Madagascar: the Plants, People and Places

Our next meeting is on Monday, July 28th at 7pm. This month’s speaker is a perennial club favorite and needs no introduction — Woody Minnich. (If you don’t know who Woody is, click here to read a brief bio.)

Entitled “Madagascar: the Plants, People and Places,” Woody’s presentation will take us to one of the most spectacular places on earth where the plants, people and animals are as unusual as anywhere in the world. About the size of Texas, Madagascar is home to an estimated 6,400 species of plants and animals. You will see and hear about many of the succulent plants we find so special. Woody will also talk about Madagascar’s fascinating people, the Malagasy, with their intriguing heritage from the Malaysian, Arabian and African regions. Click here to read more about this presentation.

Woody will also provide the plants for our raffle table and bring a large selection of succulents for sale. Be sure to have your wallet with you!

Prior to the meeting, the club will take Woody to dinner at Mel’s Diner, 3000 J Street. If you’re free, why not join us? This would be a great opportunity to chat with Woody or pick his brains. He’s a walking encyclopedia!

— Gerhard Bock, Vice President & Program Chair
Cactus — Rebutia/Sulcorebutia

After the recent incorporation of the genera Aylostera, Mediolobivia, Rebutia, Sulcorebutia, and Weingartia into the genus Rebutia, there are now around 60 species of cactus native to the eastern side of the Andes Mountains in Bolivia and Northern Argentina. They are generally small globular cacti, 4 inches in diameter or generally less (10 cm). Many species form large clusters. The genus Rebutia is named after P. Rebut, French cactus dealer and expert from the 19th century. Rebutias bloom easily and have relatively large daytime flowers. Flowers are generally yellow to red, although some species have white ones. They come from the lower part of the stem. Optimal growing conditions vary. Here the old names are quite useful since they give some ideas of what to expect. All the species need a gritty, well drained, slightly acidic cactus soil. They also need strong light, although generally not too much direct sunlight. They need good watering in summer, but you should allow the soil mixture to dry out between watering. Many Mediolobivia grow large tap roots and are best suite to a deeper than normal pot and gritty cactus compost. The plants from the original genus Rebutia are fairly cold resistant and will take some frost. The Sulcorebutia on the other hand are generally less cold resistant. The Weingartia are less rot-prone than other species, and are the least frost resistant. Rebutia are propagated by seed or offsets. The seeds should be less than 12 months old.

Succulent — Haworthia/Gasteria

Haworthia is a large genus of succulents from South Africa. They are characterized by a small 2-lipped white flowers. They are all rosette shaped succulents, although some have rather grassy leaves. Some can add leaves until they are somewhat columnar, while other remain as flat rosettes. Some have translucent 'windows' at the end of their leaves, and some of the photosynthesis occurs inside the leaf that is filled with a translucent jelly. The nomenclature of Haworthia is continuously changing, fueled by how different clones of the same plant can look as a function of their growing conditions, and also fueled by the ease with which many species interbreed. Haworthia need light shade to shade to grow well. They like a regular watering in summer and they should be kept drier in winter. There are many variations in their watering needs depending if they are originally coming from a area with rains in summer or in winter. Incorrect watering often result in the plant losing its roots. The plant doesn't look very healthy and feels loose when touched. The plant should be removed from its soil. The roots should be cleaned, and then the plant needs to be set in a pot with new soil. Haworthias will not take frost, but most species will survive. Propagation for many species is done easily by separating offsets, for others that offset slowly or not at all, seeds are the way. Leaf cuttings are possible for some of the species (generally with thick leaves).

Gasteria contains about 20 species of South African succulents related to the Aloes. The flowers have a characteristic shape, and their shape is very important in the classification of Gasterias. The name Gasteria comes from the Latine for 'stomach', and refers to the shape of the flower. When trying to identify a Gasteria, it is important to notice that juvenile Gasterias have very different shapes and colors from the adult specimens.
SUNSHINE CORNER
The Society has received a thank you note from Jeanne Lemkuil, quote: “Dear Sacramento Cactus and Succulent Society, Thank you very much for your donation to the Sacramento Garden & Arts Center in memory of my mom, Pearl Lemkuil. And also many thanks for the plaque in her honor as well. It was very nice of you to do this and your efforts are greatly appreciated. Mom dearly loved her cactus and succulents and always enjoyed the club – the activities, presentations, show and the members. Thanks again, Jeanne Lemkuil.” Speaking for the entire club, Pearl is missed. Jeanne’s card with a copy of Pearl’s Memorial Service bulletin will be available at the next meeting.
— Marilynn Vilas, Sunshine Chair

COUNTRY STORE UPDATE
Wow, with the hot weather, our garden is growing like gangbusters. If you have bushels of produce and are thinking about making jams, relishes, canned tomatoes, etc., put up an extra jar or two for the Country Store Produce Table. Keep rooting those cuttings for the Cacti and Succulent and Houseplant Tables. Staying indoors and cleaning closets? Save your extraneous cacti/succulent themed items for the Silent Auction. All this happens at the September meeting!
— Marilynn Vilas, Chair

GREG STARR’S AGAVE PRESENTATION
On Monday (6/23), agave expert extraordinaire Greg Starr gave a presentation entitled “Agaves as Living Sculptures” at the Sacramento Cactus and Succulent Society (SCSS). Greg had traveled all the way from Tucson, AZ especially for this talk, and I was thrilled to see so many people show up—not just club members, but new faces as well. There’s no better validation for a speaker than a large turnout, and we certainly had that.

Before the start of Greg’s presentation there was ample time to admire—and buy!—the plants he had brought. It goes without saying that Greg brought a good selection of agaves, including some rarities like the much sought-after and stunningly beautiful Agave victoria-reginae ‘Snow Queen’ and an Agave petrophila, which I managed to appropriate. But he also brought a variety of cactus, including Astrophytum, Ferocactus and Echinocereus. Greg’s talk focused on a dozen select species (Agave bovicornuta, gentryi, montana, multifilifera, ovatifolia, parryi, schidigera, striata, stricta, victoria-reginae and zebra) to illustrate the range of sizes, shapes and textures that exist in the agave kingdom. In breathtaking photos he took us to Mexico—the epicenter of all things agave—and described some of his adventures photographing agaves in habitat. When Greg got to Agave zebra (he presented the species in alphabetical order) I knew that he was almost done, but I could easily have listened to him talk for another hour. In addition to being a veritable fount of knowledge, he also has a wicked sense of humor, and he had the audience in stitches more than once. I can’t recall the last time I enjoyed a plant-oriented presentation more. I hope we will have a chance to welcome Greg back to Sacramento soon for another exciting talk on agaves.
— Courtesy, Succulent and More (June 25, 2014), Gerhard Bock

Mini Show Winners — June, 2014

Cactus — Opuntia/Pereskia

1st Opuntia strobiliformis, Michelle Egan
2nd Pereskia aculeata ‘Tricolor,’ Marilynn Vilas
3rd Opuntia sp., George Avery

Succulent — Senecio/Kleinia

1st Senecio tropaeolifolius, Keith Taylor
2nd Senecio articulatus, Steve Goodman
2nd Kleinia semperviva, Marilynn Vilas
3rd Senecio angulus, Michelle Egan

Thought for the Month
“If you have a plant and a garden, you have everything you need.”
— Marcus Tullius Cicero

From the Editor’s Desk —

Publication Deadline — 10th of each month.
Please forward all submissions for consideration to my contact info (per your choice) found on back page.
I don’t know what Greg was demonstrating to SCSS member Oksun Avery in the photo above, but it must have involved a very large agave!  
(Courtesy, Gerhard Bock)