

VOLUME 57 • NUMBER 03 • MARCH 2022



ESPINAS Y FLORES

SURPRISING STADELIADS

WINTER SHOW AND SALE RECAP

WELWITSCHIA MIRABILIS • UPCOMING EVENTS & more!

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



ON THE COVER

an in-ground Stapeliad in bloom

Photo by Jen Greene

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SDCSS SCHEDULE

Our next in-person meeting:

March 12th

Upcoming meeting:

April 9th

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Coffee in the Garden Coordinators	[open]
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Congratulations! To all of you who participated in the BIGGEST Winter Show and Sale ever hosted by SDCSS!

I feel greatly privileged and honored to be part of the team that pulled off this very successful event. From all the planning and organizing, the publicity team who put out the word, the setup crew on Friday, the greeting team who kept the flow of visitors smooth and orderly, the kitchen team who prepared and served breakfast, lunch, and snacks for both days, the security team in their orange vests guiding guests and helping out in so many ways, the judges who entertained and informed spectators, the vendors with a huge variety of plants, to the clean up crew—**CONGRATULATIONS** and many **THANKS!**



I was particularly excited to have so many new members participating; every time I learned that a volunteer was a new member, participating in their first show, I felt a bit giddy - this is what keeps our Society strong—new members and volunteers.

Special thanks to: **Dean Karras**, Show Chair, who put in marathon efforts - first to arrive and last to leave, organizing a wonderful show- for his first time and doing a great job; **Chris Miller**, Sales Chair, who has to put up with all us vendors and keep us happy; **May Fong-Ho**, Membership Chair, who never ceases to find new ways to track membership and improve the process of checking in members, especially for the all important early shopping opportunity; **Candy Garner**, head of the greeting team who always has good ideas and feedback on improving the checking in of volunteers and vendors; **Brian Shepard**, head of security, for managing a large team of volunteers in this important role; **Kelly Griffin**, who secured the canopy and table rentals; **Tina Zucker** who, with great difficulty, secured our professional security; **Norb Roden & Chuck Ramey**, our amazing “plant guardians” who keep track of the plants that people check in before purchase; and finally a huge shout out to the two newest members of our team - **Ken Brown** who took on the daunting task of setting up and managing the cash registers and overseeing the teams of cashiers, along with **Lynn Elliot**. I never walked by that area without seeing Ken managing the line and Lynn working a register.



Tina Zucker

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The other new member is **John McCann**, treasurer, who smoothly and discreetly managed funds received and got it all accounted for. John was also on hand to help out as needed and I am very grateful he was there to help me get my plants loaded on Sunday afternoon!

The following is a list of members who were all vital to the success of this event. I apologize to anyone who is not mentioned - between the cancer treatment I underwent last year, and my advancing age, witnessed by another birthday on Sunday, there are undoubtedly some I missed. If you did volunteer and did not receive a 'thank you' voucher, please see me at the next meeting. Gigantic thanks to: Alex Clark, Annie Wolf, Beth Jackson, Brita Miller, Cheryl Lamoureux, Dee Morgan, Denise Griffin, Don Jones, Donna Roden, Georgia Kenny, Heather Chan, Jen Greene, John Williams, Linda Stewart, Lou Crow, Mary Aparicco, Mary May, Mel Howe, Pauline Wong, Wendy Goldman, Winston Chan, Nancy Warner, Sandy Wetzel-Smith, Sherman Blench, Susan Hopkins, Jerry Garner, Alva Mireles, Alan Wilson, Eddie Warner, Michelle Heckethorn, Rick Bjorkland, Christie Lathrop, Jeremy Plath, Luke Duncan, Will Schussel, Christine Honeycutt, Beth Jackson, Linda Hunt, Eva Ong, Francesca, Janet Svaboda, Jessica McGee, Jodi Visoski, Judith Hays-Zavala, Kathi Bakin, Kelly Grenard, Kristie Steinberg, Leslie Shelly, Nicole Pulido, Perry Zevala, Robin Leon, Dan Janis, Luke Duncan. Without YOU there would be no Show and Sale!

One final (if a bit belated) big THANK YOU - to Ed Delollis and Western Cactus Growers for their generous donation of 19 bare root cactus for our Holiday Party auction. I was disappointed to have to leave early and did not have a chance to bid!

Be safe, be well, see you on March 12 for our next live meeting.

Pam Badger

February 22, 2022



Beth Jackson

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? 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!

Contact Pam Badger: pambad1@mac.com

SDCSS ONLINE

FACEBOOK:

www.facebook.com/sdcss

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

INSTAGRAM: [#sdcss](https://www.instagram.com/sdcss)

WEBSITE: www.sdcss.net

SDCSS MARCH SPEAKER



Join us **Saturday, March 12th** for our meeting and speaker Woody Minnich, speaking on **BRAZIL, Bahia to Minas Gerais.**

Our program: "This program features a combined three trips into the south eastern portions of Brazil. The region is commonly called the Brazilian Highlands and includes the two states, Minas Gerais and Bahia. In these two states there are more cacti than in any other regions of Brazil, as well as a wealth of other plants to be found, including; Bromeliads, Orchids and Palms. Our field adventure will feature the back country, the towns and their people, as well as a wide variety of plants and animals. The cacti we will focus on include; *Melocactus*, *Buiningia*, *Coleocephalocereus*, *Pilosocereus*, *Microcranthocereus*, *Discocactus*, *Tacinga*, *Arrojadoa* and *Uebelmannia*. Some of the other plant genera we will encounter include; *Bursera*, *Cissus*, *Dyckia*, *Encholirium*, *Orthophytum* and many other Bromeliads."

Our speaker: Woody, as he is commonly known, grew up in the Mojave Desert and has had an attraction to desert plants and animals since the early 1950's. He has been involved with the cactus and succulent world for over 52 years, as a grower, field explorer, club and organization leader, writer, photographer, lecturer and presenter.

**See you at the meeting
on March 12th!**



APPLY TO THE NEW SDCSS LIBRARY COMMITTEE

The current Library Committee is in need of new blood. I have rewritten the Job Description for 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.

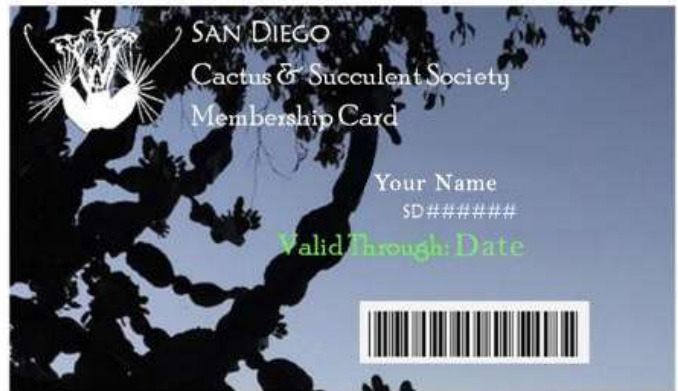
We need a Chair to lead the group and others to check books in and out. We also need people who are interested in managing the sale of the books to club members. I will continue on the committee as an advisor. Please let me know if you are interested. See me at a meeting or contact me at 619-990-2051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

CLUB NOTICES

NEW MEMBER CARD SYSTEM

WHY:

- ◇ Use technology to significantly reduce work to process Membership signup
- ◇ Reduce queuing at Welcome Table for Early Entry of special events
- ◇ Provide faster delivery and make it more convenient for most members



WHAT:

- ◇ ID card: no change – Every new member will get a paper ID card:
 - o Use as name badge for meetings and events and at library.
 - o This card will be picked up at Welcome Table at meetings and events.
- ◇ Membership card: in E-card format – Every new member as well as renewing member will receive their E-card by email with a valid through date:
 - o Use at library and early entry for special events.
 - o Emailed within 1 week of receiving membership due payment
 - o In photo (.jpeg) format, so it can be stored as photo file, or printed as photo as one wishes.

A traditional paper Membership card will be printed for those without email or smart phone. This card will be picked up at Welcome Table.
- ◇ \$3 for each replacement ID card or Membership card. This can be ordered at our website www.sdcss.net
- ◇ Contact membership@sdcss.net if you have any questions.

MAY FONG HO



VOLUNTEER AND VENDOR BADGES

To all volunteers and vendors who still have their badges from the Winter Show & Sale in their possession, please bring them with you to the next meeting you attend and leave them at the door.

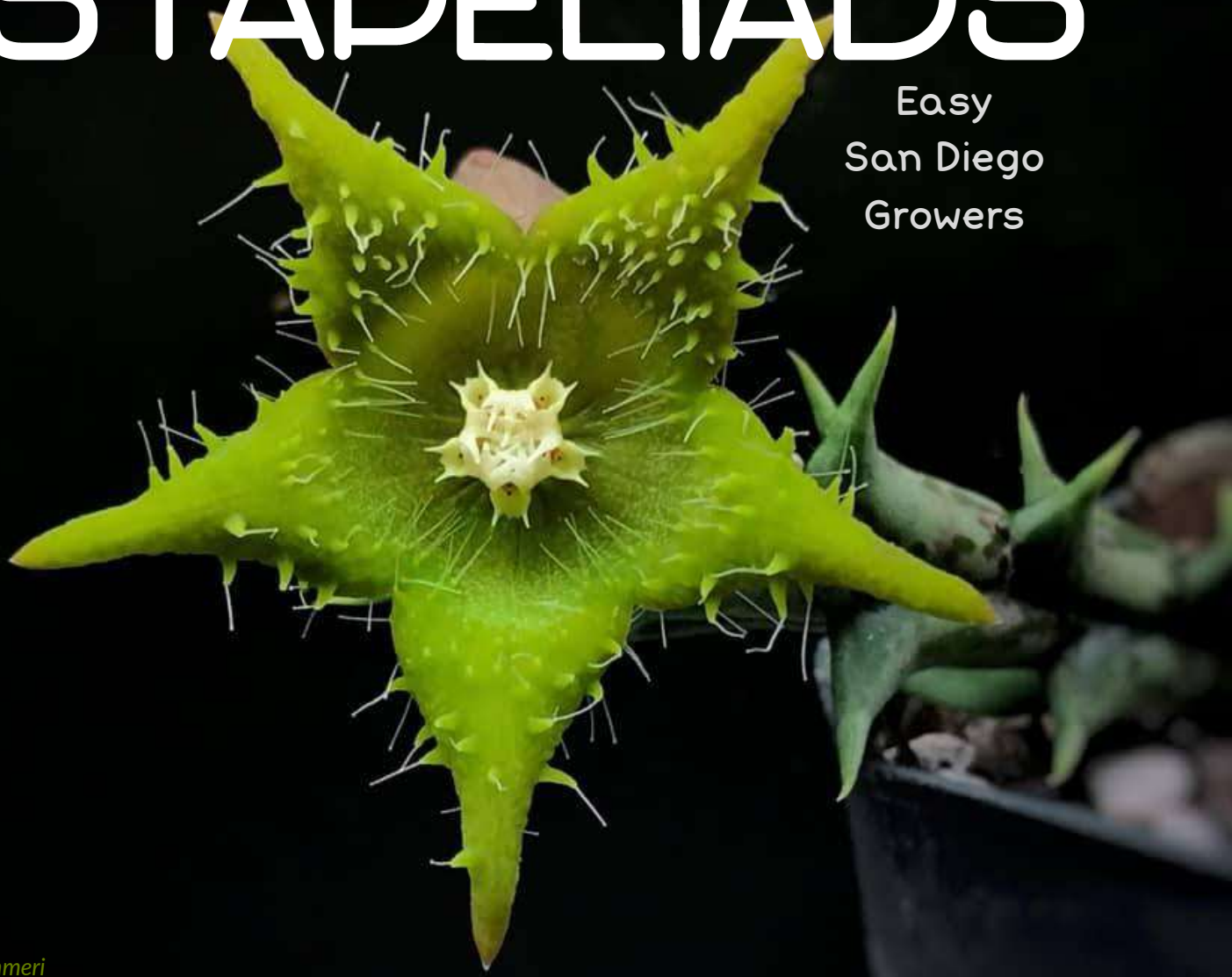
We did pick up many before things ended on the last day of the show, but there are always some that go home accidentally.

CANDY GARNER

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

SUPPDRISING^(ly stinky) STAPELIADS

Easy
San Diego
Growers



Orbea dummeri

BY JEN GREENE

The genus *Stapelia* hails mainly from South Africa, as many of our favorite succulent species do. They're generally low-growing, spineless, and have simple branches or simply stems that grow in mats or as small shrubs. When it comes to foliage, they're rarely something to write home about, although there's a certain alien-world appearance to the unusual stems that's attractive in a way.

What attracts most growers to *Stapelia* isn't the foliage – it's the incredible blooms that give them their common name: Carrion flowers.

There are dozens of species in the genus, and at least 160 that were once classified in this genus but have since been given genera of their own – *Huernia*, *Caralluma*, *Hoodia* and plants in those genera are

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

often referred to as Stapeliads, despite no longer being classified in the genus.

FRAGRANT FLOWERS

The flowers of nearly all stapeliads and stapeliad-like plants do tend to smell like rotten meat, but depending on where you have them planted, the smell isn't always overpowering or even particularly noticeable. If you stick your face right up next to them, they'll definitely knock your socks off, but grown outdoors and in open spaces, the smell is rarely so strong you can't walk near them. Even growing some in my greenhouse, the solution to the freshly opened bloom smell was to open the greenhouse doors and let it air out.

Stapeliads are pollinated by flies and similar carrion-eating insects, and here in San Diego they're quite convincing to the common houseflies we have buzzing around. The houseflies often will lay eggs around the fleshy center corona of the bloom, convinced that the flower is actually a source of food for their offspring.

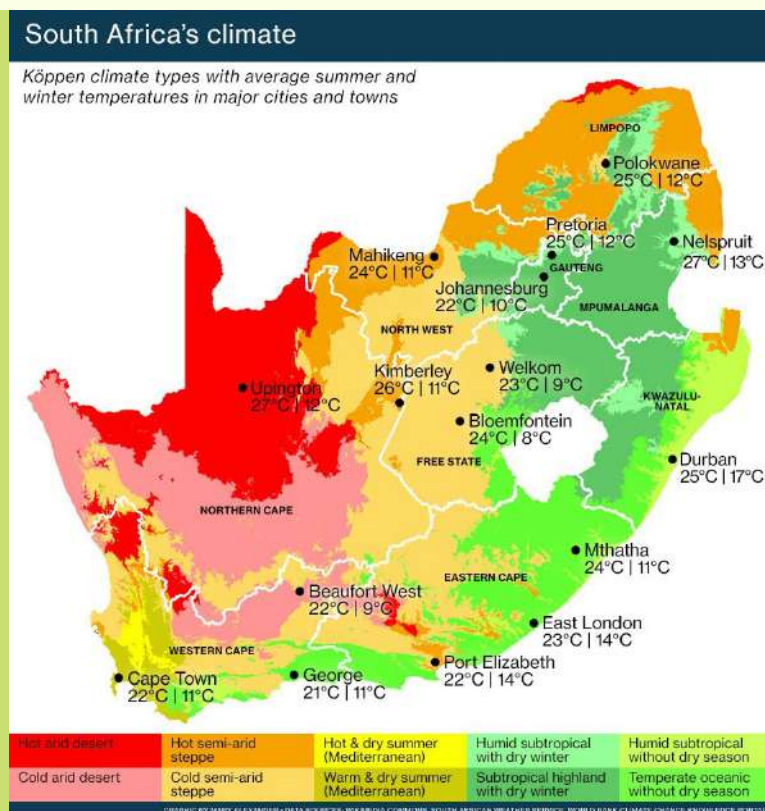
Flowers are short-lived, typically only lasting a day or

two after fully opening. Species with larger flowers, such as *S. gigantea*, will develop buds that look almost like balloons as they gain size. While individual flowers last only a day or two (making it easy to clip off fading flowers and dispose of them), the plant itself will often flower profusely over a longer period of time, weeks or even months.

GROWING YOUR STAPELIADS

Some genera/species are trickier than others, but care is roughly the same.

As with most succulents, if you're growing them in a pot, use well-draining soil. Closer to the coast, where humidity is higher and daytime highs lower, you may want to create a soil mix that's as much as 50% pumice to 50% succulent soil. If you're further inland, like me here in Escondido, I find most of them do better with more organic material in their soil. My *Stapelia gigantea*s are in straight succulent soil (I use E.B. Organics, or more recently, I'm giving the Gnosis Nursery "Alchemy Blend" a try), and they've needed that much organic matter to have water readily available.



This map of South African climates, with the key below describing moisture/seasons, should be a helpful resource to compare where your species of Stapeliad comes from and gain an idea of temperature and rainfall levels.

For most of South Africa, the rainfall season is during the hot summer months, with even the desert regions receiving several inches for a month or two.

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

Your stapeliads can tolerate extremely dry conditions, just like most succulents, but for thick fleshy stems and profuse blooms, you'll want to water yours more often. They also do better when given a dry dormant period that corresponds to the same time of year they'd be dormant in habitat – but unless you're growing one of the less common species, chances are you can ignore the dormancy period.

When in doubt – water less often. It's much easier to rehydrate your plant than it is to try and save it from rot. For most growers, rot is the biggest threat to cultivation, so be cautious!

The biggest indicator that your stapeliads need water is if they're starting to wrinkle and shrink, or if the arms are drooping like a sad houseplant. I find my *Edithcolea* to be a bit of a drama queen, drooping and getting a bit floppy if it's thirsty, and my *Hoodia parviflora* also drooped precariously when I left it a bit too long between watering.



Jen Greene



Jen Greene

A little bit of fertilizer helps encourage prolific blooms, just as it does in your stereotypical flower garden. Fertilize when you water during warmer times of year, and I've seen the best blooms when I use half strength fertilizer nearly every time I water. I've used fish emulsion and a dedicated cactus fertilizer with equal success, but I will say people seem far more offended by the smell of fish emulsion fertilizer than any of my stapeliad blooms.

Most stapeliads will blush a darker color when given more sunlight than they necessarily need, and some look more attractive with that protective blushing. When kept in brighter sunlight exposures, they tend to need more water for regular blooming, which is something to keep in mind.

If you're in a part of the county that generally doesn't get a frost, or if you do, it's very light – try growing your stapeliads in ground! I have *S. grandiflora*, *S. gigantea*, and *O. variegata* all as in-ground plants and they are thriving in exposures that are often too hot for the pretty soft succulent hybrids that work well in arrangements. They also grow easily in a ground-cover like manner, so they work well around other plants that are more sculptural.

If you need a divider between yourself and a particularly unpleasant neighbor, you can always use

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

them as edging between yourself and said neighbor. Might I also suggest some Voodoo lilies for summer blooms to offset your winter carrion flowers?

PROPAGATION

I'd be remiss if I didn't comment on how easy it is to propagate most of these species. They can be grown readily from cuttings for exact clones of the parent plant, or you can pollinate them to produce huge seed pods. The seed pods look almost identical to a *Plumeria* seed pod (if you've seen one of those), but failing that, they're almost a jumbo-sized green bean that slowly darkens as they ripen.

For easiest growth when propagating from cuttings, take your cuttings in spring, as the weather is just warming up. They can be lain flat on succulent soil and may produce roots that way, as my *Orbea variegata* do constantly. Some species seem to do better when their cut ends are allowed to callous over, and then placed directly into damp soil or a 50/50 mix of soil and pumice. When waiting for roots, avoid watering much if at all. The rooting medium should be damp, at best, and misted or splashed with water to keep the soil from turning into dust until the cutting has firmly rooted. Just as with rooted plants, when in doubt, skip watering for at least a day or two.



Jen Greene

You'll know your cutting is rooted by gently wiggling it: a rooted cutting will feel like it's "grabbed on", while one that hasn't will feel about the same as it did when you first put it in the soil. If you can't feel a difference, it's probably not rooted yet. Just don't dig it out to stare at it! You'll break or damage any baby roots that have tried to come out.

THE EASIER TO CULTIVATE (AND EASIER TO FIND) SPECIES

The species I'll list and highlight here share one thing in common: they're all easy to grow! Compared to some species which have very specific requirements, these are easy enough to use as landscape plants or stick in a container.



Stapelia gigantea

Jen Greene

One of the most striking and well-known species in the genus is *Stapelia gigantea*, with flowers that can reach a 1 foot in diameter when fully open! These, like many of the *Stapelia* blooms, will grab the attention of even the non-gardeners in your family with their "Demogorgon head" looking blooms. This species is also the worst, for attracting flies that lay eggs—if you want to avoid (continued on page 12)

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE



Duvalia caespitosa



Caralluma arachnoidea



Rhytidocaulon ciliatum



Pseudolithos cubiformis with seed pod



Huernia oculata x *urceolata*

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

that but still find the flowers fascinating, select a species with smaller blooms. Flowers are fairly consistent, being extremely large, red and yellow banded, always star-shaped and 5 petaled, although flukes can and do occur. Shorter daylight hours in fall and early winter trigger blooming.

A very similar species but with smaller flowers is *Stapelia grandiflora*, with blooms that vary in shape, color, and size. Some growers have selectively bred this species for specific bloom colors, and you can find them ranging from a deep, almost black-red color to a striped pale pink-red with yellow bands. Smaller size of blooms means smaller smell and less chance of flies arriving, but these can be large enough to attract them anyway.



Edithcolea grandis

Not a “true” stapeliad, but one of the genera that was split out from *Stapelia* a while back, *Edithcolea grandis* (aka Persian Carpet Flower) is extremely popular, and for good reason! The flowers are of a decent size, up to 5” across, and striking enough to make most people stop and do a double take. The flowers typically have a yellow base, with red spots/edging and a complex pattern that almost resembles

the Persian carpets that give them their name. Compared to the plants in the *Stapelia* genus, these have a more spiky-looking growth habit, and tend to be more densely packed with their branches and stems.

Formerly known as *Stapelia variegata*, the *Orbea variegata* is commonly called the Starfish Plant, or Starfish Flower. These tend to have longer stems compared to the Persian Carpet flower, but blooms are smaller. Flowers are extremely variable, and much like *Stapelia grandiflora*, these seem popular subjects for selective breeding to favor coloration. A typical flower is a yellow to pale white background with deep red to maroon speckles, with a distinctive raised center circle similar to the next species I’ll list: the Lifesaver Plant.

Many people probably recognize the Lifesaver Plant, or *Huernia zebrina*. Stems look almost identical to the *Orbea variegata*, so determining which of the two you have without seeing a flower is almost impossible. Once they do bloom, however, the Lifesaver plant has a glossy ring that’s deep red or pink, with zebra-striped yellow and red petals on the outer edge of the flower.



Orbea paradoxa

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

LESS COMMON BUT REWARDING SPECIES

The species here are those that are uncommon or downright rare, but rewarding if you find yourself captivated by this group of plants like I am!



Pseudolithos migiurtinus

Pseudolithos, or dinosaur eggs, are definitely high up there on the “alien looking plants” list. They are extremely challenging to grow for the novice, being highly sensitive to overwatering, and I’ve yet to successfully grow one myself. I’m told they produce truly noxious flowers, guaranteed to keep anyone and everyone you know far, far away from wherever you have them growing. Impressive for a plant whose body rarely gets larger than a few inches across or tall.

The genus Hoodia might sound familiar; some (many?) species are used to make appetite suppressants! They’re also very alien-looking plants that thrive in extreme heat and highly acidic soil. I grow my Hoodia parviflora with a chunk of limestone on the soil, and I’ve heard it recommended to mix a small amount of gypsum into their potting medium to help. Alternatively, using a small amount of vinegar to acidify your water (be sure to test the pH before watering your plants!) can accomplish the same thing.

They’re also documented as somewhat short lived; in the wild, plants typically only live about 15 years, although cultivated specimens can live to 20 – 25 years of age.

Hoodia gordonii: Produces huge, pillowy blooms, beginning in late spring and extending through summer. Can reach just over 3 feet tall in ideal conditions. Under ideal conditions, can live up to 25 years in cultivation. One of the easier hoodia to grow.

Hoodia parviflora: Sometimes called the largest stapeliad, some sources say this can grow to the size of a small tree (up to 6 feet tall)! Less commonly grown as it is more susceptible to rot compared to *H. gordonii*.

The *Caralluma* genus also hosts some plants used for appetite suppressants, but their flowers’ smell will do the trick just as neatly. These can vary from very suspiciously stapeliad-like stem appearances that can be a challenge to tell apart from something like a *S. gigantea*, while others have huge, angled stems that almost resemble a *Euphorbia* and produce enormous clusters of putrid smelling flowers.

Orbea is the genus of two of the most popular species, but it’s also the genus of some truly hard to find species. *Orbea oculata* is one that is a challenge to find in the US, but produces clearly distinct and beautiful flowers. *Orbea* as a genus is nearly as popular for selective breeding and hybridization as *Huernia*, which also has a large number of species that range in bloom size, color, and pattern.



Orbea oculata

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

Thanks to the generosity of the Stapeliad enthusiasts online, the following photos of various Stapeliad species (particularly their blooms) have been shared to display the joy we take in growing these little alien plants.

JEN GREENE

PHOTO CREDITS

Marcel René de Cotret: *Pseudolithos migiurtinus*, *Edithcolea grandis*

Scott M Harris: *Pseudolithos cubiformis* with seed pod

Michael Straarup Nielsen: *Rhytidocaulon ciliatum*

Christina Ann Wolf (IG @my.grn.paradise): *Duvalia caespitosa*, *Orbea halipedicola*, *Stapelia schinzii*, *Huernia oculata* x *urceolata*

Tony Casler: *Huernia oculata*

Shannon Culp: *Orbea dummeri*

Maria Shmidt: *Orbea paradoxa*, *Caralluma arachnoidea*, *Stapelia olivacea*

Carlos Lopez Ochoa (IG @lopezochoacarlos): *Huernia zebrina*, *Orbea decaisneana*

Jen Greene: *Stapelia gigantea*, *Stapelia hirsuta*, *Huernia bayeri*, *Angolluma* sp. aff *wissmannii*



Orbea decaisneana

THE LIFE CYCLE OF WELWITSCHIA MIRABILIS

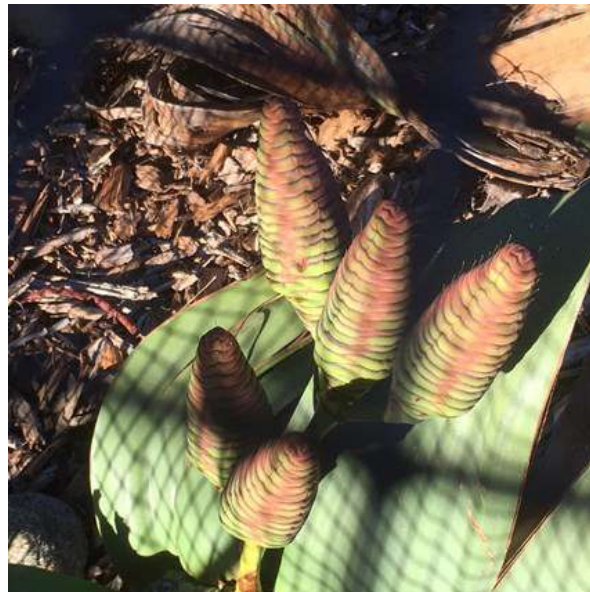
We have a pair of *Welwitschia mirabilis*, a male and a female, in cultivation. *Welwitschia* lives in the Namib Desert, in SW Africa along the Atlantic coast. It is not a succulent; it gets regular trickling amount of moisture from fog. It is famous for having only two leaves which keep growing and can live to >1000 years.



In March 2021, the male formed the male cones. In May, the other *Welwitschia* formed female cones, for the first time that I know of.



Pictured left: Male cone
Pictured right: Female cones



In July, the female cones produced minute whiskers protruding from the cone

Pictured left: Female cone with whiskers & nectar droplets

Pictured right: Female cones grow and elongate after pollination

THE LIFE CYCLE OF WELWITSCHIA MIRABILIS

Using a calligraphy brush and brushing along the flow of the whiskers, we transferred pollens from the male cones onto the female whiskers.

The female cones kept growing into dark brown cones. Finally, at the end of January 2022 (after 6 months), the cones opened, and seeds with wings started falling.

We collected 264 viable seeds from 5 cones (and ~55 empty ones, so quite successful pollination for a first try). The seeds inside the wings look like sunflower seeds. Each seed has 2 layers of wings – an empty wing with brown tip, and underneath is another wing with 1 seed enclosed. When the cones are growing, the wings with brown tips are closed to protect the ones with developing seeds. The long, dark brown Welwitschia cone looks similar to pinecone. When the seeds mature, the cone layers open and fall off, with the empty brown tip ones stuck onto the ones with seeds.



Pictured above: the 2 layers of wings for each seed; the left one is empty

Pictured right: New clean dry seeds



After peeling off the wings and the seed shells, the seeds look like sunflower seeds. The clean seeds were placed on moist paper towel in a container with a loose lid and kept at indoor temperature.



Pictured above left: First seed germinated in 3 days



Pictured above right: All 6 seeds germinated after 6 days

The germinated seeds will be planted in clean containers with sterilized medium. The recommendation is to use pure pumice and keep moist but not soggy. Begin to use very dilute fertilizer after a month.

MAY FONG HO

Special thanks to Ed Read (Cal State Fullerton), Ernesto Sandoval (UC Davis), and SDZWA/Safari Park Horticulture Department for their expert advice; Lindsay Worden, Tony Rowe, & Whitney Meier for caring of the plants; Jennifer Harris & Anne Kadonaga for their photos. Submitted by May Fong Ho 2/22/2022

A huge thank-you to everyone
who entered their plants into the
2022 Winter Show!

Please enjoy this gallery of plants that
took home the biggest show ribbons in
the Novice, Intermediate and Advanced
categories, in the Winter Grower
category, and our Best In Show.



Our fabulous judges: Peter Walkowiak, Woody Minnich, and Kelly Griffin

Jared Petker

WINTER SHOW RECAP: NOVICE WINNERS



BEST CACTUS NOVICE

Copiapoa dealbata

Dr Cactus Succulents



BEST SUCCULENT NOVICE

Agave victoria-reginae 'White Rhino'

Dr Cactus Succulents

WINTER SHOW RECAP: INTERMEDIATE WINNERS



BEST SUCCULENT INTERMEDIATE

Agave albopilosa

Chuck Ramey



BEST CACTUS INTERMEDIATE

Pelecypora strobiliformis

Keith Taylor

WINTER SHOW RECAP: ADVANCED WINNERS

BEST SUCCULENT ADVANCED

Boophane distichia Point Elizabeth

Peter Walkowiak



BEST CACTUS ADVANCED

Ariocarpus retusus

Peter Walkowiak



WINTER SHOW RECAP: BEST WINTER GROWERS

BEST WINTER GROWER NOVICE

Fouquieria columnaris

Jose Ramos



BEST WINTER GROWER INTERMEDIATE

Boophane distichia
Point Elizabeth

Keith Taylor



BEST WINTER GROWER ADVANCED

Ariocarpus retusus

Peter Walkowiak

WINTER SHOW RECAP: BEST IN SHOW



BEST IN SHOW

Pachypodium densicaule

Peter Walkowiak