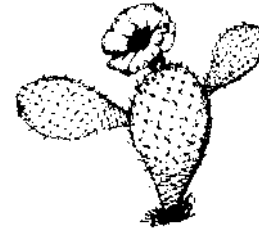


A *Cereus* blooming at Grigsby's
Photo by Lynn McDonald

The Cactus Patch



Opuntia basilaris var. *treleasei*

Volume 8 **March 2005** Number 3

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BAKERSFIELD CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

This Month's Program

Chile

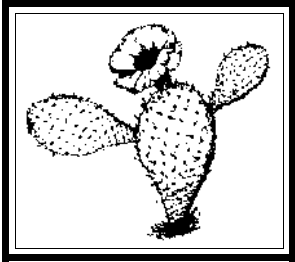
presented by **Rob Skillin**

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, Mar 8
Olive Drive Church,
5500 Olive drive
at **6:30 PM**

(West of 99 freeway
on corner of Olive drive &
Victor street)

**Plant of the
Month:
Copiapoa**



The Cactus Patch

Volume 8 Number 3
March 2005

The Cactus Patch is the official publication of the Bakersfield Cactus & Succulent Society (BCSS) of Bakersfield, California. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at the times and places noted within.
GUEST ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

2005 Officers

President – Vonne Zdenek
Vice-President – Bonnie East
Treasurer - Maynard Moe
Secretary – Les Oxford
Editors - Stephen Cooley
Linda Cooley

2005 Directors

CSSA Representative - open
Past President – Matt Ekegren

2005 Chairpersons

Hospitality - Bill McDonald
Librarian – James Parker
Field Trips – Lynn McDonald
Historian – open
Show & Sale - open

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Vonne Zdenek opened the meeting and introduced the speakers along with Bonnie East. The first speaker, Maggie Cushine from CASA (Court Appointed Special



Advocates of Kern County).

The goal of the CASA program is to protect children from abuse, neglect and abandonment. Volunteers from the community join CASA to represent these children and speak out on their behalf. Maggie's subject was to help children caught up in abuse have volunteers from BCSS to plant gardens for their enjoyment. Maggie can be contacted for further information.

The second speaker was Mark Muradian from Fresno. Mark gave a fantastic presentation of his trip to Yemen and Socotra, showing beautiful photo's of the area including plants that are native to that area. We saw giant caudiciform *Dendrosicyos*, *Dorsetnia* and *Adenium* as well as *Edithcolea*, *Caralluma* and Dragonsblood trees (*Dracaena*). Mark also displayed many pots that are one of a kind with an artistic flare that were for sale.

Les Oxford



BCSS BOARD MEETING

February 22, 2005

In attendance were Maynard Moe, Vonne Zdenek and Les Oxford.

Our speaker will be Rob Skillin, presenting his talk on Chile, March 8, 2005 at Olive Drive Church.

Discussed a trip to Woody's to purchase raffle plants. No date was set.

Just a reminder, don't forget dues, \$10.00 for single member and \$15.00 for couples.

Discussed appropriating funds for bricks, rocks and plants for the garden at Cal State. This will be brought up at our next meeting.

Discussed the annual yard sale coming up sometime in the spring. Need to set date.

The next board meeting will be at my place. 6800 Klamath Way, #E. 837-2355, March 25th. Our April 26th board meeting will be at Bonnie East's home.

Les Oxford, Secretary

MARCH'S PROGRAM

CHILE

presented by **Rob Skillin**

Rob will present a program based on his recent trip to Northern Chile, where the Atacama desert comes right down to the sea and home of *Copiapoa*, *Eulychnia*, *Neochilenia* and *Eriosyce*. Rob spent over two weeks this summer traveling hundreds of miles over dirt roads in some of the driest country on Earth. Among his traveling companions were last month's speaker Mark Muradian and fellow BCSS members Woody Minnich, Maynard Moe, and Stephen Cooley. Come to the meeting and see photos of giant clumps of *Copiapoa*, the likes of which have never been reproduced in cultivation.



Rob photographing
Copiapoa haseltoniana

Plant of the Month

The Genus *Copiapoa*

by L. M. Moe

The Atacama Desert of northern Chile is incredibly dry. It is the smallest desert of the world and it is also the driest. The average precipitation is less than 0.004 inch per year with some locations having no precipitation at all in over 400 years. This is the home of *Copiapoa*, the plant of the month.

Copiapoa is a fairly small genus of cacti with only about two-dozen species loosely related to *Notocactus*. *Copiapoas* are found only in the Atacama Desert, mostly near the coast. They were first collected in the 1820s and placed in the genus *Echinocactus* with all other globular cacti. It wasn't until 1922 that Britton and Rose recognized the uniqueness of these plants and placed them into their newly described genus *Copiapoa*. The name comes from Copiapo, a town in northern Chile where many species occur.

These cacti vary in size from massive clumps (*C. solaris*) to one of the world's smallest cacti (*C. laui*). Probably the most popular species is *C. cinerea*, sometimes called the compass cactus because they are small columnar cacti that lean or tilt towards the north. Apparently this helps reduce the internal core



A large clump of *Copiapoa solaris*

temperatures thereby lowering water loss.

Well-drained soil and infrequent watering are necessary to grow most *Copiapoa* species. In England, they are not watered at all from May through October. They do not tolerate freezing.

An excellent reference for natural history information is found in "Copiapoa in their Environment" by Rudolf Schulz and Attila Kapitany. Taxonomic information can be found in Edward



Copiapoa cinerea

Anderson's "The Cactus Family." A good internet site for photos is to just enter "Copiapoa" into the Google image search field.



Rock hunting -- March 12th

Leader Dan French thinks the desert will be too wet on original date of March 5 & proposes a later Saturday in March. It still will depend on weather. He hopes to be at this meeting to discuss.
Contact him or me Lynn McDonald

Palm Desert -- March 19-21

Camping trip -- Plans to leave early Saturday morning & drive to camp site. Participants will need to meet after club meeting to discuss carpooling, equipment, etc. We plan to camp Sat & Sun evenings. If anyone would like to go for just one night, let it be known too. We will probably camp at Lake Cahuilla or one of the Salton Sea sites. There are shower facilities at these places. Remember the good walking shoes, sunscreen, plenty of water, etc.

The following are some of our destinations. Information on each can be found on the Internet, each has a website.

The Living Desert Zoo & Gardens: The Living Desert was established in 1070 and has grown to become one of the most successful zoological gardens in the country. Within it's 1,200 acres there are lush botanical gardens representing 10 different ecosystems -- from the Southwest & Mexico to East Africa & Madagascar. There are over 400 desert animals representing over 150 species. There are also wilderness hiking trail, Native American exhibits and special events/programs. When the weather is warm, it is best to visit the garden in the morning. Plan 3-4 hours for exploration. The gardens open at 0900. Admission fee is \$10.95 for adults, \$9.50 for seniors 62+.

The Moorten "Desertland" Botanical Garden is a compact showcase of desert trees and cacti. It is only about an acre in size, but every square inch is packed with desert specimens. It is truly a desert gem, well worth a visit. The map you receive upon entering indicates the different regions where the plants are native. The desert regions represented include; the Sonoran, Mojave, Arizona, California, Texas, Colorado, and Central Mexico. The map also has the following information about the history of the garden:

The Moorten family, all desert plant specialists, turned their

residence estate into a living museum of desert lore. There is something of interest for everyone with glistening crystals, colorful rocks, ancient fossils, pioneer and gold-mine relics.

Long established in Palm Springs since 1938, this private arboretum was created to share with everyone the beauty and extraordinary varieties of desert plants from around the world-featuring desert trees and cacti from miniatures to giants. It is a classic collection of more than 3000 varieties of plants designed in concentrated habitats along a nature trail. Also, a special exhibition of quite rare plants called the world's first "Cactarium" (a word they coined in this profession).

The Moorten's Mediterranean style home, called "Cactus Castle" is in the Palm Grove Oasis, often described as a haven of tranquility. The charm of old Palm Springs.

Indian Canyons: Palm Springs and the surrounding area has been described as a recreation oasis as early as the 1890s.

Tahquitz Canyon and three southern canyons are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Palm and Andreas Canyons have the most and second most palm trees in the world, with Murray Canyon listed as fourth. The canyons and associated resources are especially sacred to the Indians today and are historically important to scientists and nature lovers. Please enjoy the free gifts of equanimity and serenity that you may take with you. While in Palm Canyon, visit the Trading Post for hiking maps, refreshments, Indian art and artifacts, books, jewelry, pottery, baskets, weavings and conversational cultural lore. The canyons are open 0800-5:00 PM daily. Admission is \$6.00 adults, \$4.00 seniors 62+

Windwolves Nature Preserve -- April 16

(details to be announced)

New York Mountains camping April 29-May 1

(details to be decided)

Lynn McDonald

ROCK HUNTING FIELD TRIP

January 30th 2005

Several BCSS member met at Towerline Road for a trip towards the Mojave Desert to collect big boulders and small rocks for the CSUB Cactus Gardens. Everybody filled their pick-ups and cars with all sizes of rocks. We had buckets and two wheelers to transport the rocks from the field to the cars. On the way back, we visited the Mojave Cactus Nursery and brought back several plants. Everybody then met at CSUB Cactus Garden to deliver the rocks. It was a great sunny day for finding all sizes of rocks. The Cactus Club will schedule another field trip for more rocks in the future. Look for dates in the newsletter

Les Oxford



Jack with his special rock-loading ramp
photo by Les Oxford



Sydney and Maynard loading rocks
photo by Les Oxford



With the truck full, Maynard is forced to walk back to Bakersfield
photo by Les Oxford



CROWDS!

A Letter From Bruce

After the holiday lull, things have started up with a bang! First the choir, which had been advertising to get needed members, attracted double the usual numbers.

The tenors are still the smallest voice, but they are more than ever.

Then the film club started a Cuban festival which has attracted a full house. The first week the Cuban Ambassador came and they served Cuba Libras. The next week they raffled off a box of cigars and a bottle of rum. The third week (at a showing of "Fresa y Chocolate", deservedly the best-known Cuban film and an Oscar nominee) they served two flavours of ice cream.

On the 15th Feb. the museum had a packed opening for an exhibit "Closed spaces" with baskets from Scotland, Japan, India and, of course, Botswana. The first two countries had modernistic baskets and the latter traditional.

Capital Players had a poor turnout for a "Club Night" on the 29th Jan. Polly & I performed "Baby, It's Cold Outside" again. There was a much better turnout for the play "Run for your Wife" which we saw on the 11th Feb. This was partly because it featured Warona who had represented Botswana on the TV (un)Reality Show "Big Brother".

The bird club has been trying to attract more members, but, so far, the result is poor. We had a moderate turnout for a hike in the Kapong Hills (NW of Gaborone) on the 6th of Feb. The walk started out dull (except for a plant of *Orbea lutea*) but right at the turn-around point we ran into a huge variety of birds including a knob-billed duck and lots of paradise whydahs with long streaming tails. The meeting on 18th Jan. was yet another report on the Delta bird count and we skipped the meeting on the 15th Feb. as it was on self defense which I think is more dangerous to the defender. (Several birders have been attacked while in the bush.)

It hasn't all been clubs & crowds. On 21st Jan. the Natural History and Archaeology Divisions surveyed a site proposed for a Youth Center. We objected as this was not procedural (we evaluate Environmental Impact Assessments so we should not do them) but we were ordered to do so. The eastern side of the plot is covered with rock outcrops which had the tuberous cucumber *Trochomeria* coming out of crevices and lilies of the species *Anthericum whytei* on flat areas next to the out crops. At first I thought this latter was a non-succulent with fibrous roots, but then I dug deeper and found that some of the roots were longer with

fleshy tubers at the end!

The western side of the plot was very waterlogged and had masses of wild garlic (*Tulbaghia leucantha*). This pale-flowered succulent was described by the late Marta Schmitz in Lesotho as "Sefotha-fotha - that which is smelled from a distance." It is used to strengthen tobacco. It has such a strong smell of garlic that it is not eaten as is *Tulbaghia acutiloba*, another species which ranges from Botswana to Lesotho.

I was interested in the comments in the Cactus Patch on the splitting of the Lily family. We now have 13 families in our herbarium which were formerly lilies. The above-mentioned *Anthericum* is in the family Asphodelaceae which contains several succulent genera and *Tulbaghia* is in the Alliaceae which includes onions and garlic.

On the 22nd of Jan. the two older Cook boys came to our house (after taking SAT's) and put up shelves. We'd forgotten how convenient it is to have tall, strong, young men around. We now have a compact area with TV/ VCR, Computer & accessories, and even a few books.

Finally, to continue with another historic account, I read some of the reprints in the African Hunting Series. James Sutherland, who wrote The Adventures of an Elephant Hunter (originally 1912, McMillan, London), fought with the Germans in the Maji-maji rebellion in what is now Tanzania in 1905 to 1906. In World War I he fought against the Germans there!

I was interested to learn that people from New Guinea and neighboring Pacific Islands were imported to fight in the Maji-maji rebellion. This may explain why the same belief that bullets can be turned to water (maji) is found in Africa and the Pacific. Luxun Chabidzambo III Mlenga, son of a herbalist just across the border from Tanzania in Northern Malawi assured me that John Chilembwe who led a rebellion against the British



Anthericum whytei

in Southern Malawi in 1915 had similar medicine and was still alive (despite the body produced by the British). Luxun assured me that Chilembwe had escaped by turning invisible.

Returning to Sutherland, his book describes a lot of plants and animals in addition to the elephants he seems to have killed in enormous numbers. He concentrates on poisonous ones such as the vine which he calls "combe". This is *Strophanthus kombe* which grows from Malawi down to Botswana. Malawi exported this to Europe as a heart stimulant similar to digitalis. Once in a radio interview in Malawi I mentioned *Strophanthus kombe* as a commercial medicine and was asked the local name. My mind went blank, although in the Chewa spoken there it is "kombe"!

Another book in the series is Arthur H. Neuman's Elephant Hunting in East Africa (originally 1898, Rowland Ward, London). Again, it is mostly an account of slaughtering elephants, but there is a mention of Euphorbias or "Cactus-tree" bush. He was not the first or last to confuse African euphorbias with American cacti. This theme was elaborated further in the book with an account of an elephant actually eating the tree euphorbia! Neuman notes, "The thick milky juice of this tree is excessively pungent, the least spurt of it in the eye causing irritation. I should imagine the effect of swallowing any on the human stomach would be very serious; but an elephant's mucous membrane must be less sensitive." Actually rhinos have also been recorded eating this and baboons get high on the latex. Luxun even said his father drank the latex!

A third book is Owen Letcher's The Bonds of Africa (originally 1913, John Long, London). This is a travelogue going from Cape to Cairo. It ends with this quote:

Africa, where the women have no beauty, the
birds no song, the flowers no scent and the rivers
no water.

Then he adds:

How often have I listened to that elaborate
condemnation! But with the flight of years there
has come to me an appreciation of the beauty of
the ill-fated women, I can hear music in the cry
of the Lourie, even the thorny aloe contains a
perfume, and I think a dried-up stream-bed can
float for me more charming fancies than the
soot-stained waters of the Thames.

Thus have I learned my Africa.

Bruce J. Hargreaves

Gone to Seed

by Stephen Cooley

PART THREE: It's Alive!

Before I get started let me correct one thing from last month's article; Mesa Garden no longer prints a catalog but the current lists can be viewed or downloaded from their website www.mesagarden.com.

Okay, now you've received the seeds you ordered, cleaned your pots and soil, planted the seeds, watered them, put them in a plastic bag and checked them every hour for a week until finally you see something. A small green thing has appeared at the surface, then another, and another. Germination! For the next week or so more and more come up, or sometimes you only get a few. Perhaps you won't get any, which happens sometimes.

At this point you may realize that you've made the most common error when planting seed: too many seedlings. You should have used fewer seeds or a bigger pot. If you had known how well the seeds would germinate you could have provided the right size pot. But, when you only have 25 seeds to start with, running a germination test would be a waste.

After about a week or two from germination, you should be able to recognize distinct bodies and/or the seed leaves of your new plants. If, like me, you did not cover your seeds you will also see a lot of fine roots. Now is a good time to sprinkle on some coarse sand, washing it down over the roots with a spray bottle. Your young plants will need this in order keep themselves upright. Your new plants can stay covered in their plastic bag for a few more weeks or they can be taken out. Do not expose them to full sun at this point, you can gradually work them up to full sun when they are a bit older.

You have now successfully started your own succulents from seed. Now you must finish them. The most critical time in the life of your new plants will probably be their first transplanting. Do not get impatient, transplanting can be up to a year away at this point. You will have much better success at transplanting when the plants are older and getting crowded in the pot. Concern yourself now with the health of your seedlings.

At this young age your succulents will require more moisture than when they are adults. However, they still will rot if kept too wet. Fertilizer should not be necessary until they are a month older or more. Adding fertilizer too soon can lead to excess weed growth.

Weeds? Yes, even your little pot you can have a problem with weeds. These are not the dandelions of your lawn or the grass, mustards, oxalis and sparges of your mature potted plants. Now that you have taken your seedling pot from the plastic bag you have allowed algae and moss to blow in with the breeze. If they grow too fast they can cause problems for your little succulents. The solution is in prevention, don't keep the top of the soil overly wet – you can still water your plants from the bottom by sitting the pot in a tray of water. In general I have had few problems with moss and algae, as they prefer cooler temperatures and by the time they get established, I have cut down on the watering of the seedlings.

Your succulents will grow slowly now, except, of course, the ones that don't. What I mean to say is that the Cactus, *Lithops*, *Conophytum*, and some other popular ones will grow slowly. Some, like *Pelargonium*, *Ipomoea*, *Othonna* and many other caudiciforms can grow quite rapidly. These speedy ones will need to be treated more like bedding plants and transplanted to larger containers quickly.

One of the keys to seedling success is attentiveness. Look at your plants frequently and take care of the problems as they arise instead of being surprised by them when it's too late.

Next Month PART FOUR: Getting Ready to be a Grandparent.



16 day old *Orbea* seedlings

If you have any questions about this article feel free to contact me. Also, when you feel like you're ready to try some seeds let me know and I'll let you have some of mine. Email me at thecactuspatch@bak.rr.com or talk to me at the meeting.



GARDEN WORK DAY

I think Sunday (March 6) will be a fine time to work in the garden at ESA/FACT/Cal State. If you are interested and able, let's meet out there around 9 and move dirt, weed, plant stuff, etc.

- Linda Cooley

2005 CLUB ROSTER

The club roster for 2005 will be printed and given out at the next meeting. Rosters are given out only to paid members of the club and are not published on the internet. If you would like to change the way your information appears you need to contact me, otherwise, it will remain as printed in last year's roster. New members will have addresses, phone numbers, and emails added to the roster – contact me if you would like to add or delete anything. Those not attending April's meeting will have their roster mailed.

To have your article printed in

The Cactus Patch get in touch with:

Stephen Cooley, editor

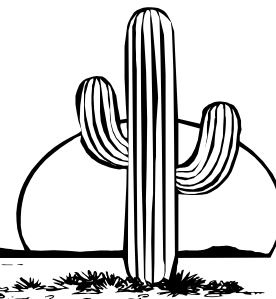
Linda Cooley, editor

thecactuspatch@bak.rr.com



***Be Sure To Check Us Out
On The Web At:
www.BakersfieldCactus.org***

UPCOMING EVENTS



BAKERSFIELD CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY EVENTS

Mar 8 BCSS Meeting 6:30 pm Olive Dr. Church, 5500 Olive Dr.

SPEAKER: Rob Skillin PROGRAM: Chile

Mar 12 BCSS Field Trip: Rock hunting in the Mojave

Mar 19-21 BCSS Field Trip: Living Desert Museum & Botanic Gardens, Palm Canyon, Laguna Canyon Nursery, much more.

Mar 25 BCSS Board Meeting -- Les' house

Apr 12 BCSS Meeting 6:30 pm Olive Dr. Church, 5500 Olive Dr.

Apr 16 BCSS Field Trip: Windwolves Preserve details to be announced

Apr 26 BCSS Board Meeting – Bonnie's House

Apr 29-May 1 BCSS Field Trip: New York Mountains camping

May 10 BCSS Meeting 6:30 pm Olive Dr. Church, 5500 Olive Dr.

SPEAKER: Woody Minnich PROGRAM: Exploring Northern Argentina

May 31 BCSS Board Meeting

June 14 BCSS Meeting 6:30 pm Olive Dr. Church, 5500 Olive Dr.

June 28 BCSS Board Meeting

OTHER CACTUS AND SUCCULENT EVENTS

Mar 26 Cactus Data Plants Spring Pottery & Plant Sale. Littlerock. 9am.

Apr 9-10 South Coast C&SS Show & Sale. South Coast Botanical Gardens
26300 Crenshaw Blvd, Palos Verdes Peninsula. 9am-4pm.

Apr 24 South Bay Epiphyllum Society Show & Sale. Address same as above.

Apr 30-May 1 Sunset C&SS Show & Sale. Veterans Memorial Center, Garden Room, 4117 Overland Ave, Culver City.

May 15 Huntington Gardens Plant Sale. 10am-5pm.

May 16 Epiphyllum Society Show & Sale, LA Arboretum.

May 21-22 Gates C&SS Show & Sale Jurupa Mts Cultural Center, 7621 Granite Hills Dr., Glen Avon. 9am-4pm.

June 4-5 Sand Diego C&SS Show & Sale, Balboa Park, Room 101

July 1-3 CSSA Annual Show & Sale at the Huntington

Aug 5-11 CSSA Biennial Convention. Scottsdale Plaza Resort, Phoenix.

Aug 20-21 20th Intercity Show & Sale. Los Angeles Arboretum. 9am-5pm

Sept 3 Huntington Symposium, Huntington Botanical Gardens

contact the editors (page 14) for more information