ESPINAS Y FLORES

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

UPCOMING SDCSS PICNIC // AUGUST BRAG TABLE RESULTS //
FINDING SUCCULENT PLANTS USING iNATURALIST // ...and more

ON THE COVER

Euphorbia monteiroi (Angolan form) fruit

Photo by Jared Petker

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UPCOMING SDCSS SCHEDULE

SDCSS PICNIC EVENT
September 12th

OUR NEXT UPCOMING MEETING
October 10th

Our August meeting was wonderfully well attended, and what a beautiful day we had in the park! It was especially nice to gather together, enjoy our plants and friends, and look forward to the sunset of the parking fees coming soon!

Our very own **Rita Lunceford** treated us to a fascinating presentation about her experiences traveling to China and importing plants from there. Rita has traveled to China several times, combining business with cultural exploration, and she shared some wonderful insights into the people, perspectives, trends, and, of course, plants she has encountered along the way. The cuisine she shared looked absolutely incredible, and definitely not what I had expected. But the real plant surprise was seeing field-grown Madagascarine *Pachypodium baronii* in full flower in China. Stunning!

Thank you, Rita, for putting together such a special and engaging program for us. And there's more to come: Rita is planning a small-group trip to China this spring! If that sounds intriguing, definitely follow up with her when you get the chance. What an amazing opportunity to experience China through the eyes of someone who knows both the plants and the culture.

Our Plant of the Month was presented by **Wendy Goldman**, who shared her experience with the fascinating *Adromischus* genus in the Crassula family. It's such a collectible group, with an incredible amount of variety. Thank you, Wendy, for stepping up and sharing your knowledge with us!

Next Up: our Annual Picnic! Our next meeting will be our **annual picnic at Kate Sessions Park**! Georgia is coordinating the festivities, with lots of members pitching in to help make it a great day. **Expect great food, great plants, and great friends—old and new!** Be sure to sign up online by September 4th… all the details will be in this newsletter.

Finally, we're already looking forward to our October meeting at Balboa Park, when we'll welcome a new-to-SDCSS speaker, **Dylan Zoller**, who will share stories and photos from his incredible plant travels in Brazil. We can't wait!

Kelly Griffin
August 21, 2026

Date: Saturday, September 12th **Time:** 11am - 2pm
Address: Kate Sessions Park, 5115 Soledad Rd, San Diego CA
We're meeting at: Area 4

COME FOR THE PICNIC GAMES, CAMARADERIE, FOOD AND--OF COURSE--PLANTS!

FOOD: Taco Cart lunch SDCSS is chipping in to cover costs... if you're a member, that's just $10 for a great lunch that would normally cost $22. The Non-member fee is $15. Both are a terrific value!

PLANTS: Bring your best plant for a PLANT SWAP! This will work the exact same as our Holiday Party swap... if your plant is chosen, you're up to pick a plant next. Label your plant to participate, but we'll also have labels at the picnic. **FREE SUCCULENT** with your ticket? You bet. We can guarantee free plants for the first 50 individuals who show up at the picnic, and hopefully more.

FUN: In addition to the plant swap, we have a number of games planned for all mobility levels. Wear your best sun hat and bring a chair. Extra chairs are welcomed to share, please label them.

While our space is reserved from 9am to 3pm, the planned activities are from 12 to 2.

For any questions before the event, please contact Georgia at georgiakenney619@gmail.com or call Georgia on the day of the event at 619-370-4390

TICKETS SALES CLOSE FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4TH. PURCHASE HERE!
SEE YOU ON SEPTEMBER 12TH, 2026!

FINDING SUCCULENT PLANTS USING INATURALIST

BY OLGA BATALOV

Have you ever wondered about the plant and/or animal diversity of our area? San Diego County has one of the highest plant diversities in the country. How many of them have you seen? How do you find out what they are? Below are a handful of cacti that can be found in our county. We have everything from cacti and succulents to spring annuals to bulbs and even iris! You just need to know what to look for, where to look for it and oftentimes when to look. Even the most common of flowers have a season when they bloom and certain areas where they prefer to grow. Sounds great, but how? By using iNaturalist!

Cochemiea dioica
Cabrillo Nat'l Monument

Ferocactus cylindraceus
Anza Borrego Desert SP

Opuntia basilaris
Anza Borrego Desert SP

Cylindropuntia prolifera
Torrey Pines SNR

What is iNaturalist? It is a database of everyday people's observations, in nature or in the city, which are then identified by experts. There are thousands of users and millions of observations from all around the world. Does that sound overwhelming? It can be if you do not know how to use it.

To start off, the website is www.inaturalist.org. You do not need to create an account to use it, but you will need one if you want to add your own observations or message people - accounts are free! From the main page, you can take different paths depending on what you want to find. If you know exactly what you want to look at, just type it into the search field at the top left. You will get a page with all of the observations of that plant or animal with several tabs. To follow along, you can use this link to one of our native cacti.

At the time of this writing, there are 45,510 observations of Engelmann's Hedgehog Cactus (Echinocereus engelmannii) by 9,122 observers. So many to choose from! On the dark gray bar, you can switch between the different subpages using the tabs. The first tab has all of the observations and it has additional sub-views - more on that later. The second tab is the species list; in this case, there is only one, but depending on what you are looking for, there could be many. The third one has the identifiers - these are the people who know this cactus the best. The fourth and last tab has the observers: everyone who has seen this cactus - these are the people you could message to ask how best to find it. Both of these last two tabs are sorted from most to least observations.

Now back to that first tab, the one with the observations. If we select that, it has 3 different sub-views of the same information: "Map", "Grid", and "List".

The "Map" sub-view shows exactly what you would expect—a map with the locations of every observation. Now, if this plant is rare (as many cacti and succulents in our area are) or someone took a photo on private property, you will find floating circles as you zoom in—these are obscured points with a scrambled location.

The "Grid" sub-view shows the first photo of each observation in a grid layout. You can more easily find and click on one that interests you—perhaps it is a photo of one in flower, or a crested one, etc. This will take you to the page for that specific observation, which has more information like when they saw it (date and time), where they saw it (if not obscured) as well as how accurate that location is, and any additional photos or comments.

The "List" sub-view is useful if you want to just see a list with dates, times and locations; it is also sortable.

One more thing about the "Map' sub-view—it has several additional map options if you click on the icon that looks like 3 stacked sideways squares: "Map", "Satellite", and "OpenStreetMap".

The first additional "Map" option shows roads, major landmarks and some trails.

The "Satellite" option is useful when you zoom in to see terrain features like meadows, forest canopy, etc. It is harder to see the individual points on this map option.

The "OpenStreetMap" option is the one I use the most—it shows most trails and it differentiates public from private lands using shading. You can really appreciate just how big some state and national parks are with "OpenStreetMap", and it helps keep you out of trouble by avoiding private lands.

If we look at the "Map" sub-view of this species, we see that it grows in more than just our county. We can narrow it down further. On the upper right, above the dark gray bar, you can see a dark gray "Filters" button. If you click that, you get a menu with a lot of options (default settings shown below). You can use the checkboxes to limit the list to just wild observations, or ones with photos (and sounds for animals). "Research Grade" ones are when at least two people agree that this is the right ID, so these are more likely to be correct—if you are following along, check this box. In the middle panel, you can choose to focus on birds, reptiles, fish, plants, etc. by clicking the appropriate icon—click the leaf icon for plants, since a cactus is a plant. You can sort by "Date Observed" instead of "Date Added" (the default) because sometimes people add observations months or years after they saw the plant or animal. I have been guilty of this because I find old photographs that I never uploaded. I usually sort by "Date Observed" if I am interested in only the most recent observations. On the rightmost panel, you can further narrow your search down to a particular date, or a date range, or a particular month(s). If, for example, you are planning to go on vacation somewhere in December, you can select "December" as your month to find out what people have seen that month in the location, which we'll be picking in the next section.

Now for the most important filter: location. You can accomplish this (at least) two ways. If you click "More Filters" (bottom left of above screenshot), you can add a "Place." If you are following along, type and select "San Diego County, CA, US" as the "Place". Now, if you exit out of this menu, you will see that the Research Grade observation count has dropped significantly to a little over 5,000. You will also see the red outline of San Diego County on the map. Another option would have been to use the red-orange dashed square or circle icons at the top left of the map to draw a rectangle or circle on the map instead. Under the Observations tab, in the Map sub-view, scroll to zoom in to the red clusters you now see. They will become green location icons when you zoom in far enough. You can now see that this cactus species is mostly found in Anza Borrego Desert State Park, with some populations in the mountains near Mt Laguna and Cuyamaca. You can click on any of these green location icons, or switch to the Grid view to look at them all more easily.

Okay, so this was a very specific example. Now we will see what the "Species" tab can show us. As long as you have narrowed down your search to a location, click the "X" to the right of "Engelmann's Hedgehog Cactus" in the search bar. If you clicked the Plant leaf icon, you should now have a list of all plants in San Diego County. The "Species" tab will show them in order from most to least observations. California Buckwheat is the most observed plant in San Diego County. Without the plant filter, the Western Fence Lizard will hold the top spot.

Scroll through this list—how many plants do you recognize? Did you know their names? On each photo tile, there are two links—one has an observation number and will open a subset like the one we made for *Echinocereus engelmannii*, while the one with the name will take you to the webpage for that species. That page usually has a lot of useful information (example screenshot below), like a gallery of photos, the top observer, the top identifier, the date it was last observed, the total number of observations, and similar species.

There are also several charts that summarize data from the observations, like when they are usually seen ("Seasonality") and when they flower/fruit. These datasets are very useful, but keep in mind that info can vary year to year and across different areas. Similarly, you can search for a specific genus or family, such as all *Dudleya*, *Agave*, *Euphorbia*, or Cactaceae in San Diego County. Introduced species will have a pink "IN" in the top right corner of the species tile, while native species will have a green "N" instead.

You may be surprised by how many or how few observations some of our local species have. Would you have guessed that a lizard has the most observations in San Diego County (and actually all of California)? Clearly, it is very photogenic. The mallard duck has the most observations worldwide. Similarly, some places, especially popular trails, have a lot of observations and other places have very few.

You can use what you learned to find any plant or animal that interests you, or live vicariously through what other people have seen. My brother likes lizards and had always wanted to see an Eastern Collared Lizard specifically. Thanks to iNaturalist, we finally saw not just one but four of them - he was so happy! Late last year, I stumbled upon the Chocolate Lily (*Fritillaria biflora*), which is native to our area. I knew it flowered early in the year, usually in February or March, but it had been so wet and warm that some flowered in mid-January this year. If you look closely at that species, you will see that it is very particular about where it grows. Even in Mission Trails, where it is pretty common, it clusters in certain areas, mostly meadows. It also blooms for a short period of time in each given location. A similar group of plants are the mariposa lilies (Calochortus genus) that tend to flower for a week at most in a given location. By "stalking" the plant online, you know when and where to go look for them, or when to find them in flower.

I hope you are inspired to try this amazing free resource for yourself! If you want to upload your own observations, you will need to know when and where your photos were taken. The when is (usually) easy with the internal clock that most cameras have - just be sure you have the right time zone set! The where is harder - the more precise the location, the better. There are apps that help you save your location, or you can simply take photos with your smartphone with location turned on. Personally, I have been using the free version of GeoTracker to save my current location when I use my camera because the app also marks it with location accuracy and a time stamp. There is also an iNaturalist app for both Android and iOS smartphones.

OLGA BATALOV

Depending on your familiarity with computers, other search fields that can be added to hyperlinks include:

- For plants annotated as in flower, add: &term_id=12&term_value_id=13
  Note: many observations have no annotations - adding them is one way that anyone can help!
- To filter observations by location privacy settings, add: &geoprivacy=open (or obscured or private)
- To only look at native plants, add: &introduced=false
- To only look at research-grade observations, add: &quality_grade=research
- To sort by date observed, add: &order_by=observed_on

Plant photos used in article: *Cochemiea dioica*, *Ferocactus cylindraceus*, *Opuntia basilaris*, *Cylindropuntia prolifera*

Aloe "Fourth of July" in flower **Kelly Griffin**

The SDCSS monthly newsletter welcomes all contributions from its members!

If you have a personal 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

SAN DIEGO Cactus & Succulent Society

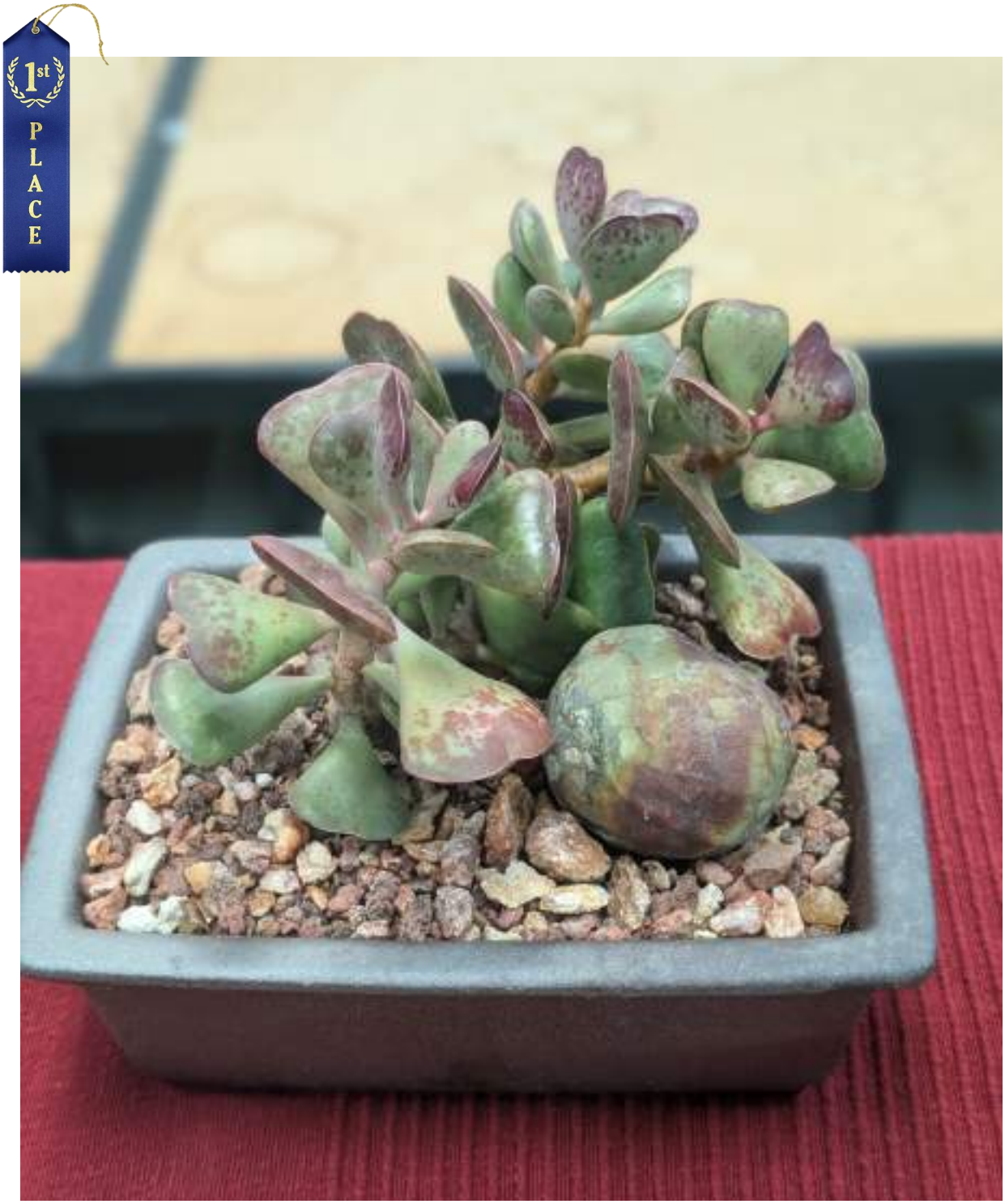
MAMMILLARIA GEMINISPINA

BY NORB RODEN

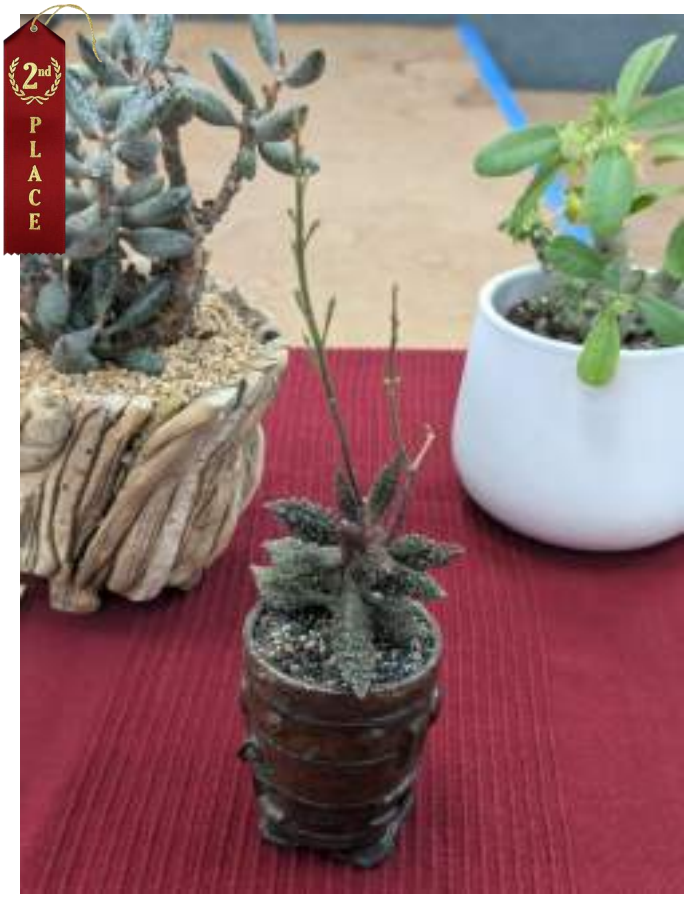
SDCSS members shared a lovely table of plants at the August Meeting's Brag Table!

Thank you for bringing in your plants to the Brag Table!
We'll see you at our next one in October… novices, this is your chance to kick butt and grab some club bucks while you're at it!

1ST: *ADROMISCHUS MARIANIAE* 'HERREI' **GEORGIA KENNEY**



1ST: *ADROMISCHUS TRIFLORUS* **VICKI HOFFMAN**



2ND: *ADROMISCHUS MARIANIAE* 'HERREI' **CHUCK RAMEY**

3RD: *ADROMISCHUS MARIANIAE* 'CLANWILLIAM' **SUZY FORAN**

ADROMISCHUS ROANIANUS **CHUCK RAMEY**

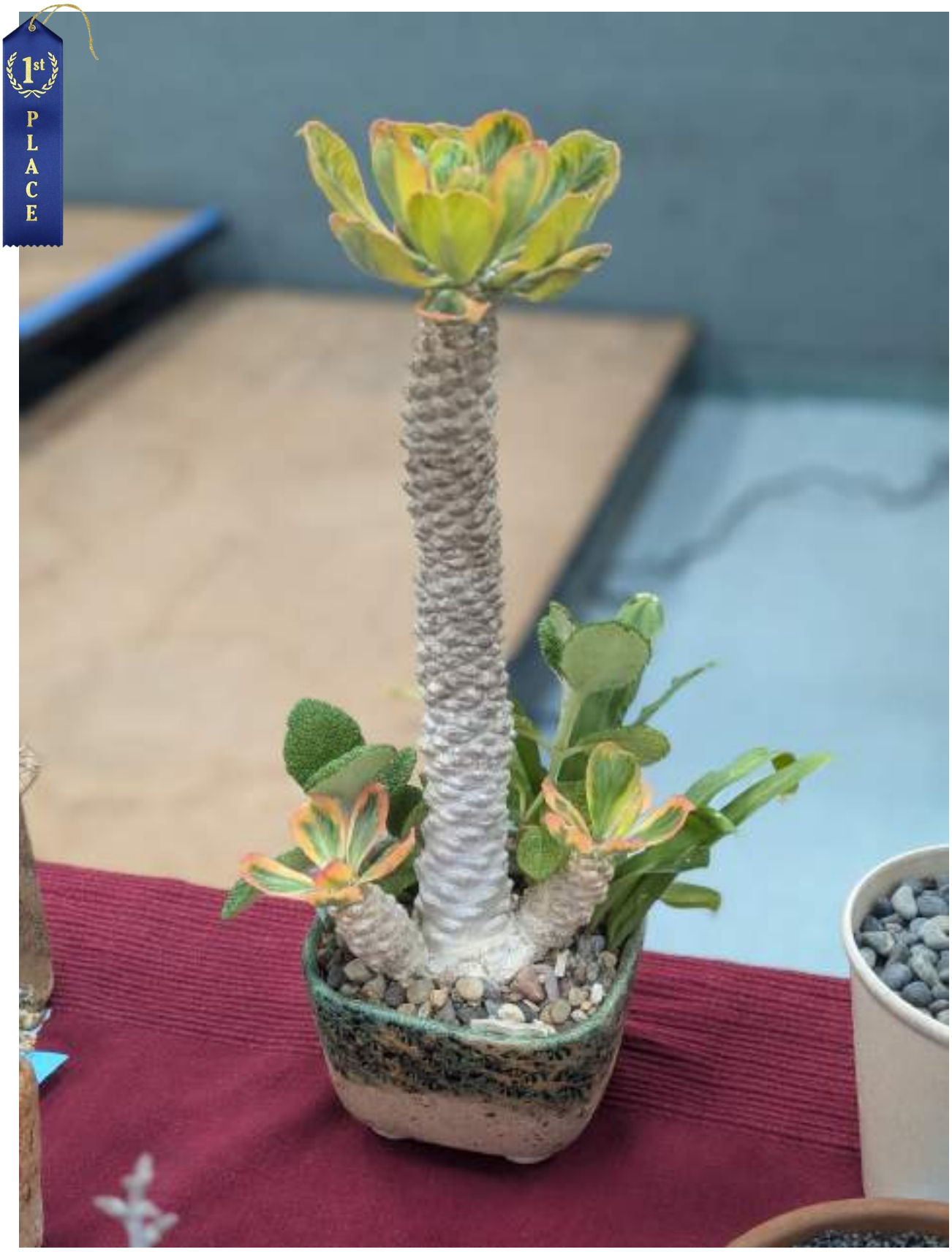
ADROMISCHUS MARIANIAE 'FROSTED EGG' **SUZY FORAN**

ADROMISCHUS CRISTATA V ZEYHERI **ALLEN CLARK**

ADROMISCHUS CRISTATUS **'CRINKLE LEAF'** **SUZY FORAN**

EUPHORBIA SUSANNAE **MIRIAM A PARENT**

DORSTENIA FOETIDA **MIRIAM A PARENT**



1ST: *EUPHORBIA POISSONII* DISH GARDEN **CANDY & JERRY GARNER**

2ND: *HAWORTHIA TRUNCATA* HYBRID **RITA LUNCEFORD**

3RD: *HAWORTHIA* HYBRID **RITA LUNCEFORD**

AVONIA QUINARIA ALSTONII **TINA ZUCKER**

ECHEVERIA 'RAINDROPS' **TINA ZUCKER**

ADROMISCHUS MAKINI TINA ZUCKER

KEDROSTIS AFRICANA TINA ZUCKER

ADROMISCHUS MARIANIAE TINA ZUCKER

ADENIUM SP.
CANDY & JERRY GARNER

EUPHORBIA CYLINDRIFOLIA **CANDY & JERRY GARNER**

HAWORTHIA TRUNCATA HYBRID **RITA LUNCEFORD**

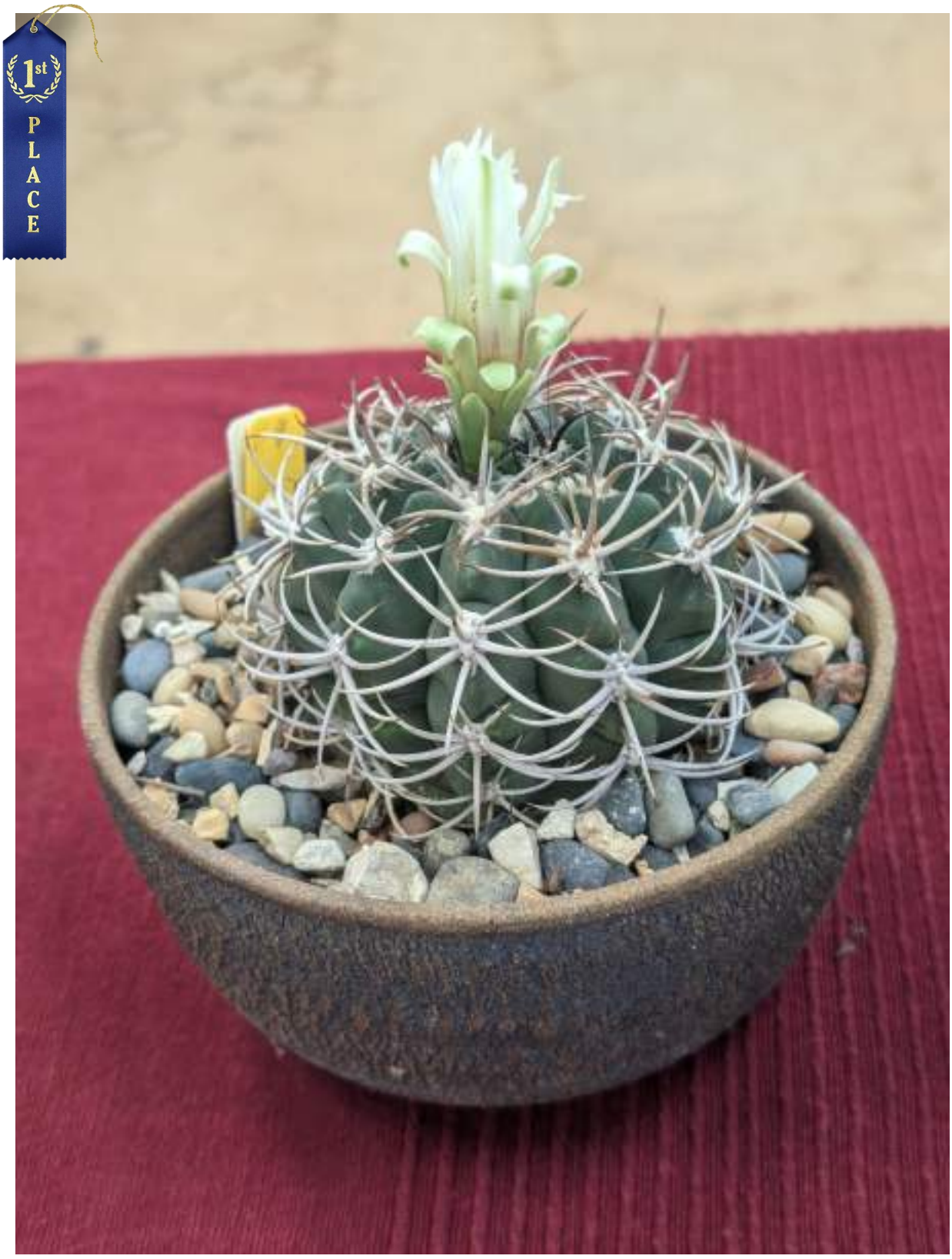
ADROMISCHUS MARIANIAE 'HALLII RED' **TINA ZUCKER**

1ST: *MAMMILLARIA GEMINISPINA* **NORB RODEN**

2ND: *MAMMILLARIA MAZATLANENSIS* **CHUCK RAMEY**

3RD: *GYMNOCALYCIUM BALDIANUM* **VICKI HOFFMAN**

MAMMILLARIA BOCASANA **MIRIAM A PARENT**



1ST: *GYMNOCALYCIUM FEROX* **CANDY & JERRY GARNER**

2ND: *ECHINOCEREUS MARITIMUS* **BRIAN SHEPHERD**