SACXS FACTS

NEWSLETTER FOR THE SAN ANTONIO CACTUS AND XEROPHYTE SOCIETY

NOVEMBER 2011 VOLUME 23, NUMBER 11

"THE SAN ANTONIO CACTUS AND XEROPHYTE SOCIETY WAS ORGANIZED IN 1977 TO PROMOTE THE STUDY, PROPAGATION, CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS OF CACTI AND OTHER SUCCULENT PLANTS."

President's Message

Tunas Anyone?

One of my favorite cacti is the Texas Cow's Tongue Prickly Pear, a.k.a. Opuntia engelmannii var. linguiformis. The weirdly elongated pads of this variety are so uniquely Texan. The large and luscious fruits or "tunas" of Cow's tongue prickly pear are an intense, nearly maroon, red. This deep color is caused by a group of plant pigments called Betalains. Betalains are found in the fruits of opuntias and other cacti, and are responsible for pigmentation of pink and red flowers such as those seen in Mammillaria species. Besides causing staining when fruits are handled, Betalains may have anti-cancer or anti-oxidant properties. When the Spanish explorer Cabeza de Vaca journeyed through the area now known as Texas, he encountered numerous Indian tribes who relied upon the prickly pear cactus for survival. In his writings, Cabeza de Vaca described how the natives would gorge themselves on the "Tunas". In fact, he and his men also subsisted on the fruits. C. de Vaca would've had a problem this year, since drought has really stunted the formation of flowers and fruit on all of the Opuntia species in our region. I've noticed very few tunas this year. By the way, if you happen to harvest any tunas, there are numerous prickly pear fruit recipes available on the internet.

If talk of cactus fruit makes you hungry, plan to attend our club Christmas party on December 4 at the San Pedro Event Center in San Antonio. We'll provide details at the November 16 meeting. This will be our last meeting for the year. Steven Lovekey, one of the founders of the Central Texas Cactus and Succulent Society, and a past president of TACSS, will be our featured speaker.

Have a wonderful and blessed Thanksgiving.

Ann Black,
SACXS President

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November 16, 2011 Meeting Information

Our speaker for the November meeting will be Steven Lovecky. Mr. Lovecky is one of the founders of the Central Texas Cactus and Succulent Society and a past president of the Texas Association of Cactus and Succulent Societies. He has been growing and propagating cacti and succulents for over 45 years. He is familiar with most of the desert habitats in the U.S. His presentation will illustrate the Cacti of Central Texas through the Trans Pecos region of Texas.

Get an Education!

The SACXS Library awaits your perusal.

Our collection of books on xerophytes is quite extensive. To check out a particular book, please contact our librarian, Paul Kibler, at elisakibler@satx.rr.com. Paul brings a collection of books to every meeting.

Dear SACXS Members:

Don't forget to wear your nametag to our meetings. Nametags can be ordered from Manny Zamora, our membership chairman, at each meeting.
If you haven't gotten the newsletter, please make sure that we have your correct email address and other contact information.
Please visit our website www.sacxs.org for important club info, the current newsletter,and past issues of SACXS FACTS.

Order Your Nametag Today

!! SAVE THE DATE !!

Our annual Christmas Party is scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 4 at 2pm. Party details and location will be provided at the November 16 meeting.

Espostoa melanostele

Caution, read at your own risk! You may be compelled to own one. This cactus hails from the valleys of western Peru from 2600 feet to 7800 feet in altitude:

However, most of the plants available in the trade are cultivars or selections that have reduced or delayed darkening of the hairs. Melanostele means dark tower. Here is my 4 1/2 foot plant (they get to 6 feet) that I have had for almost ten years:

Photograph by the Author

Now for the surprise. It has been a show stopper outside near my front door all this time! This plant is rot prone and cannot tolerate freezes below 28 degrees. Here's the trick. Plant in a rapidly draining medium. Place under the south eaves of the house to keep dry in winter. Cover well with a sheet for hard freezes, under which place two incandescent light bulbs away from the base. This plant as protected withstood brief 16 degrees and longer 19 degrees. For a more severe freeze you may want to carefully wheel it into the garage. My only regrets are the inside diameter of the pot is only 15 inches and the hairs have darkened a bit in recent years.

Allen Lindner

Claude's Report on the Sonora Trip

Hi everyone! Into every life some rain must fall. But in Sonora this weekend it was frost .Saturday morning it was about 28` and not a cloud to be seen. Me, Eula and our son arrived on Friday at about 12:30. We checked in and then went hunting . By 5:00 we had collected all the cactus we wanted and that left Saturday and Sunday morning to collect rocks & fossils and take wildlife photos. Thirty one people attended. After the Friday night dinner of Chicken cooked outside over a wood fire, beans, potatoes and other things I was too full to sleep. Saturday turned out to be a wonderful day at about 65 to 70`with a light breeze. We took a lot of pictures. Saturday night was steak cooked over a wood fire. It was great. Everyone wants to come back. Here are some photos of what happened. Check out what had it's eye on Eula.

November 16, 2011

Refreshment Assignments:

Harvey Kendall harkend@aol.com
Paul and Elisa Kibler elisakibler@satx.rr.com
Jack and Alice Knight aliceknightsa@aol.com
Allen Lindner alindner@grandecom.net
Yolanda Medina medinay49@gmail.com

Auction Plant Assignments:

Sam Rogers buckrogers000@yahoo.com
Barbara and Randy Schulze barbschul@aol.com
John Sells john-sells@earthlink.net
Barbara Smith-Townsend bsmithtownsend@gmail.com
Bjorn and Jane Steffensen steffensenb@uthscsa.edu

***IMPORTANT: All assignees will be contacted by e-mail.**

SACXS meets at the San Antonio Garden Center.

Halloween Leftover

Place: San Antonio Botanical Center. 3310 N. New Braunfels
Time: Meeting starts at 7:15 pm . Come early! Social Hour begins at 6:30 pm
It's free and open to the public.