

VOLUME 58 • NUMBER 01 • JANUARY 2023



# ESPINAS Y FLORES

HAPPY 2023! • CALIFORNIA NATIVE CACTI & SUCCULENTS  
SAFARI PARK UPDATE • HOLIDAY PARTY RECAP & more!

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



**ON THE COVER**

*Echinocereus engelmannii*

Photo by Olga Batalov

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## SDCSS SCHEDULE

Our next in-person meeting:

**January 14th meeting**

Next upcoming meeting:

**FEBRUARY 11<sup>TH</sup> SHOW AND SALE**

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SD Zoo Safari Park, Baja & Old World Gardens	May Fong Ho
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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**H**appy New Year! It has been quite a year for San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society! We started the year off strong, choosing to present a two day Show and Sale in February rather than the traditional one day event. After the 2 year hiatus we wanted to come back strong, and it was a rousing success thanks to all of you who worked together to make this happen! Our monthly meetings gradually got back into full swing, as people became more comfortable getting out and about, and we had some wonderful speakers. Despite the difficulties in getting people to travel to give talks, **Kelly Griffin** put together some great presentations. We also had some excellent Plant of the Month presentations; even one from a new member, Jodi Visosky! Towards the end of the year we also saw the return of pre-meeting workshops as **Jen Green** jumped in to get this popular activity back up and running. June saw the return of our big Show and Sale and it came off quite well as we welcomed some new vendors as well as old favorites.



And then there was the Holiday Party! It was wonderful—thanks to all who made this possible; **Chris Miller** handling the catering, sales, and generally managing and tracking the auction; **Kelly** who procured an awesome selections of gift plants; **Sherman Blench** for making the festive center pieces, which were later auctioned off. Big thanks to **Western Cactus Growers**, **Ed DeLollis**, **Mark Fryer**, **Peter Walkowiak**, and **Al Kline** of Botanic Wonders for the donation of plants for the auction; once again, **Gary Vincent** donated two of his amazing bird houses—the auction was a huge success, and we raised an impressive amount of funds for conservation of endangered plants and their habitats. The silent auction was also a success - thanks to Rick Bjorklund who donated so many fun items and everyone else who contributed and bid on something for this great cause. Thanks to all who showed up early to set up (I wish I could remember everyone who was there) and **Sandy Wetzel-Smith** for managing coffee and the impressive desserts people brought in. **Herb Stern** provided a lovely selection of wines for all to enjoy and our cashiering team of **Ken Brown** and **Lynn Elliot** were there to check people in and collect \$ from the auction. **Der-shing Helmer**, our newsletter editor, designed and had made a beautiful 2022 commemorative pin which was gifted to those present. At the end of a long day **John McCann**, **Donna Roden** and several others were there pushing brooms and putting the place back in order. I am sure I have missed some contributors...as always, a great group of volunteers makes for a successful event. Thanks to all who helped out, and to everyone who attended.

I'm looking forward to **our next meeting on January 14**, and our next Show and Sale is coming up in February, so get to the meeting early to catch some tips on preparing plants for the show! Jerry Garner will be sharing his expertise in the pre-meeting workshop. We will be looking for volunteers, too, so come and see where you can participate!

Best wishes for 2023,

*Pam Badger*

December 26, 2022

## SHARE YOUR PASSION!

Have you ever read the *Espinās 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](mailto:pambad1@mac.com)

## SDCSS ONLINE

**FACEBOOK:**

[www.facebook.com/sdcss](http://www.facebook.com/sdcss)

**TWITTER:** SanDiegoCactus

**INSTAGRAM:** #sdcss

**WEBSITE:** [www.sdcss.net](http://www.sdcss.net)

## SDCSS JANUARY SPEAKER

Join us **Saturday, January 14th** for our guest speaker: **Kevin Kreucher: "Jurassic Cactus—Otherworldly Plants on the Sea of Cortez."**

**Our Speaker Topic:** In his talk "Jurassic Cactus—Otherworldly Plants on the Sea of Cortez," Kevin will discuss and share his recent trip to several islands on the Sea of Cortez. Get ready for some Giant Cardons, Ancient Feros, and Procumbent Pachycauls!

**About Our Speaker:** Kevin Kreucher, better known as "Crazy4Cactus" on Instagram, has been enjoying the hobby for more than 5 years. He has a saying when it comes to plants, "Anything worth doing is worth overdoing." Based in Orange County, he is not only a passionate collector--he is also an avid photographer of all things xeric!



**See you at the meeting!**

## PRE-MEETING WORKSHOP & PLANT OF THE MONTH

The January **Pre-meeting Workshop (11am)** will feature board member **Jerry Garner** with his time-tested tips on getting your plants in shape for the Winter show.

In this month's workshop, we will focus on preparing your plants for the show tables for the Winter show. Jerry will cover the basics of entering a plant in the show and have a short discussion about filling out the plant entry tickets, as well as where and how to find the plant category information. He will then address pot cleanliness, plant cleanliness (insect control), and plant grooming. He'll finish with some basic staging tips for using top-dressing, rocks, and plant-to-pot placement to enhance the presentation of the plant.

If you have a plant that you are unsure about showing, bring it to the workshop and we will work on the plant's best presentation. He will also bring an assortment of simple tools that can easily be assembled into a plant grooming kit. He hopes this workshop will take some of the worries and mystery out of showing your plants, and encourages all members to show them at our show!!

This month's **Plant of the Month** will be **Cacti and Succulents Native to Southern California**, presented by **Olga Batalov**. Read Olga's article in this edition of the Newsletter, and enjoy a presentation as well at our meeting before the January speaker!



Jerry getting ready to school us all on basic showplant preparation

CLUB NEWS AND NOTICES

# SAN DIEGO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

## WINTER SHOW & SALE: FEBRUARY 11, 2023

BALBOA PARK, CASA DEL PRADO, ROOM 101 & PATIO

The show is FREE and open to the public!

### SHOW HOURS

Doors open: 10am-4pm

### SALE HOURS

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

General public: 11am-4pm

ONE DAY  
ONLY!



A lovely holiday lightscape taken in December at the San Diego botanic garden

Tina Zucker

PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

# CACTI & SUCCULENTS NATIVE TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

BY OLGA BATALOV



*Mammillaria dioica*  
Olga Batalov

If you have marveled at the amazing cacti and succulent photos by our club's speakers, but have not looked for our local cacti and succulents, you are missing out! Some of them may literally be in your backyard.

While the cactus diversity and density is certainly higher inland in the desert areas, including Anza Borrego Desert State Park and Joshua Tree National Park, there are cacti (and succulents in particular) that can be found near the coast as well. Even Anza Borrego Desert State Park and Joshua Tree NP are not that far away—several hours' drive at most—and there are a number of places that do not require a high-clearance or four-wheel drive vehicle. Anza Borrego Desert State Park, California's largest state park, also covers much more area than people probably realize, extending far beyond the town of Borrego Springs and south to practically the border with Mexico.

## PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

spines of *Ferocactus cylindraceus*

Olga Batalov

Having lived in San Diego for over 20 years now, heading to Anza Borrego Desert State Park was a common spring excursion growing up, mostly to see the wildflowers in bloom. While the spring wildflower bloom is very much dependent on weather, the cactus and succulent bloom is much less reliant on the rare combination of enough spring rain and the absence of a late frost. Even if the deserts do not grace us a super-bloom next year, there is still plenty to see (with no crowds!), especially if you go a bit later in the spring. The best place to view most of the cacti listed below is the Cactus Loop nature trail in Anza Borrego Desert State Park, across the road from Tamarisk Grove Campground; parking is free at this short but steep trail. Equally good hiking areas in Anza Borrego, although they now charge a modest day use fee, are the trails from the Hellhole Canyon and Borrego Palm Canyon parking lots. The visitor's center also has a nice desert garden.

What cacti and succulents can you expect to find, and when is the best time to see them in bloom? As cacti go, there are several species of several genera that you can see locally, some even extending out to,

or found exclusively on, the coast. One of the ones you can find near the coast as well as out in the desert is *Mammillaria dioica* (see article cover image), which goes by the common names of 'Strawberry Fishhook Cactus' (because of the red stripes on the flowers) and 'Coast Fishhook.' I have seen it in bloom in late January at Cabrillo National Monument, as well as mid-to-late March in Anza Borrego. Sometimes it is hidden under shrubs, especially in the desert areas, but it also can grow completely exposed. Another species is the 'Common Fishhook Cactus,' *Mammillaria tetrancistra*, which I seem to have never photographed in bloom.

Another genus is the barrel cactus; two species can be found locally: *Ferocactus viridescens* ('San Diego Barrel Cactus') near the coast and *Ferocactus cylindraceus* ('California Barrel Cactus') further inland. There are a number of easily accessible *Ferocactus viridescens* at Cabrillo NM on the coastal trail near the tide pools. This species blooms in late spring, May to June. Much more common and easier to find is *Ferocactus cylindraceus*, which in my experience can be seen in bloom (although perhaps not peak bloom) as early as mid-March. The spine color can vary

## PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

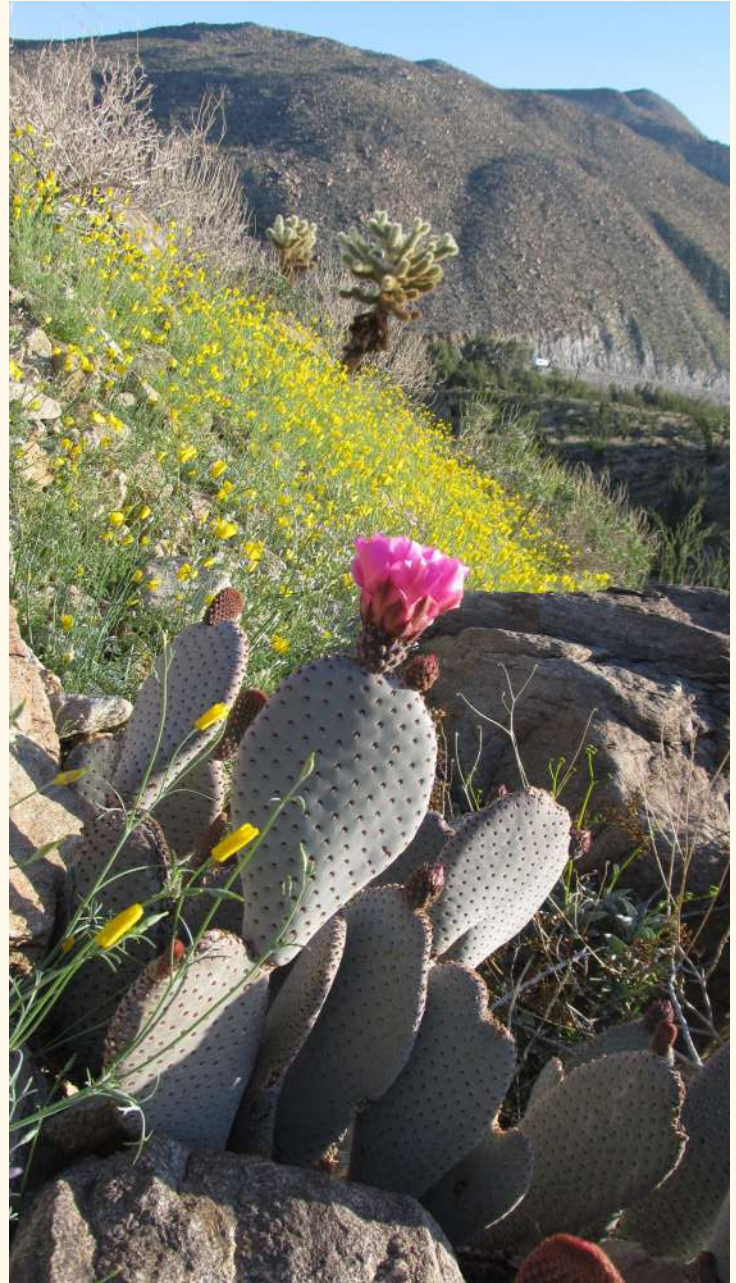
considerably from red to yellow to white; the reddest ones tend to be the younger plants.

Next up are several species of *Cylindropuntia*, which are more commonly referred to as “chollas.” Anza Borrego hosts at least four cholla species: *Cylindropuntia acanthocarpa* (‘Buckhorn Cholla’), *C. bigelovii* (the dreaded ‘Teddy Bear Cholla’), *C. echinocarpa* (‘Silver Cholla’) and the unmistakable *C. ramosissima* (‘Branched Pencil Cholla’ or ‘Diamond Cholla’). I have never seen *C. bigelovii* in flower, but the dense spination that ages to brown or black is a telltale sign of this species. This species is also sometimes referred to as the ‘Jumping Cholla’ (although that true honor belongs to an Arizonian cholla) because of how easily the stems detach and then stick to anything near them. Similarly, I have never seen *C. ramosissima* in flower, but it looks so distinct from the other chollas in our area with its slender stems and long spines that flowers are not necessary to make an ID. Another cholla species is limited to coastal San Diego, but more common in Baja California: *Cylindropuntia californica*, which is very lightly covered in spines. It co-occurs with *Cylindropuntia prolifera*, another species found in coastal areas of southwest California.

Related but distinct is the *Opuntia* genus, my favorite being the ‘Beavertail Prickly Pear,’ *Opuntia basilaris*, with its vivid magenta flowers. Several other species can be found locally, including the widespread *Opuntia chlorotica* and the coastal *Opuntia littoralis*.

One final prevalent cactus is *Echinocereus engelmannii*, with huge pink flowers if you come late enough to witness them in bloom. This species tends to bloom later, late March at the earliest and into April. Chances of seeing them in flower are better in early-to-mid April.

This is not intended to be an extensive list, as other cacti are found in our area and some can have very narrow distributions. Notably, *Bergerocactus emoryi*, while found mostly in Baja California, does extend up north to San Diego County, including Cabrillo National Monument and the Point Loma peninsula. This called for a return trip, since we primarily went to Cabrillo NM last January for the tide pools during low tide and



*Opuntia basilaris* and *Cylindropuntia bigelovii* Olga Batalov

somehow I managed to walk right past them.

Succulents have not been focus of mine but San Diego certainly has plenty: several *Dudleya*, *Yucca*, *Nolina* and *Agave* species, as well as the stately ocotillo, *Fouquieria splendens*. Relatives of the boojum (*F. columnaris*) of Baja California, ocotillos will leaf out within days after a good rain and they will flower every year, even if they got barely any rain. As such, they are a vital nectar source for migrating and resident hummingbirds. {cont'd after the next page}



PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE



*Cylindropuntia echinocarpa* and pollinator **Olga Batalov**



*Cylindropuntia ramosissima* **Olga Batalov**



*Fouquieria splendens* in flower

**Olga Batalov**

## PLANT OF THE MONTH FEATURE

Joshua Tree NP is named for the Joshua tree, *Yucca brevifolia*. Two other common species are *Yucca schidigera* and *Hesperoyucca whipplei*. *Agave desertii* is common in the deserts, as the name would suggest, but *Agave shawii* can be found near the coast. Although not necessarily a succulent, a favorite bulb of mine is the desert lily, *Hesperocallis undulata*, which is best seen at Arroyo Salado in Anza Borrego Desert State Park. Weather-permitting, another super-bloom will happen, like the one in 2017 if not better. If you have never seen one, there is nothing quite like seeing the desert come alive with fields of color. The same goes for when the California poppies have a super-bloom, like what happened at Lake Elsinore in 2019.

Come for the plants, but watch out for the wildlife too! Reptiles love the desert, including rattlesnakes, horned lizards, collard lizards, chuckwallas and rosy

boas. Another benefit of less people is the possibility to see bighorn sheep—we finally saw two of them, one in 2020 and one in 2022. Iconic birds like the California Quail and Anna's Hummingbird are always a pleasure to spot as well. Keep your eyes peeled and you never know what you might find, both inland and near the coast.

**OLGA BATALOV**

Links for reference:

- [Wildflowers of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park](#)
- [Anza-Borrego Foundation Wildflower list](#)
- [CA Dept of Parks and Rec Anza-Borrego Wildflower List](#)
- [Ocotillo webinar by Anza Borrego Foundation](#)



*Hesperocallis undulata*

Olga Batalov



Wildflowers at Lake Elsinore

Olga Batalov

## 2022 HOLIDAY PARTY RECAP



A panorama of this years' festivities!

**Pam Badger**



Sandra Wetzel-Smith: volunteer of the year **Donna Roden**



Denise Huntsman-Griffin: director recognition **Donna Roden**



May-Fong Ho: community service award **Donna Roden**



Ken Brown: volunteer of the year **Donna Roden**

## 2022 HOLIDAY PARTY RECAP



John Williams receiving a Life Membership Award

Donna Roden



More holiday cheer... thanks for coming, everybody!



Donna Roden

## SAFARI PARK UPDATE



**H**oliday Greetings from our beautiful *Aloidendron dichotomum* in bloom right now (pictured left)!

Its old name was *Aloe dichotoma*, and the best guess is 70-80 years old. Its common name is Quiver Tree, from the Northern Cape of South Africa to Namibia.

After the recent rains, the Baja & Old World Succulent Gardens at Safari Park are in gorgeous shape. Come visit before May 2023.

On Jan 1, 2023, I'll transition my lead role at these gardens to Tom Osborn (plant focus) & Don Jones (management focus). Tom will help to add/select/advise care of plants; Don will work with the team of 18 volunteers and the Safari Park Horticulture Department. Both will work with SDCSS, which sponsors the Gardens.

After the transition, I'll do my gardening by wandering around. I'll likely be focus on plant health - too much water, too little water, too much sun, too many bugs, those destructive critters (deer/rabbit/gopher), etc.

To put things in perspective:

We have the largest collections of Baja plants outside of Baja. In the OWSG, we have collected >200 species of aloe, 80 species of euphorbia, and many pachypodium, alluaudia, didierea, African bulbs, species from Madagascar, sansevieria, and other strange looking succulents. Come and enjoy the Gardens before aloe blooms end around April 2023.

To keep plants in top shape, we have 18 volunteers now: Sherman Blench, Grace Chen, Jennifer Harris, May Fong Ho, Anne & William Kadonaga, Don Jones, Julie Kort, Nam Jin Lee, Dee Morgan, Cheryl & Rick Negus, Tom Osborn, Norb Roden, Tony Rowe, Denise Truett, Lindsay Worden, and Nick Van der Westhuizen.

Past volunteers: Susan LaFreniere, Julia Austen, Don Israel, David Yetz, Mark Richards, William & Patricia Hatfield, Wendy Harrison, Mary Reiser, Lyn Mardesich, Ellie Anderson, Dennis Pilien, Anna Lee.

I also want to thank the generous donors from the past 13 years.

We have about 500 visitors a week to these Gardens, from new-born to senior. The SD Zoo is 106 years old, and Safari Park is 50 years old this year. We plant the Gardens so they'll be here 100 years from now, providing enjoyment and education to millions of visitors!

If you would like to donate or volunteer at the gardens, please send an email to Don Jones at [donjones4167@gmail.com](mailto:donjones4167@gmail.com) or Tom Osborn at [encyclia@gmail.com](mailto:encyclia@gmail.com).

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

## A PLANT'S JOURNEY

On Christmas Day, I took a trip to the zoo to check on the winter growers and the Aloe blooms. As is my habit, I headed straight to the African Rocks Trail and the *Aloidendron dichotomum* that I donated to the Zoo seven years ago when they were starting on this project. What I saw took my breath away! I have known this plant for many years, and she never looked better.

I first met this plant about 25 years ago, growing in a garden on Mt. Helix in La Mesa. The garden belonged to a woman who had once been a member of SDCSS and who had recently passed. Her husband was going to sell the house and wanted to re-home his wife's beautiful plants. My late husband, Lee, and a crew of other club members got together and rescued many plants, but this Aloe would take more equipment as. even back then, she was *large*. A backhoe was hired, large box built, and she moved into my yard. There she sat for almost 20 years. Lee had met some of the zoo gardeners who purchased a nice selection of plants from him, bound for African Rocks. They had asked about the Aloe, and Lee suggested he might donate it. At this time, it was still in the box, and I still had hopes of planting her in the yard.

In 2016, after Lee passed, I got a call from Pat Smith, a zoo gardener, who asked about the Aloe, and I decided to donate it in Lee's honor. We had never managed to get it planted, and I felt she deserved a place in the ground. I was very busy at the time—overwhelmed with Lee being gone and working more than full time—so I told Pat we would have to arrange a weekend to move her. The next week, while at work, I was checking Facebook and saw a picture of my plant being loaded on a big truck! It turned out that a mutual friend who has access to my yard had let the crew in to move the plant. I was surprised, but glad to have it done.

It was a few more years before African Rocks opened, and the first time I went and saw her in the ground, in an honored location at the entrance, it was like seeing an old friend. I visited regularly and watched as she slowly adjusted to the new location. The first couple years she had almost no blooms, and I couldn't help but worry—not all mature plants take to transplanting, and can take years to adjust.

Jump to my visit on December 25th, 2022—seeing her in her full glory was pure **joy!** From a garden in La Mesa, to years in a box in Spring Valley, to an honored place in the SD Zoo, she has had quite a life.



*Pam's Aloidendron dichotomum* in bloom and situated in its forever home in the African Rocks Trail exhibit at the San Diego Zoo **Pam Badger**

**PAM BADGER**