



DRY TIMES

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No. 9

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September meeting
Tuesday, September 1, 2015
7:30 pm

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

PROGRAM

Botanical Gardens of Australia Tour
(through a cactus and succulent collector's eyes)
Attila Kapitany

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Cactus
Copiapoa, Matucana

Succulent
Bursera, Commiphora, Operculicarya

This month Attila Kapitany returns to Sunset to give a program on the Botanical Gardens of Australia. Attila is immediate past president of the Cactus & Succulent Society of Australia with 10 years in this position, and is also currently editor of its journal. He has spoken before the CSSA convention as well.

He has thirty years of experience growing and marketing cacti and succulents. Attila is also a member of the Horticultural Media in Australia, writing regularly in magazines, journals and newspapers and promoting succulent plants.

Attila has co-written seven books with Rudolf Schulz about succulents, with an eighth book a solo effort on Australian native species. His newest publications are a series of eight booklets on xerophytic Australia plants.

Since 2007 Attila has dedicated much of his time and resources to promoting the lesser known Australian succulent plants, touring the Australian speaking circuit regularly and featuring on television and radio.



Attila Kapitany

If your last name begins with **G - L** please bring in goodies for the refreshment table.

2015 Plant of the Month

| <u>MONTH</u> | <u>CACTUS</u> | <u>SUCCULENT</u> |
|--------------|--|---|
| September | <i>Copiapoa, Matucana</i> | <i>Bursera, Operculicarya, Commiphora</i> |
| October | <i>Stenocactus, Ariocarpus</i> | <i>Echeveria, Dudleya</i> |
| November | <i>Cleistocactus, Pilosocereus, Oreocereus</i> | <i>Senecio, Othonna</i> |

Cactus of the Month: Copiapoa, Matucana



Copiapoa humilis v. tenuissima



Matucana pujupatii, photo by N. Christianson

Copiapoa is a unique genus of spectacular plants from to the North Coast of Chile. The genus has no close relatives, and is confined to a region of ecological change, becoming steadily drier for the past several hundred years. The southern limit of *Copiapoa* is where reliable winter rains can be found, while the Northern limit is the tropical region of reliable summer rains. *Copiapoa* live along the coast and through the river valleys cut through the coastal mountains. Some of the species live completely on dense fogs that appear regularly for months at a time.

The hills and valleys of Northern Chile are still not well explored from a botanical point of view, and new species are still being described and additional species will be found in the future. Given these extreme conditions, one would expect the cultivation of these plants in Southern California, with our frequent winter rains, fogs, and “June gloom” to be quite a challenge. Fortunately, this is not so, and *Copiapoa* are relatively easy to grow. They respond happily to the same potting mix, watering, and fertilization as most cacti, growing many times faster than they would in habitat. Some species can even be grown in the open, as long as the soil is well drained. They do tend to be slower growers than many.

Copiapoa are easily propagated from cuttings or division of clumps. Seed is available from the CSSA seed bank, and most cactus seed houses, and germinates quickly in the spring. They should be started in a moist potting soil, and moved to drier surroundings after germination.

Copiapoa were first collected in the 1840s, and described as *Echinocactus*, then the home of anything more or less globular. The genus *Copiapoa* was named by Britton and Rose in 1922 in their great work **The Cactaceae**. The name derives from Chilean province of Copiapó, home to many of the species. All of the *Copiapoa* are worth growing. This is a genus unparalleled in excellent species.

Tom Glavich, September 2003

Matucana is a genus of mostly globular plants endemic to Peru. The showy and large red, yellow or pink tubular flowers are usually zygomorphic. Joel Lodé in his new book “**Taxonomy of the Cactaceae**” recognizes nineteen species that have been separated from *Borzicactus* where they had been placed a few years ago. General collectors are most familiar with the more common species: *M. aurantiaca*, *M. haynei*, *M. madisoniorum*, *M. paucicostata* and *M. weberbaueri*. These plants prefer to be somewhat dry and warm in winter.

Succulent of the Month: *Bursera*, *Commiphora*, *Operculicarya*

This month’s succulents are a study in convergent evolution of pachycaul (swollen trunk) shrubs.



Bursera fagaroides, photo by T. Nomer



Bursera leptophloeos, near Ouro-lândia, Bahia, Brazil, photo by N. Christianson



Burseras are plants from the New World, while *Commiphora* are from the Old World. *Operculicarya* are from Madagascar.

All have similar cultivation requirements. They do best when watered in the summer in Southern California. They will all tolerate being left unprotected, outdoors during the winter rains, although some of the *Commiphora* (particularly ones coming from the tropics and Madagascar are very sensitive to freezing temperatures, and need protection when temperatures approach the mid-thirties. Any standard succulent mix will do as a potting medium. Growth is much more rapid when they are fed. They will really take off when put into the ground and quickly try to become trees! All of the plants do well when treated as bonsai, and pruned to expose the geometry and structure of the trunk and bark.

Bursera is a widespread genus, with a range that extends from California into South America. Many of the species are beautiful trees with red or brown peeling bark, rarely seen in cultivation. Most *Bursera* are aromatic, with wonderful woody fragrance from their leaves and bark. Species frequently seen are *Bursera fagaroides* (shown above), *Bursera microphylla*, with very small leaves, *Bursera multijuglans* (with red peeling bark), and *Bursera simplex*.

Commiphora are the African equivalent. *Commiphora* is also a widespread genus, stretching from South Africa through tropical Africa the Arabian Peninsula and Madagascar. Many of the species have peeling bark, although the color tends to run more towards the yellow and gray than red. Vigorous growth is also found in well-fed and watered plants. *Commiphora* are aromatic, with fragrances that manage to be both similar to and different from *Bursera*. *Commiphora pyracanthoides* is similar to some of the tall growing *Bursera*, and is easily grown from seed. Named species are beginning to appear on seed lists and nursery catalogs. The genus is understudied, and there are many species unknown or unidentified.

Operculicarya is a Madagascan species that is the classic succulent Bonsai. It has great wrinkled trunks, gnarly roots and naturally tiny leaves.
 Tom Glavich, November 2004

The commonly seen *O. decaryi* from southwest Madagascar was described in 1944. It can be successfully bonsaied. *O. hyphaenoides* is found in southwest Madagascar as well. *O. pachypus* was described by U. Eggli in 1995. It comes from a restricted area near Toliara. It is distinguished from *O. decaryi* by its zigzag pattern of branching. *O. borealis* grows in northeastern Madagascar.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sept. 5, Huntington Botanical Gardens Succulent Symposium, all day at the Huntington.
- Sept. 6, Long Beach Cactus Club annual Plant Auction, 12:00-5:00pm, Rancho Los Alamitos, 6400 Bixby Hill Rd., Long Beach, CA 90615, info: 310-922-6090.
- Oct. 24 & 25, Palomar Show and Sale, Sat. 9-5, Sun. 10-4, San Diego Botanic Gardens, 230 Quail Gardens Rd., Encinitas Info: hciservices@gmail.com 858-382-1797.



Matucana aureiflora



Matucana intertexta, photos by N. Christianson

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

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|---|
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