



EPI NEWS

the monthly newsletter of

SAN DIEGO EPIPHYLLUM SOCIETY, INC.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1988

Vol. 12, no. 9

HISTORIC GARDENS FEATURED AT SEPTEMBER EPI MEETING

The September 14th SDES meeting will feature a program presented by the Horticultural Heritage Committee of the San Diego Historical Society. SDES Member Jeanette Dutton, who serves as Secretary to the Committee will show slides of San Diego's earliest garden showplaces.

See Old Town's Casa de Bandini when it really was a Casa with an incredible garden.

See Hortons' Victorian Garden in New Town, planted to show how many things you could grow in San Diego if you'd just come west and sign on to Horton's dream.

See Rosecroft Gardens in Point Loma, taken by the Gardens owner A.D. Robinson and his friend, the First Lady of S.D. Horticulture, Kate Sessions.

Be there on that fateful day when interested San Diegans met on the hills of Florida Canyon to decide with Samuel Parsons, designer of New York's Central Park, just what City Park (later called Balboa Park) should be like.

This is a program not to miss. Bring your friends and neighbors because this program is a treat for all.

CANDIDATES TO BE NAMED AT SEPTEMBER MEETING

The SDES Nominating Committee will make its report to membership at the Sept. 14th General Meeting.

SDES by-laws provide for additional nominations to be made from the floor at the September meeting only.

Make your voice heard. Take a role in guiding your Society.

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EPI CONFERENCE NEARS RESERVATION DEADLINE NEARS

Members and other Epi Lovers have one final chance to sign up for the Oct. 8th Epi Conference at the Wild Animal Park at the Sept 14th meeting. Reservations may be made by mail until October 1st.

See Sean Minogue for details.

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NEW SERIES BEGINS DON'T USE THE "H" WORD

For the next few issues Epi News will feature a series of articles that taken together might be confused for an Epi Culture Handbook. Please do not make this mistake. This is a newsletter, not an Epi Handbook.

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EPI NOTES AND NEWS.....

A work party will be held at the Wild Animal Park on Saturday Sept. 17th. All hands are needed to spruce the place up for the October Conference and to make cuttings for Beauty and the Beast. Sign up at the Sept. General Meeting.

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Thanks to those at the last WAP work party....
George French
Curt Hammel
Dick Chadwick
Pat Barrett

* * * * *

Thanks to George French and to Nate and Dorothy Ogdon for supplying Epi Blooms for the SDES display at WAPs Open House in July.

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Congratulations are due to SDES member Virginia Bennett. Virginia has just become a citizen of the United States.

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Rick Latimer notes:

The Huntington Botanical Gardens would like to build an archive of cactus and succulent society publications or newsletters in their library. It would be to the advantage of San Diego Epiphyllum Society to have a set of its' Epi News in the Huntington Archives. If any member has a set (original copies only and as complete as possible) that they would like to donate to the Huntington, please contact Rick Latimer, our Second Vice President.

HELPFUL HINTS GLEANED FROM ATTENDANCE AT CACTUS SOCIETY MEETING

No.1 To remove cactus (read: epiphyllum) spines from the skin. Coat afflicted area with "Elmer's Glue". When glue dries peel away the patch of glue. Cactus spines will miraculously disappear. It's so easy!

No. 2 After collecting ripe (opuntia) fruit (I recommend ice cube tongs, pruning shears and a bucket) spear each "apple" with a bamboo splint through the stem area. Rotate fruit over an open flame. The spines being cellulose will burn quickly. It will be completely safe to handle for peeling.

We are indebted to the guest speaker, David L. Epple. of Arizona Cactus and Succulent Research, Inc. of Bisbee, Arizona for these useful hints.

(And we are equally indebted to SDES Honorary Life Member Sam Markey for telling us about it. Ed.)

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REFRESHMENTS FOR SEPTEMBER:

Volunteers are...

Jeannie Brereton
Jeanette Dutton
Donna Couchman
Marge Schlapfer
Nate Ogdon

Refreshment Chair Rose Martinez is anxious to please. Let her know how you like her innovations.

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EPIPHYLLUM BASICS PART 1

Epis are beautiful in spring when their blooms rival any other found in the garden. Their unusual branches are striking in their shades of green and unusual shapes any time of the year. It is easy to see why epis are so popular.

In nature Epiphyllum species plants are found in the rain and cloud forests of Central and South America. Early botanists were thrilled by these plants and their exotic blooms, but widespread popularity was not achieved until hybridizers had done three things to "improve" on nature. The species all tended to be night bloomers opening only late in the evening, short lived with blooms usually a memory by 7:00 AM, and white (with notable exception). Hybridizers mixed the species plants with a wide variety of other cactus plants to gain the wide assortment of flowers and plant forms we enjoy today.

YES VIRGINIA, THEY ARE CACTUS

It is important to know that although they are a true cactus, epis are found not in arid deserts but in humidity rich jungles where they grow as epiphytes, plants that grow on other plants. Unlike a parasite, an epiphyte does not take its nourishment from its host. Instead an epiphyte will use its roots to anchor in place and absorb much of its nourishment through large openings (pores) on the fleshy branches.

Most epi growers grow epis not

as epiphytes but as terrestrial (ground growing) plants. However care is taken to insure that the special needs of the plants are met.

Today we find epis in more and more gardens. Epis are found in many nurseries as either small rooted plants, cuttings or full grown mature plants, ready to bloom come spring.

EPIPHYLLUM BASICS PART 2

An often asked question is "How do I start an epi collection?"

Several things are important for the first time epi buyer to know.

Epis are easy to care for, but their care is very different from other plants. Have ready a shady location that has easy access to water.

It is probably easier to start a collection of epis at or just after an epi flower show. The error most new epi lovers commit is buying every epi that they can get their hands on. During or just after a show you should have a pretty good idea of what you really want in an epi. Even if you don't come away with a long list of the various hybrids that you particularly want, you'll have a fresh image of what you like in an epi. Ask yourself, do I like the larger blooms?, a particular range of colors?, or certain combinations of colors? What ever your thing is in epis the best thing you can do is to identify it early on and

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then specialize. Starting from the first plants you buy.

Specializing needn't be restrictive or confining. You may decide to specialize in a variety of epi types. All you really want is to give your collection a focus or goal. If that goal is to have one of everything at least you will know how many miles of lath house you will need to start building (you won't have much time for nursery hopping though).

Starting an epi collection is easy once you know what kinds of plants you want. The next question is where to buy?

There is no doubt that the healthiest plants that are most likely correctly named come from established epi retailers. Individual collectors all have their own opinions about who has the healthiest and most correctly named plants among those retailers. Some retailers carry slightly different selections of hybrids and species plants. You may select a particular epi retailer because of the location or the other types of plants that they carry in addition to epis. Whatever, the selection of a favorite retailer is a personal choice. The collector is the winner because there are so many fine sources to select from.

Epis are also available from SDES and the other epi societies. Here some cautions are advised. First the health, age and identity of the plant material available are obviously not guaranteed as they might be if you were to

purchase your epis from an established retailer. Second, the selection usually has limited appeal for the established collector.

The big advantage of buying epis from a group like SDES is pricing and availability of cuttings.

EPIPHYLLUM BASICS PART 3

With epis a little Latin goes a long way for most collectors. That is to say that botanical nomenclature doesn't do much to help the beginner. But once you get started you'll find a basic knowledge of botanical names can be helpful.

Common plant names can cause trouble when they are used carelessly. For example "Night Blooming Cereus" is a name that you hear all the time. According to Haselton this plant is Epiphyllum oxypetalum. The Ortho Book on Cacti and Succulents says it's Hylocereus undatus. The controversy starts there but does not end.

Botanists use a binomial (two name) system to identify plants. The first name identifies the genus, the second name identifies the specific plants within that genus.

Epiphyllum are members of the Cactaceae family of plants. They belong to the subtribe Epiphyllanae, which includes many other genera of tree dwelling, rainforest cacti.

Most often epi growers use the name of a particular hybrid without any other

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sort of identification. When we hear someone talking about the hybrid "Padre" they are really talking about Epiphyllum x "padre" (X denotes a hybrid). By contrast the true Epiphyllum species (the non-hybridized plants as found in nature and collected by many epi lovers) are identified with the proper botanical name, such as Epiphyllum crenatum or E. strictum. Once we have established the genus we may speak only of "strictum" etc. In writing we use the initial of the genus when we are sure it will not confuse the reader.

Terms like "Orchid Cactus", "Christmas Cactus", "Water Lily" or even "Turf Grass" are helpful in conversation. They give us the basic idea. When we hear them shadowy images begin to form in our minds. But we require the exact information imparted by the botanical name to make that image both crisp and true.

To be sure, knowing the correct name is important, but remember, the plants don't care what you call them. With proper care they will grow just the same.

EPIPHYLLUM BASICS PART 4

Once you have your plant material (cutting, rooted plant, even seed) you will need to put it in something (a growing medium) inside something (a clay or plastic or wooden container).

Think back to the conditions in which epis are found to thrive in habitat. They live in an area where moisture is

plentiful in the air. Their roots are not buried in soil but rather clinging to the side of a tree, collecting a supply of dust and other organic debris.

But we are going to plant the thing in a soil-like mixture encouraging roots to grow as they would for any other plant. Roots that normally would be exposed to air are going to be soaked all the time unless we are careful in composing a mixture that will not retain large amounts of water, will allow air to reach the roots and will be fairly lightweight for ease in care.

Here are three views from two experts about soil mixes.

Dick Chadwick recipe #1
 1 part commercial potting soil
 1 part ground redwood bark
 20% perlite (sponge rock)
 5% charcoal
 1 tbsp. "super phosphate" (per gallon of mix)
 1tbs. "sulphate of potash"* per gallon of mix

Dick Chadwick recipe #2
 1 part commercial potting soil
 1 part ground redwood bark
 1 part planter mix (Loamex, etc.)
 10% perlite
 5% charcoal
 1 tbsp "super phosphate" (per gallon of mix)
 1 tbsp. "sulphate of potash"* (per gallon of mix)

* 20% Sulphate of Potash, if using 50% Sulphate of Potash use 1/2 tbsp.

See how Dick's recipe is

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different from the one that George French call his favorite.

George French's Recipe for Epi Mix

2 cu. ft. Nursery man Azalea mix
2 cu. ft. Super Soil
2 cu. ft. orchid fir bark
small 1/2 to 1/4 inch
6 cups bone meal
2 cups Super Phosphate
Pour mix on 6X6 plastic sheet and mix well. Store in plastic trash can.

Notice how both men use a coarse mixture (George with his orchid bark, Dick opting for sponge rock).

This insures that the water will flow quickly through the mixture. Not staying behind to drown the roots. The bark will probably hold some more water than the sponge rock but both ingredients are excellent at allowing the oxygen to filter back down to the roots, essential for their health.

So now that we have the soil, what type of pot should we use?

The answer depends as much on your personal taste as it does the specific application. As a good rule of thumb, plastic pots are preferable to clay, since clay pots dry out so quickly. A single epi cutting is fine started in a 4" pot, but several (like 3 or 4) are often placed in a single 1 gallon pot. In both cases the cuttings should stay where they are through at least their first bloom cycle.

MORE NEXT MONTH

HAIL, SNAIL AND SCALE
LOTS OF SPOTS AND ROTS
SLUGS AND BUGS

by Helen Barkdoll

The August Meeting was a veritable storehouse of education. The fantastic photography by Bob Barkdoll, Dick Chadwick and Charles Coons illustrated, close up, many of the common problems of epis and related plants. The two speaker format allowed flexibility in presentation and we were able to tap the deep well of information Dick Chadwick has at his command about chemicals and diseases. Helen Barkdoll explained the more organic approach such as the beer, alcohol, water sprays and snail stomps. Dick did have a garlic solution for some problems.

After the program Dick inspected people's stressed plants and helped map out a program for recovery. The display of labeled examples of epi problems was always overcrowded. In case you were unable to get close enough, the following should help.

The chemicals suggested are potent poisons. Always to be used with extreme care and caution. Try all non-chemical solutions first. Use protective clothing and a face mask. Use only the dosage for cacti, usually a reduced strength. Read the label and all directions carefully. SDES is not responsible for any damage caused by the use of garden chemicals or otherwise.

Most insecticides and

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fungicides are a topical treatment that give an outside layer of protection that can be washed off.

Systemic poisons enter the plant's system and the plant then contains the toxin making it poison to eat. Any residual chemical leaching from the pot can contaminate vegetable gardens and fruit orchards making the crops poisonous to eat and the soil ruined for crops for some time.

Read labels carefully and know what you are doing. In many cases it is easier, safer and ultimately more rewarding to start over with fresh cuttings, fresh soil and a clean pot.

SYMPTOMS OF PLANT DISEASE AND THE RECOMMENDED TREATMENT

BLACK SPOT #1
irregular black spots on branch margins
A fungus disease caused by improper cultural practices. Too much shade. Repot and give more light. Remove new undamaged growth and pot. Can treat with Benomyl.

BLACK SPOT #2
irregular patches throughout the branch
May be caused by over watering, too much nitrogen, lack of proper light or all of above. Also sometimes is hereditary. Check cultural procedures. May be fungus or bacteria. Prune out old branches.

BLACK ROT
A fungus living on the surface of the planter mix. Too coarse of a mix seems to encourage this rot. Cut off the

infection and repot in fresh mix. If making new cuttings from the infected branches, be sure to cut off all the rot. Treat with captan or a mix of captan and benomyl. Water plants between 4:00 AM and 8:00 AM only.

SLIMY COLLAR ROT, GREY STEM ROT

A fungus that thrives on humid conditions. Cut down on watering, always water before 8AM. Make sure air can circulate evenly around plant. Treat like black rot.

ROT/DECAY AROUND APPLE

Induced in branch by not removing apples. Remove all apples unless you want the seed. Fruiting wastes plant energy if seeds won't be used.

WEAK GROWTH

Etiolation, spindly root hairs.
Usually poor light, over crowded conditions and sometimes too much heat. Give better light. Don't remove the growth as it develops it will just make more weak growth. Wait until early March the remove all weak growth at once. The strength of the plant will go into blossoms or making good strong growth.

SUNKEN AREAS/MOTTLED EFFECT

May be caused by improper feeding or forcing. Give soil change and a more moderate diet.

SCABBINESS

In most cases it comes with age. Often affected "Discovery", "Reward" and other triangular branched epis.

SCARS

Can be caused by hail or wind abrasion. White irregular patches that are raised up. Unsightly only. Prune or ignore.

APHIDS

Small green, yellow, brown or black sucking insects that usually attack the developing bud or new growth. Can be washed off with a fine hard spray of water, swabbed off with a 50-50 isopropyl alcohol/water mix. Malathion is very effective.

ANTS

Frequently found in connection with aphids, mealybugs, scale etc. on whom they rely for food. Use ant stakes or pour boiling water on nest three days in a row. (Editors note, ants are best controlled chemically by use of a bait of granules which they will take back to their nest and share with all.)

FREEZE DAMAGE

transparent branches
If not too severe, branch can be left on the plant to give it strength and protection from additional frost. Cover shade house with plastic if you freeze regularly. Newspaper tents can be temporary shelters for occasional frosts. Smudge pots or plant removal for severe freezes.

SUNBURN/WATER BURN

When water pools on leaf, heat of sun is intensified and can actually cook the leaf. Shade plant or shake off water.

RUST

Orange patches on branches, bumpy and scaly. A form of sun burn. The plant has been chilled then hit with direct sun before it has warmed up. Move plant to more protected area.

RED LEAF #1

Normal on many plants like "Black Out", "Blacklight", "Miss Escondido". May also be caused by plants becoming chilled. In case of chill protect from drafts or cold weather. Much new growth is red but turns green with maturity.

RED LEAF #2

Root rot or dried roots. Branches become dull, discolored and wilted. Cut off all the old roots and repot, treat it like a new cutting. In most cases it would be better to remove all the branches and root them instead of trying to save the old root ball.

MEALY BUGS

Small pinkish insects covered with a cottony white fluff. Easy to remove with a small brush dipped in isopropyl alcohol. For severe infestations spray with malathion.

ROOT MEALY BUGS

Small white fuzzy insects that attack the roots. Drench plants with Malathion or cut off roots and repot.

CATERPILLARS

Small green inch worm or black worm with beige stripe. Eats holes in new growth. Look under branches and pick off. Sometimes best located by a pile of droppings.

SAVE \$\$\$\$ SALE

HURST NURSERY
12059 LAMBERT AVENUE
EL MONTE , CALIFORNIA

WITH FALL APPROACHING IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR TO SHARE MY HUGE ROOTED CUTTINGS ON A TWO OF THE SAME VARIETY FOR THE PRICE OF ONE. MANY OF THESE WILL BLOOM IN SPRING; MOST ARE READY TO GO IN PERMANENT POTS.

SORRY THE MINIATURES ARE EXCLUDED THIS YEAR.

SALE STARTS OCT.1ST- OCT. 16TH WEDNESDAY THROUGH SUNDAY.

WALK-IN TRADE ONLY. 115-8132

NURSERY CLOSED AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER.

CALL IF YOU SHOULD NEED ANY SUPPLIES. (818) 444-5296

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BANQUET INFORMATION:

Look for your invitation to the 1988

SDES Awards and Installation Banquet

in the Oct. Epi News. Tickets go on

sale at the Oct. meeting.

If you can't wait for details talk to
event Chair John Noble (619) 294-4355.

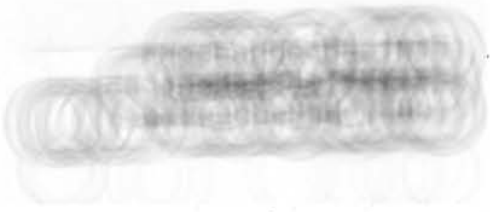
Sorry to hear...

SDES member Roy Barrett, husband of

SDES "Go-getter" Pat Barrett, is recovering

from a fall and serious head injury.

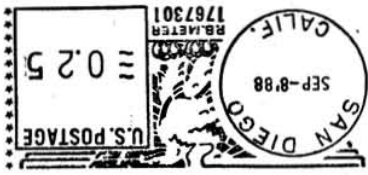
All of our best wishes go to Roy and to Pat.



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