanying grasses and/or in the shade of larger trees. In cultivation, a soil mix that is high in inorganic matter (such as pumice) is ideal to mimic these conditions without going overboard with an exact match.

Pumice works well as a porous material that is lightweight but not so light that it will float to the top of your pots and wash out. In a pinch, you could use perlite instead, but I'd recommend that only for seedlings you plan to repot within a year or two. *D. crystallophilus* supposedly don't like being repotted, and can take a while to become established when moved to a new pot, but my repotted plant did just fine with little to no signs of stress.

Make sure you don't water your cactus for at least a week after repotting it.

This period of no water allows the roots to heal from any micro-abrasions or damage that occurs when dusting the soil off the roots or otherwise moving it around in new soil. By letting the soil stay dry for at least a week, you give the roots time to heal and patch up so moisture doesn't get in and cause rot. The most common cause of death in these cacti is rot, which most often is from being over-watered.

WATERING

As with any other cactus, ensure the soil is completely dry before you water it again. They are not very happy about being kept completely dry for long periods, so a delicate balancing act is needed in winter. In hot weather or bright light exposures, the cactus will suck up water more quickly than in less ideal conditions. As an example, in my greenhouse with high light exposure and high temps above 110 in summer, I may need to water every other day. In winter, by comparison, I leave them almost entirely dry, with a light watering about once a month if there's a warm day. Another way to look at it is that these have roughly two seasons: growing season, and dormancy.

GROWING SEASON

The growing season is in the warmer, brighter months. For me, this seems to start quite early in the year, around March. The key seems to be when the nighttime lows stop dipping below about 45F in the greenhouse, especially if the daytime highs are in the 80s or 90s. During the milder months, when the greenhouse is below 100F and nights are at least 45F or warmer, I'll water about once a week, less often if it's cloudy. At the peak of summer, when the greenhouse is hot, nights are short and warm, and the sun is blazing every day, they get more water. During this time of year, I watch them closely, picking up their pots to check if they need water or not. By feeling if the pot feels heavy or light, I can judge how much moisture is in the soil. I water deeply each time, ensuring that water is running out of the bottom of the pot to minimize any salts or hard minerals found in our tap water.

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

DORMANCY

Dormancy for a *Discocactus* isn't really dormancy so much as conditions being too poor to grow, so they just kind of...pause. They should be kept on the dry side to prevent rot, but not left completely dry for the entire season like a *Copiapoa*. When growing mine in the plastic greenhouse, I would carefully water them with a squeeze condiment bottle* about once a month, and the amount of water was really just enough to moisten the soil without really draining through. The first winter, this was the most stressful period for me, but this past winter was much easier as I knew what to look for and what to do. Dormancy seems to kick in when daytime temps are rarely above 80, and nights dip down to below 45.

*Pro tip - get a squeeze condiment bottle or two from Amazon, and use that for precision watering, especially in winter or when you want to get under the top edge of plants.

FROST HARDINESS

These are not frost hardy, but if kept sheltered and protected, mine have done fine with brief air temperature drops to the low 30s. They are always closed up in their greenhouse, whether it was the plastic one or the redwood one, and thus protected from cold breezes, water, or other potential threats due to cold. Simply keeping them closed up and protected from moisture at night seems to protect them enough to tolerate the cold temperatures.

FERTILIZATION

When *Discocactus crystallophilus* are in their active growing season, **and** they are in a highly inorganic potting mix (think 50 - 75% pumice), they greatly appreciate dilute fertilizer on a regular basis. I use a balanced 1:1:1 fertilizer at half strength, but in the past I've used a cactus-specific fertilizer. Since switching to the balanced fertilizer, I've seen regular, consistent blooms all through summer, while before I only got a few rounds, so I'd say the balanced fertilizer is a win!



Do not fertilize your cacti during winter! When it's cold and the days are shorter, they aren't actively growing, and providing fertilizer at this time can actually lead to rot.

LIGHTING

For best appearance, and to encourage blooming, these cacti thrive with lots of bright light. They don't appreciate full sun 100% of the time, as this can burn them, but I find mine to do best with either 40% shade during midday (provided by shade cloth), or full shade for the hottest/brightest part of the day (roughly noon to 2 or 3 pm).

You'll know you're getting it right, bordering on too much light, if they start blushing a reddish hue on the outer edges of the ribs. This stress blushing can and often does appear in winter as well in response to cold weather and being kept on the dry side.

BLOOMS

By far, one of the most exciting things about *Discocactus* are the massive, heavily fragrant blooms.

They begin to emerge quickly, poking up in the morning and being fully developed and ready to open

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

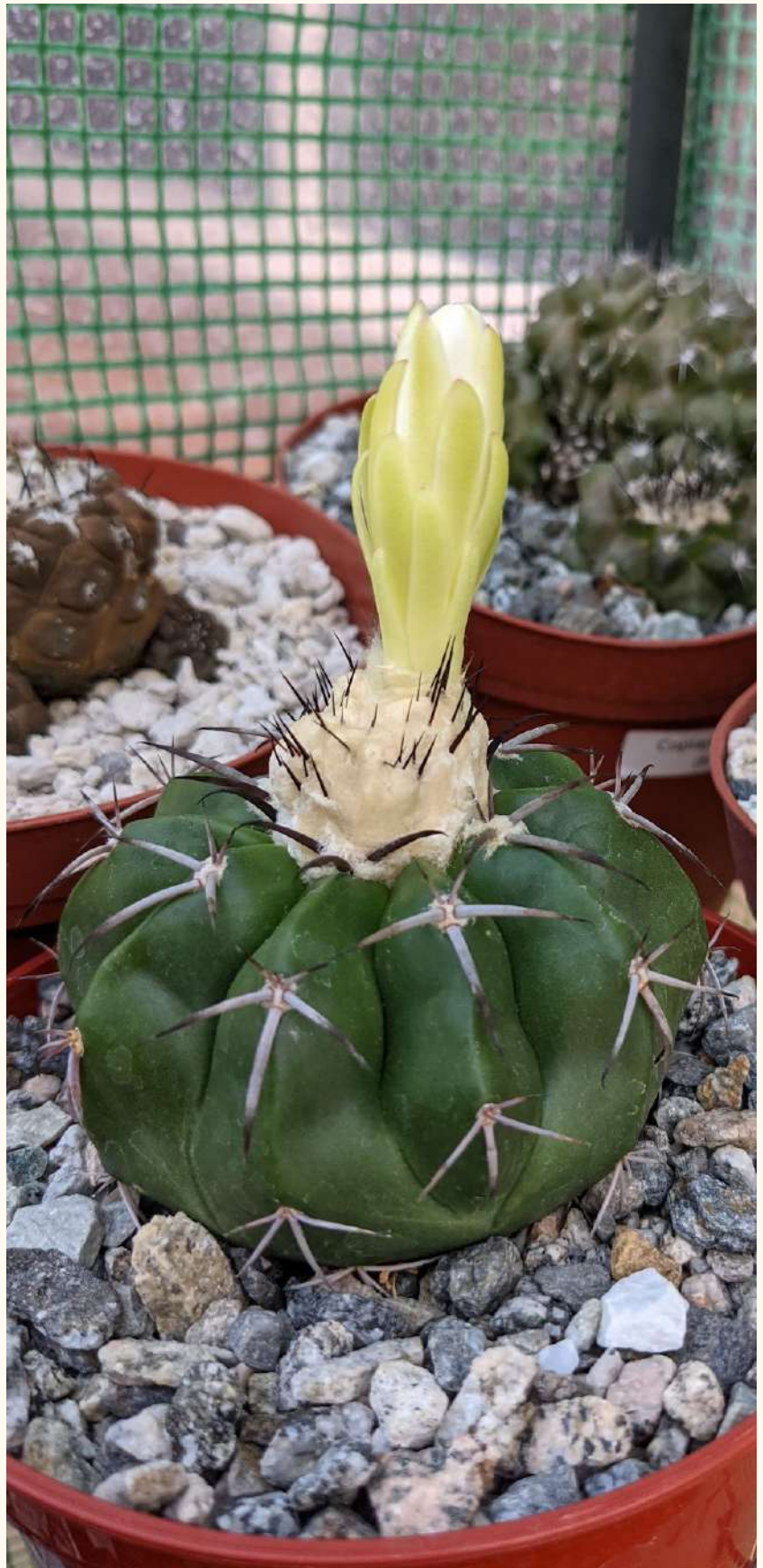
by evening. They only bloom at night, and blooms open for only one night, so watch them closely so you don't miss it!

Mine have produced blooms from late spring through to fall, as long as it was warm and sunny. A regular fertilization schedule helps a ton in encouraging blooms, and they are well worth encouraging! The scent can and will fill an entire greenhouse, and is a lovely scent that women will wish they could wear as perfume.

TRY A *DISCOCACTUS CHRYSALLOPHILUS* YOURSELF!

These are a rewarding, easy to grow little cactus that is still uncommon to see for sale or in plant shows. When you get your first bloom, you'll be over the moon excited for the big, funky flower and its hypnotic scent.

JEN GREENE



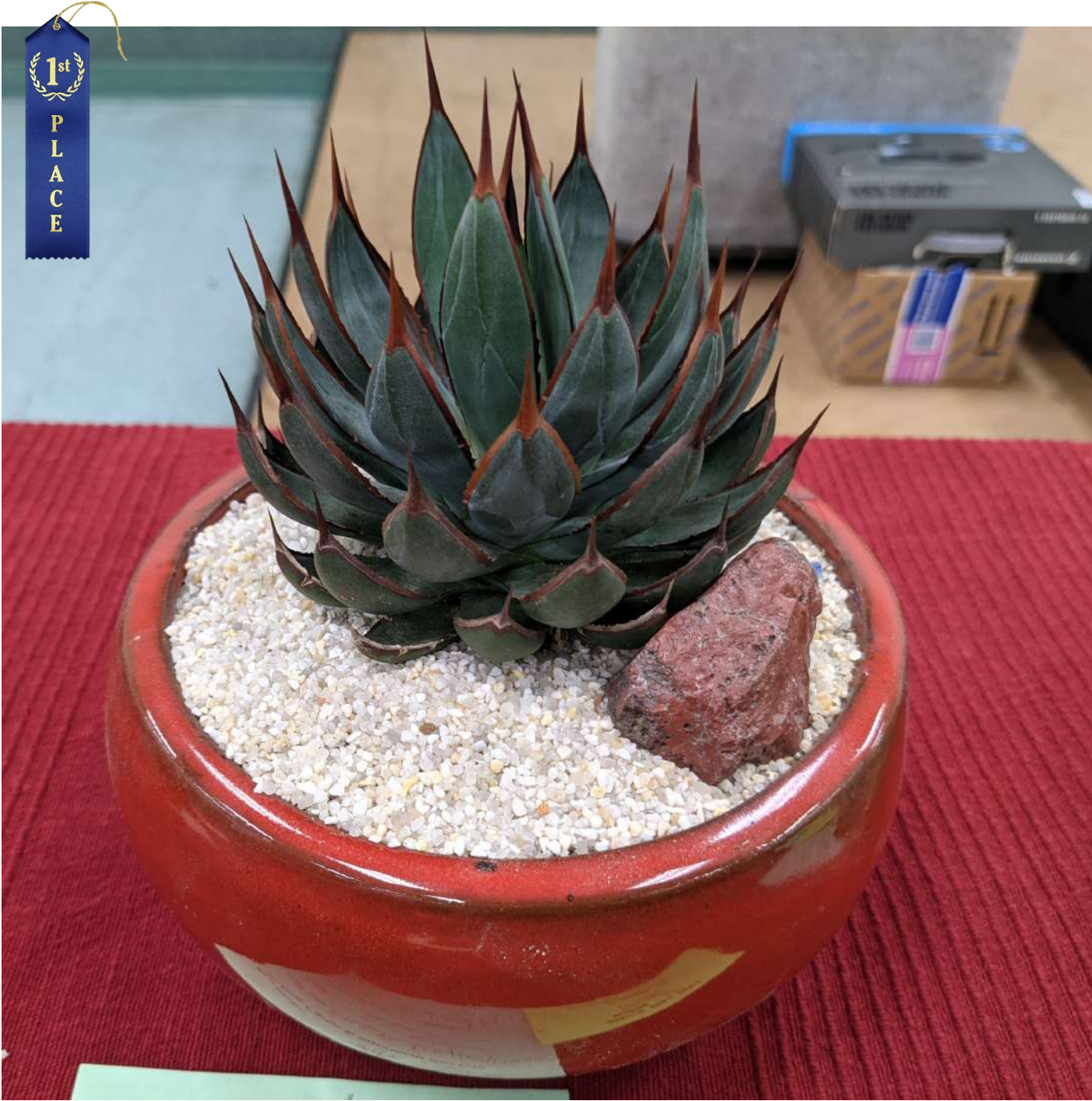
OCTOBER 2022 BRAG TABLE WINNERS GALLERY

SDCSS members came through and shared their best plants at the October Meeting's Brag Table, judged by Kelly Griffin!

Bring your brag-table worthy plants to our November 12th meeting for your chance to win club bucks and bragging rights!

Pro tip: our novice cactus category might be an easy sweep for the right novice participant... could that be **YOU?**

OCTOBER BRAG TABLE RESULTS: NOVICE SUCCULENT



1st: Mangave 'Praying Hands'

Jodi Visosky

OCTOBER BRAG TABLE RESULTS: NOVICE SUCCULENT



2nd : Mangave 'Spotty Dotty'

Jared Petker



2nd : Aloe hybrid

Chris Gleason

OCTOBER BRAG TABLE RESULTS: NOVICE SUCCULENT



3rd : *Euphorbia montrose*

Jodi Visosky



3rd : *Euphorbia 'Twinkle Twirl'*

Jared Petker

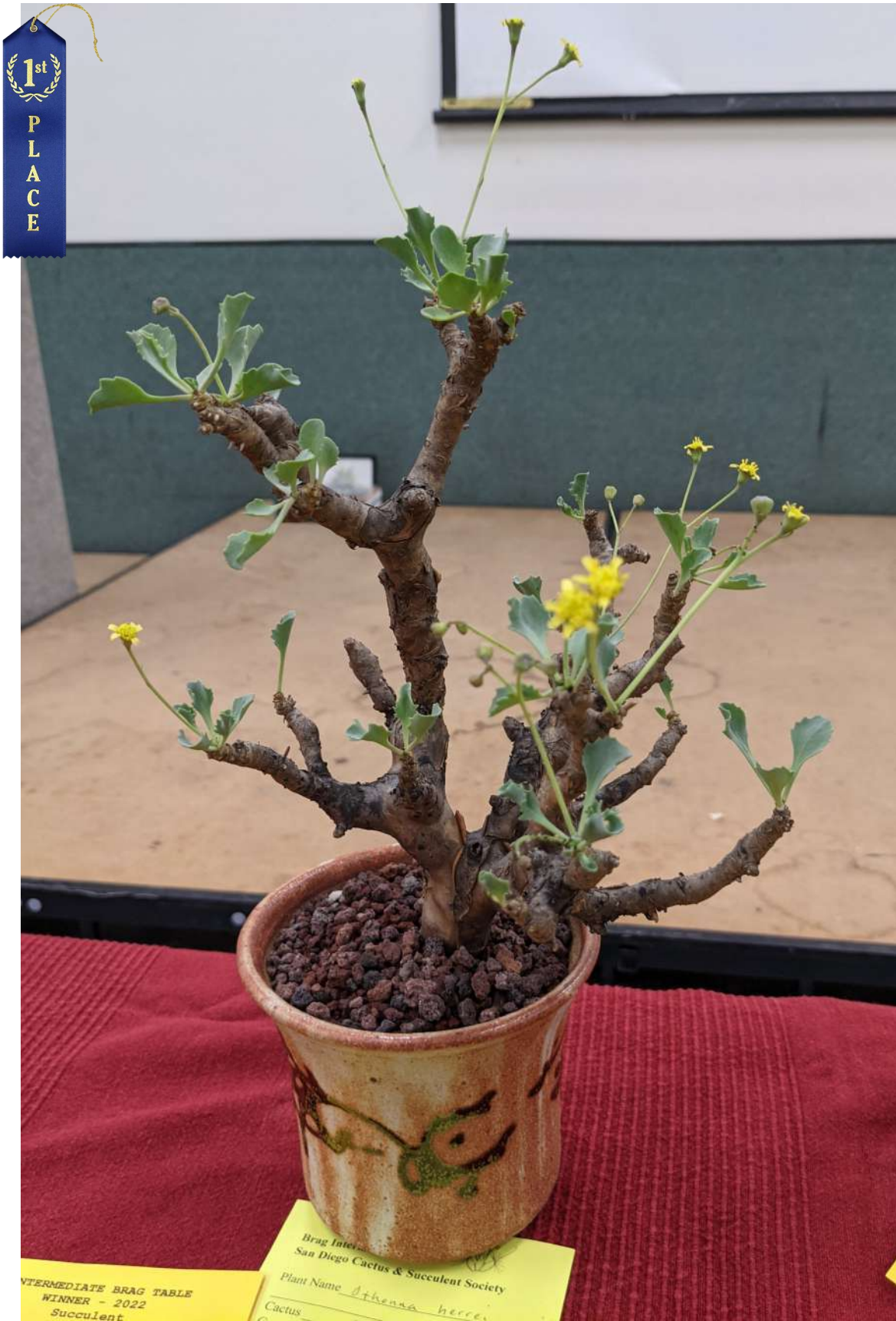


Aloe hybrid

Tricia Bostard

Brag Novice
 San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society

JULY BRAG TABLE RESULTS: INTERMEDIATE SUCCULENT



1st: *Othonna herrei*

Melanie Howe

JULY BRAG TABLE RESULTS: INTERMEDIATE SUCCULENT

2nd
PLACE



2nd : Aloe cv. 'Sawbones'

Chuck Ramey

3rd
PLACE



3rd : Aloe betula

Chuck Ramey

JULY BRAG TABLE RESULTS: INTERMEDIATE SUCCULENT



Othonna cremnophila

Melanie Howe



Dorstenia sp.

Chuck Ramey

JULY BRAG TABLE RESULTS: ADVANCED SUCCULENT



1st: *sansevieria pinguicula*

Pam Badger

JULY BRAG TABLE RESULTS: ADVANCED SUCCULENT



2nd: *Euphorbia cylindrifolia x francoisii*

Pam Badger



2nd: *Aloe castilloniae* cross

Kelly Griffin

JULY BRAG TABLE RESULTS: ADVANCED SUCCULENT



3rd: *Tylecodon wallichii*

Pam Badger

JULY BRAG TABLE RESULTS: ADVANCED SUCCULENT



Aloe cv 'Talon' variegated

Kelly Griffin



Crassula susannae

Kelly Griffin



Euphorbia millotii

Pam Badger

OCTOBER BRAG TABLE RESULTS: NOVICE CACTUS



1st: *Rhipsalis salicornioides*

Tricia Bostard

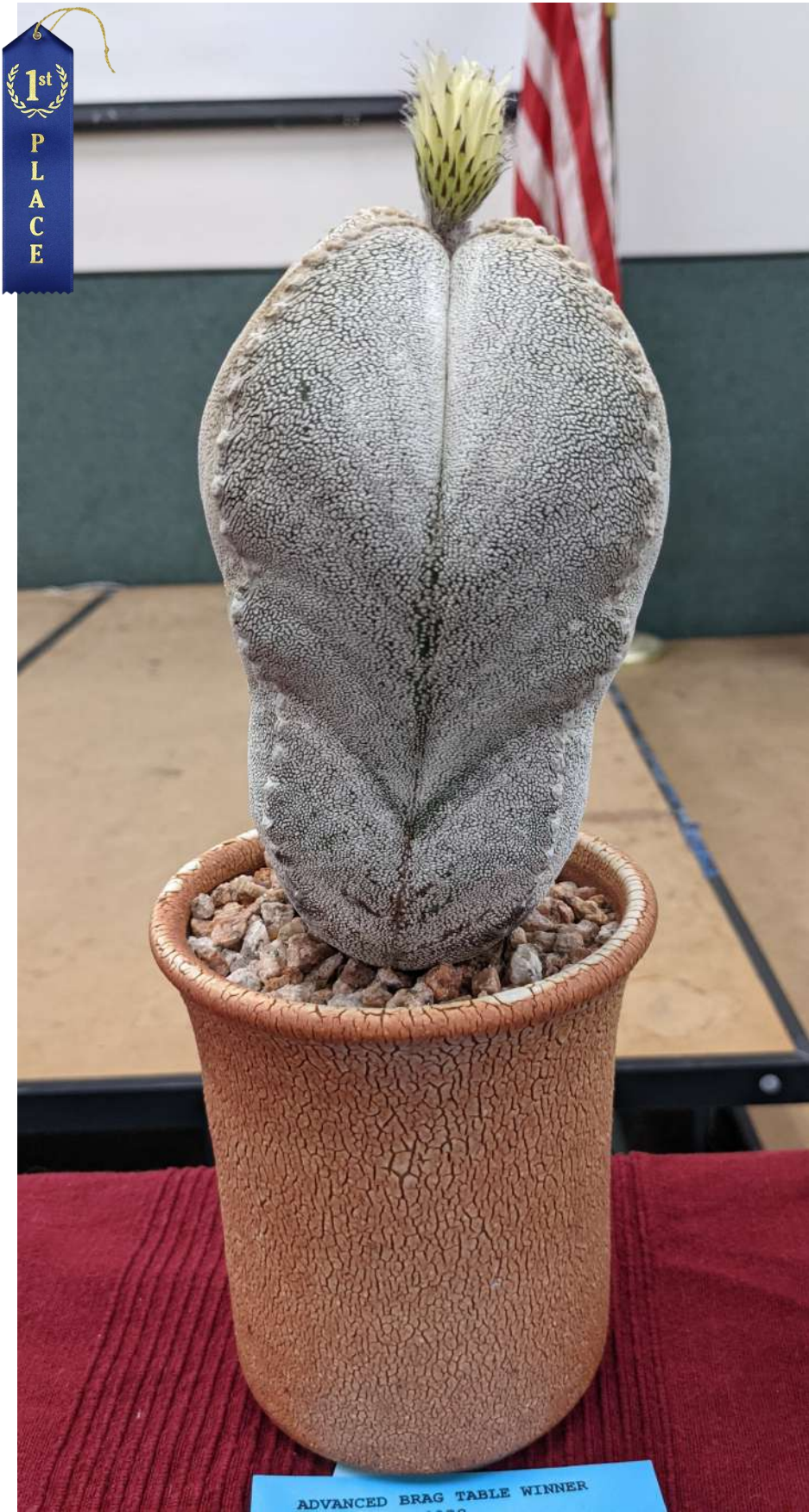
JULY BRAG TABLE RESULTS: INTERMEDIATE CACTUS



1st: *Mammillaria camptotricha*

Chuck Ramey

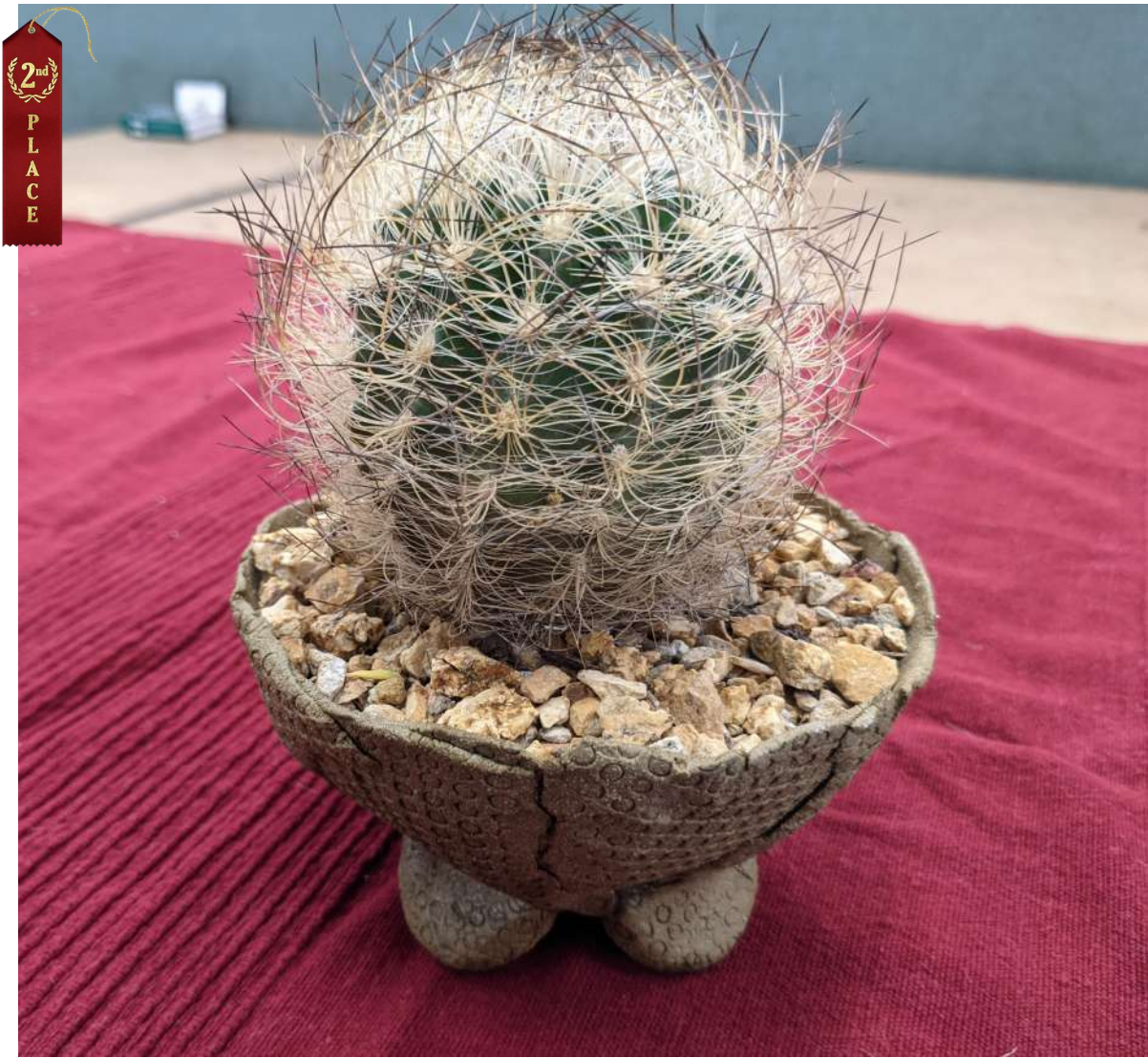
JULY BRAG TABLE RESULTS: ADVANCED CACTUS



1st: *Astrophytum quadricostatum*

Pam Badger

JULY BRAG TABLE RESULTS: ADVANCED CACTUS



2nd : *Neoporteria nidus senilis*

Pam Badger