



# DRY TIMES

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No. 9

President: Rosalie Gorchoff  
(310) 822-1783

Editor: Nels Christianson  
(310) 396-1231

nchristianson@mednet.ucla.edu

**October meeting**  
**Tuesday, October 6, 2011**  
**7:30 pm**

**Burton W. Chace County Park**  
**13650 Mindanao Way, Marina del Rey**

## **PROGRAM**

***Succulents of Southern California and Surrounding Ecosystems***  
***by Todd Masilko***

## **PLANT OF THE MONTH**

***CACTUS:***  
Melocactus

***SUCCULENT:***  
Succulent crests

Todd Masilko will give an overview of the diversity of succulent plants found near our own backyards. The talk will include habitat and cultivation notes on cacti and succulents native to coastal Southern California and adjacent islands, winter rainfall influenced regions of Baja California, and parts of the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts.

Todd has a background in Industrial Design and has been an enthusiastic grower of cacti and succulents for nearly ten years. He is currently an instructor at the Pasadena Art Center College of Design and runs a Pasadena based product design consultancy. In addition to growing plants, he is a photography enthusiast. Over the last several years, he has traveled to observe and photograph plants in habitat in the Canary Islands, Yemen and Socotra, Namibia, Baja California and mainland Mexico, as well as California and the Southwestern United States. Todd recently joined the board of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America.

**\*\* If your last name begins with letter N-R, please bring goodies to munch on at the break. Thank you!**

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

November 5-6, San Gabriel Valley Cactus and Succulent Society Show and Sale, LA County Arboretum, 301 N. Baldwin Ave, Arcadia

December 2-4, Orange County Cactus and Succulent Winter Show and Sale, Sale Dec. 2, 3, 4 10am-4pm each day, show Saturday and Sunday 10 am- 4pm, Fuller Arboretum, 1900 Associated Rd., Fullerton, contact Vince Basta 714-267-4329

December 6, Sunset's Holiday party, put it on your calendar!

**SUNSET SUCCULENT SOCIETY CELEBRATES 50 YEARS IN 2011 !!**

**One Way to Become an Active Member** by Nels Christianson

I inherited my love of plants from my mother and began to collect cacti and succulents in Merced in the 1960s. In the winter I kept them in pots in a large sunroom. When I went to UC Santa Barbara I took a few plants with me and kept them both inside and outside my apartment. In 1976 I traveled to Brazil on a Rotary Foundation scholarship. During the 18 months I lived there I marveled at the myriad of tropical plants that were so new to me, including cacti, succulents and bromeliads. When I returned I moved to Santa Monica where our apartment had a small garden space and I began to grow succulents and other plants again. Moving into a home in Mar Vista in 1981, I started purchasing cacti at Cactus Ranchito from Ed and Betty Gay in Tarzana and at other locations. In 1984, I went to Sunset's show and sale for the first time and joined the club. However, I was too shy to attend a single meeting and did not become an active member until the next year. Meetings during those years were held at Reed Park in Santa Monica. I remember one night when Seymour Linden had to usher out a noisy intruder during the middle of a presentation. Also, in 1984, I decided I could learn to make pots for my plants and enrolled in my first ceramics class at The Clayhouse in Santa Monica. I soon added ceramics to my hobbies and learned how well this interest combined with succulents. I began to enter plants in my own pots as a novice and eventually moved up to the senior division. For a few years I sold my pots at the Sunset show. As time went on I became the Club's treasurer, serving for about ten years, and in 2000 I became editor of our own Dry Times. I have also been the designated driver on many Sunset field trips. Subsequently, I've had the privilege of participating in CSSA sponsored trips to Brazil and Oaxaca and have made three additional private succulent trips to Brazil. I also contributed a memoir and a poem about traveling in Brazil to the CSSA Journal in 2009. Being a Sunset and CSSA member and active participant has enriched my life. I appreciate the friendships (too many to mention) that have blossomed and the incredible knowledge I have gained about succulent plants at meetings, conventions, symposia and trips to plant habitats. As I look to the future of the Sunset Club and of my own collecting, I often remember the early encouragement of friends like Bob Carr, Bettie Wagner and Seymour Linden who are no longer among us and of still-active members like Judy Campbell, Laurel Woodley and Rosalie Gorchoff. Their contributions to me and many others are part of the legacy of our 50-year old club. We have much to be thankful for. Let's keep Sunset vibrant and growing by attending meetings, sharing knowledge and volunteering. In turn, I welcome the opportunity to share with any of you a bit about plants, pots, poetry and Brazil. Just ask!

**PLANT OF THE MONTH 2011**

**CACTUS**

**SUCCULENT**

October Melocactus

Succulent Crests

**September 2011 Plant of the Month Winners**

**Junior Cactus**

no winner

**Senior Cactus**

1 <sup>st</sup> Place	Darlene Weld	Copiapoa krainziana
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	Brian Gold	Copiapoa cinerea
	John Matthews	Copiapoa tenuissima monstrose
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	Brian Gold	Copiapoa tocopillana

**Junior Succulent**

1 <sup>st</sup> Place	Judy & Bill Campbell	Operculicaria decaryi.
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	no winner	

**Senior Succulent**

1 <sup>st</sup> Place	Nels Christianson	Bursera fagaroides
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	Brian Gold	Operculicaria decaryi
	Brian Gold	Commiphora humberti
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	Brian Gold	Operculicaria decaryi

The September POM judges were Barbara Hogan and Robert Trichter accompanied by Tim Harvey.

**CACTUS OF THE MONTH – MELOCACTUS**

*Melocacti* are among the first cacti found, probably discovered and brought back to Europe by Columbus. Species native to Venezuela were in cultivation in England (and well grown even by our standards) as early as 1569! They are native to the Central America, the Caribbean and coastal South America, the range stretching up to Puerto Rico, and west into tropical Peru.

*Melocacti* are immediately recognizable by the large cephalium that develops on mature plants. *Melocacti* grow as normal appearing, but flowerless, globular cacti until they reach maturity. This can take from 6 to 15 years in cultivation, with a greater range in habitat. Once they reach maturity, the body stops growing vigorously (it still grows slowly). Most of the plant energy goes into producing a cylindrical flowering and fruiting structure known as a cephalium. This is usually white, with short hairs of yellow, orange or red. As the years go by, the cephalium becomes more cylindrical, with the base becoming more colorful. The flowers are usually a red-purple, and the fruits are almost always a bright red, to attract birds. With age, the cephalium can grow to 18 inches or more in height, occasionally bifurcating or trifurcating.

The onset of a cephalium in a *Melocactus* terminates vegetative growth. The body no longer gets larger. They grow in rocky soil, often protected by nurse shrubs. The soil contains the decaying remains of shrubs, bromeliads, lichen, and other organic matter. The humidity is high, particularly during the growing season.

Melocacti will not tolerate cold, and particularly cold and wet. Melocacti tend to get hard brown scars if they get too cold, even while dry.

Tom Glavich November 2004



Melocactus levitestatus near Monjolos, Minas Gerais, Brazil  
Southernmost inland Melocactus population in the world  
photo by N. Christianson



Melocactus glaucescens, near Ouroândia, Bahia, Brazil  
photo by N. Christianson

**About DRY TIMES**

DRY TIMES is published monthly by the Sunset Succulent Society (SSS), whose officers are:

<b>President</b>	<b>Rosalie Gorchoff</b>	<b>(310) 822-1783</b>	<b>Vice Pres.</b>	<b>Brigitte Williams</b>	<b>(818) 352-4531</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Peggy Oberg</b>	<b>(310) 645-7946</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Brigitte Williams</b>	

**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Pres., Plant of the Month Laurel Woodley**

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