

September 2013

Plant of the Month

Astrophytum
Dorstenia/Ficus

Refreshments

Letters
A-D

New Members

Cynthia Brunetti
Susan Hirsch
Linda Holub

Editor

Phyllis Frieze
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Visit Us on the web <http://www.lacss.com>

Mission Statement:

The Los Angeles Cactus and Succulent Society (LACSS) cultivates the study and enjoyment of cacti and succulent plants through educational programs and activities that promote the hobby within a community of fellow enthusiasts and among the greater public.

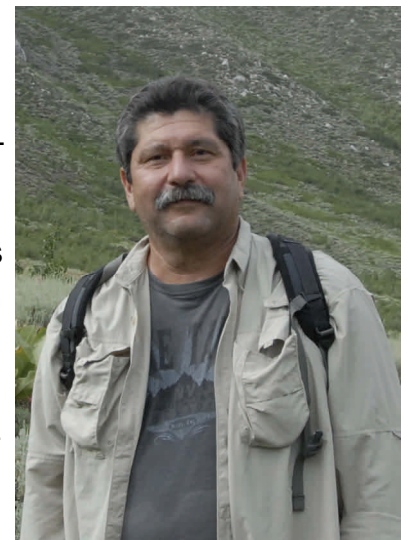
Our next general meeting is

September 5

***Program Title:* Introduction to Plant Photography:
John Martinez and Tim Harvey**

Well other than photographing your family, (“... and that’s Aunt Bertha before she shaved her mustache...”) at some point you will probably like to photograph your cactus/ succulent collection. John Martinez, experienced photographer, will explore the fundamentals of creative plant photography through light, exposure and composition. He’ll give you tricks, tips and techniques in photographing your collection and Tim Harvey, experienced field photographer will discuss photographing plants in the wild. You’re invited to bring your own camera as a reference.

John lives in Moorpark with his wife Linda and has recently retired from the Los Angeles Fire Department after thirty five years of service. He is a member of the Los Angeles CSS, San Gabriel Valley CSS, San Fernando Bromeliad Society and volunteers at the Huntington Botanical Garden. He has a deep fondness of nature and has been growing cactus and succulents most of his adult life. Over the past three years he has been very fortunate to share growing grounds with three very experienced growers of cactus, succulents and other exotics. Aside from maintaining his plant collection, his time is divided between gardening, golf, photography, occasional fly fishing, and grandchildren. As a native of Southern California, he attended California State University Northridge where he received a Bachelor’s Degree in Art.



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Meeting Refreshments

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Monthly Drawing

President's Message—September 2013

Greetings to all of you. I hope that you are enjoying the waning days of summer.

Inter City Show

Did you get an opportunity to visit the Inter City Show on August 17-18? LACSS had terrific representation among leadership, volunteers, exhibitors, vendors, and attendees.

Being a clerk this year was an excellent learning opportunity. The judges were thoughtful and articulate, explained their criteria for selection, and provided written tips to the novice exhibitors. In addition to staging, the overall health of the plant was emphasized through more vivid color, new growth, and general grooming. Rarity and maturity of specimens were also taken into consideration.

I was also thrilled to see that so many of our members entered plants this year. Congratulations to all. John Matthews has acknowledged all of our entrants and volunteers in his show article, but I especially want to thank John himself for his show co-chairpersonship and for his encouragement of participation from our club members. And I must admit that after the show, I looked around at the specimens thinking, "My plant was good enough to be entered here." I'll have to wait until next year to find out!

Huntington Desert Symposium

If you haven't already signed up, there may still be time for you to attend the annual Desert Symposium at the Huntington on August 31. This highly regarded event once again promises to be excellent.

Desert Creations Field Trip

John Martinez has announced that our next field trip will be to Desert Creations on September 21. Please mark your calendar and look for the flyer in this *Cactus Chronicle*.

On a personal note...

Jim and I had our first ever successful seed germination this summer and are now the proud parents of about 50 *Fockea edulis* plantlets. This is extremely exciting, as our other efforts have all ended in tragedy. This time, we carefully mixed vermiculite and pumice, sieved to about ¼ inch, layered into a plastic shoe box. We misted our seeds daily and delighted over the green paired sprouts.

The plants are now about 1 ½ inches tall, and have been carefully transplanted into 2 inch pots. Here's the exciting part: when each plant was moved to its own 2" pot, it was already distinctive: a fat or elongated caudex, solitary or branching root structure, erect or leaning body. In other words, they aren't all alike! Imagine how different they would have been if they were hybrids. The joys of succulent gardening never end.

See you on September 5.

Roxie Esterle
President

INTER-CITY THANK YOUs

Well, the 28th annual Inter-City Show and Sale has concluded without the excessive heat of last year. The new single large canopy that replaced the many smaller ones seems to have really helped keep the temperature down. Not to mention the hours of work saved by not having the many smaller canopies to setup and take down and transport..

The number of plant entries was up from last year (1,145 vs. 963) which is encouraging. With displays and collections, there were between 1,200 and 1,250 plants entered. There were over 92 exhibitors (compared to 79 last year) which also indicated increased interest. Our own LACSS exhibitors certainly had a field day. LACSS Trophy winners were -

Kim Thorpe	Best Variegated Cactus, Best Asclepiad, Best Madagascar Euphorbia, Best Collection (some fantastic Haworthias), as well as most points advanced succulents, and most total points overall (2 years in a row!).
Phyllis Frieze	Best Any Other Genus
Cheryl White	Best Astrophytum
Nils Schirmmacher	Best Cereus
Kyle Robinson	Best Miniature
John Matthews	Best Mesemb, Rarest Plant in Show

Other LACSS members who entered plants included Sandy Chase, Barbara Hall (most points advanced cactus), Duke Benadom, Chris Rogers, John Sucio, Peter Walkowiak (most points open cactus and most points open succulent), Jim Hanna, Manny Rivera, Tim Harvey, Mike Wisnev, Sylvia Strehlo, Kathryn Boorer, Woody Minnich, Joyce Schumann, Frank White, Linda Holub, Mark Muradian, and Juana Williams.

Barbara Hall and John Matthews won Golden Sweeps awards.

Our contingent of clerks helped the judges - Jim & Roxie Esterle, Kim Thorpe, Cheryl White, John Sucio, Nils Schirmmacher, Kyle Williams, Peter Walkowiak, Woody Minnich, Sandy Chase, and yours truly. The judges included Manny Rivera from LACSS.

Other LACSS members who donated their time and talents to the Walks & Talks program were Steve Frieze, Peter Walkowiak, Manny Rivera, Woody Minnich, Michael Buckner, and Sandy Chase.

LACSS vendors included Artie Chavez/Steve Frieze, Duke and Kaz Benadom, Erika & Al Van Auker, John Matthews, Tim Harvey, Peter Walkowiak, Woody Minnich, Jim Hanna, Mark Muradian, and Michael Buckner.

It is the volunteers, after all, that keep the show/sale moving along smoothly. Due extra-special recognition is Barbara Hall who ran the kitchen and kept everyone well-fed and hydrated. Special thanks to Kim Thorpe for the huge donation of food and drinks. Other LACSS volunteers (clerks listed above) seen at various show stations over several days were Ronit Weiss, Manny Rivera, Gunner Eisel, Joyce Schumann, Richard Roosman, Linda Holub, Kathleen Misko, Jay Kapac, Mike and AnnaWisnev, Chris Rogers, and Jim and Roberta Hanna.

I want to thank everyone who participated in any way in this show. I apologize, as I'm sure I've overlooked a few names above. I certainly hope everyone who participated or only attended the show/sale had a good time. I also hope those of you who just attended or couldn't make it this year will consider entering some plants and volunteering in some capacity next year. It is a great way to make new friends and learn more about our hobby.

John Matthews, Inter-City co-chair

**LACSS
Mentoring Program Update
September 2013**

This is an update on the Mentoring Program. At the July meeting we received 9 requests for mentoring, most were for general information and Gasteria/Haworthia.

Based on this input:

Artie Chavez and Steve Frieze have agreed to host a General Information session at Steve's home in North Hills. Information will include basic plant care, transplanting, light, watering and other topics.

Scott Schaffer has also agreed to host a discussion on Gasteria and Haworthia.

Dates, times and locations for these programs will be announced.

This program is an excellent opportunity for new members, as well as long term members to learn from our experts.

Attached are the Plant Families and Topics for which mentors have been identified. We will circulate another sign up sheet at the September meeting for those who want to take advantage of this program. If you are unable to attend the September meeting and wish to sign up for the program, please contact me directly.

We welcome feedback and suggestions on how this program could be more helpful.

Thanks,

John Suci
Johns.three@gmail.com
818-429-1647

LACSS Mentoring Program

Plant Families and Topics

Plant Families

Agave
Aloe
Asclepiad
Bromeliad
Bulbs
Cacti
Caudiciform
Conophytum

Euphorbia
Gasteria
Haworthia
Mesem
Pelargonium
Orthonna
Succulent trees
Xeric bulbs

Topics

Collection quality improvement
General Information
Plant care, transplanting, light, watering
Hybridization
In house coaching
Home tours

Landscaping
Pests
Propagation-seed, root & leaf
Seed raising
Staging
Trouble shooting

Plant of the Month

2013

September

Astrophytum Dorstenia-
Ficus

October

Cacti from Coahuila
Crassula

November

Crest-Montrose Crest-
Montrose

December

Holiday Party

2014

January

Mammillaria without
hooked spines
Pelargonium

February

Columnar Cacti
Aloe Hybrids

March

Opuntias (So. America)
Agave

April

Gymnocalycium singles
Yucca, Nolina,
Calibanus, Beaucarnea

May

Buiningia, Uebelmania
Mesembryanthemaceae
(other than Lithops &
Conophytum)

June

Favorite, Favorite

July

Escobaria, Corypantha
Cucurbitaceae

August

Obregonia, Strombo-
cactus, Echinomastus
Fockea, Raphionacme,
Brachystelma

September

Thelocactus
Fouqueria

Plant of the Month - August Winners

Succulent -- Bursera, Commiphora

Rookie Division

First	David Le	Commiphora africana
Second	David Le	Bursera fagaroides
Third	Joyce Schumann	Bursera fageroides

Novice Division

First	Jim Esterle	Bursera fageroides
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Advanced Division

First	Sandy Chase	Bursera simplicifolia
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Open Division

First	Manny Rivera	Bursera sp.
Second	Manny Rivera	Bursera simplicifolia
Third	Manny Rivera	Commiphora monstrosa
Third	John Matthews	Bursera schlectendalii

Cactus - Stenocactus

Advanced Division

First	Cheryl White	Stenocactus lamellosus
Second	Cheryl White	Stenocactus lloydii
Second	Sandy Chase	Stenocactus sp.
Third	Sandy Chase	Stenocactus lamellosus
Third	Sandy Chase	Stenocactus sp.

**Intercity Show Winners From LACSS Members
Photographs by Nils Schirmmacher**



Barbara Hall
Mammillaria schiedeana



Cheryl White
Thelocactus hexaedrophorus



John Matthews
Astrophytum caput-medusae



Joyce Schumann
Avonia papyracea

Intercity Show Winners From LACSS Members (continued)



Phyllis Frieze
Haworthia Semiviva



Kyle Robinson
Sarcostemma andongense



LACSS Garden Tours

Date: September 21 at 10:00 A.M.

First visit the home of Artie and Kim where you will have the opportunity to see their collection of caudiciform succulents and other exotic plants. Call (818) 679-6548 for directions or more information.

Then you are invited to visit the garden of Phyllis and Steve where you will have the opportunity to see the drought tolerant landscaping they have installed. Their home will be open at 12:00 P.M. Lunch will be provided at this location.

Lastly, you will be able to buy plants from Desert Creation's large inventory of unusual cacti and succulents at Phyllis and Steve's. All plant purchases made on this day will be reduced by *20 percent* with *10 percent* of the final purchase price being donated to LACSS.

All collected African Plants are available at these discounts as well as some cacti at more than 40 percent off the original price.

Call (818) 482-8795 for additional information about this event

September 2013

From the Stacks of the Library

How many times have we wished to travel to a distant, exotic land?

Sometimes that wish will come true. But when it doesn't, we can still travel vicariously through books. Would you be interested in "the most alien-looking place on Earth?" Would a place where 37% of the plant species are found nowhere else on Earth, interest you? Would the island archipelago of Socotra interest you? Curious now? Then, we have the book for you.

Actually, two books. The first is "***Socotra – Paradise of Succulents in the Indian Ocean.***" This is not your usual book of photos for identification of plants. This is a complete book on the history of the island, geography, and culture of the people of Socotra. The authors, Franziska & Richard Wolf, take us on a tour of the island, noting the flora, fauna, geology, history and culture. The travel arrangements alone never get boring. The descriptions of the sea, mountains, plants, etc. make you feel like you are there.

The second book is "***Succulent Plants of Socotra***" by Joël Lodé. This thin volume of photos is from **A** (*Adenium socotranum*) to **Z** (*Zygophyllum simplex*) and unlike any you have ever seen before!

These two books complement each other and should be read at the same time. Socotra is difficult to travel to and is just now building a few roads, as we know them. The books depict the ruggedness and beauty of the land and the uniqueness of the people. It is exciting to be able to "visit" an area almost untouched by modern technology. I felt compelled to access Wikipedia to learn more about Socotra and was surprised to learn that that most of what Wikipedia knows is in the first book.

So, for all of us armchair adventurers, this is the land for us to explore through these two books. Make sure you stop by the Library table and **CHECK THEM OUT!**

I apologize for not fulfilling my Librarian duties this month. I will be visiting the distant, exotic land of Idaho. Rosemary Ecker will be at the Library table to assist you as she did so well during my last absence.

See you in October.
Joyce the Librarian

Dorstenia and Ficus

Dorstenia and *Ficus* are both members of the *Moraceae* or Fig family. *Dorstenia* is a strictly tropical genus, mainly from rain forests. A few members have become succulent and are found in the dry lands of East Africa and Socotra. *Ficus* is one of the largest genera of all plants, with at least 800 species! Most people are familiar with the edible fig (*F. carica*), *Ficus benjamina* (a common houseplant) or the rubber plant (*F. elastica*). However, comparatively few would be classified as succulents. The succulent members of the genus mostly come from either Mexico or South Africa. Most *Ficus* are tropical, though some species reach temperate zones, such as the edible fig.

Dorstenia is the more tropical genus (in regards to the species of interest to us), and is fairly touchy about getting cold and wet. It does best when protected from temperatures below 50 degrees. All the species appreciate reliable watering and feeding when in active growth.

One of the rarest and best known species is *Dorstenia gigas* from Socotra. This species grows on the rocky slopes of the island, with *Dendrosicyos* and *Adenium*. It gets several feet tall and has shiny, oval shaped leaves that are amongst the most beautiful in the genus. Another commonly seen species is *Dorstenia foetida*. It spreads more horizontally and is small than *D. gigas*. The epithet "foetida" means fetid, or rotten smelling. If you bruise the plant or crush a leaf you will quickly see the name is appropriate! There are many rarely seen species from the jungles and dry lands of Tanzania. With luck they will be in cultivation in the next few years.



Dorstenia gigas



Ficus palmeri

The Mexican and South African *Ficus* are altogether much easier to grow. They are happy growing outdoors in pots, and can take cooler temperatures and heavy winter rain without rotting. By far, the two most common species are *Ficus petiolaris* and *Ficus palmeri*. They are very similar in growth habit, with *Ficus petiolaris* being distinguished by its red leaf veins.

The flowers of *Ficus* are extremely unusual. They are tiny and form on the inside of the "fruit". The only access to these flowers is through a microscopic hole that only very tiny species of wasps can enter. These wasps lay eggs in some flowers while at the same time transferring pollen between other flowers. The pollinated flowers form seeds while the other incubate wasp larvae that eventually turn into wasps that fly off to new fig flowers. Sure makes you hungry for a fig, doesn't it! *Dorstenia* flowers are fascinating in that they are something of an evolutionary precursor to the fig flower. They are minute, but the fruit like receptacle is still open, giving an almost alien appearance to the inflorescence.

Both make excellent pot plants, and can be displayed as bonsai. Both are easily grown in root-over-rock style, by growing a plant for a year in a deep, narrow pot, and then taking the resulting roots, pruned back to only a few major ones, and draping them over a rock. The whole assembly should then be buried for a second year, for fast growth. The rock can then be raised to display the roots.

Ficus can be easily propagated from either seed or cuttings. Seed is best planted in late spring, when the weather is guaranteed to be warm. Growth is generally fast, and repotting is necessary soon after germination. Cuttings can be taken any time when in active growth, and simply stuck in damp, loose potting soil. If a cutting is taken with several leaves, best results will be obtained if all the leaves except one or two of the smallest are removed. Rooting is generally rapid.



Ficus & Dorstenia inflorescences

Kyle Williams
Special Thanks to Tom Glavich

Astrophytum



Astrophytum ornatum

Astrophytum are often one of the first cacti that a novice cactus grower buys, yet a well grown, mature specimen will impress even the most experienced collector. There are a small number of species in the genus, but numerous cultivars of those species gives the serious collector new plants to add to their wish list all the time.

Astrophytum contains 5-6 species that are native to Northern to Central Mexico, with one species (*A. asterias*) extending into the Big Bend region of Southern Texas. Four species, *A. asterias*, *A. capricorne*, *A. myriostigma*, and *A. ornatum* are very common in cultivation and can often be seen for sale at local nurseries and big box stores. Another species, *A. coahuilense*, is not recognized as a species by everyone because the plant looks nearly identical to *A. myriostigma*. However, the flowers are different (*A. coahuilense* has a red throat while *A. myriostigma* does not) and crosses between the two are extremely difficult to make due to a high degree of sterility. Plants of the same species should cross easily which these do not.

The most unusual species of *Astrophytum* by far is *A. caput-medusae*. Described only a decade ago (2001) this species has numerous long, thin, tubercles that look like arms emanating from a central point. Another interpretation of its appearance is that it looks like a bunch of snakes. In fact, the Latin name "caput-medusae" means "Medusa head" which is a very apt description! This is so completely unlike the rest of the genus that the first taxonomist to name it called it *Digitostigma caput-medusae*, believing it to be a brand new genus. However, once you get past the bizarre shape of the plant you start to notice the arms are covered in soft white scales or hairs just like the rest of *Astrophytum*. When the plant blooms the flower is indistinguishable from other *Astrophytum*, and the seeds are identical to those of that genus.



Astrophytum caput-medusae

Astrophytum grows in very arid regions, with porous mineral soils. Their adaptation to this environment can lead to cultivation difficulties as they have a tendency to split open from sudden increases in soil moisture level. To avoid this, keep them in a soil that is very quick to drain, and which has little organic matter. A mixture of pumice and gravel or very coarse sand, with only a little potting soil is best for these plants. The roots are designed to pump up as much moisture as possible in as short a time as possible from infrequent rains. In a slow draining potting mix they will do this very effectively, and the body of the plant will swell, but the skin will not. Eventually the body pressure gets too great and the skin cracks. Despite this, most species will grow well under normal cactus culture. One notable exception is *A. asterias*. This species is extremely rot prone when overwatered or watered at the wrong time. It comes from a region with essentially no winter rainfall. Rain is concentrated in the summer months (just the opposite of us in California).



Astrophytum asterias

Growers in Japan and more recently in Thailand have developed some spectacular clones, cultivars and hybrids, particularly with *A. asterias* and *A. myriostigma*. The most popular cultivars of *A. asterias* are sold under the name of *A. 'Super Kabuto'* and *A. 'Miracle Kabuto'*. Some of these special clones with intricate patterns can sell for more than \$100, when first developed. After a few years of propagation, the price drops to levels that most can afford.

-Kyle Williams

Special Thanks to Tom Glavich

Photo Credits: Kyle Williams, Kaktus855, & Tom Glavich



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General Meeting

September 5

Program Title: Introduction to Plant Photography

By: John Martinez and Tim Harvey

September 2013 Sales and Events

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| September 21 | LACSS Garden Tours
10:00 AM—Artie and Kim's Home
12:00 PM—Steve and Phyllis' Home |
| September 29 | Long Beach Cactus Club Annual Plant Auction
Rancho Los Alamitos, 6400 Bixby Hill Road, Long Beach, CA
INFO: 310-922-6090 |
| November 2 & 3 | San Gabriel Cactus & Succulent Society Show & Sale
9:00 AM-5PM LA County Arboretum
301 N. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia, CA |