



# Epi News



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DECEMBER 1989

SAN DIEGO EPIPHYLLUM SOCIETY

VOL 14, NO 12

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SCHLUMBERGERS HYBRID "BRISTOL QUEEN"  
PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB BARKDOLL

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SDES BANQUET NEWS ON PAGE 2

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S.D.E.S. IS REALLY  
S.D.E. & R.S.S.

At the November Meeting of SDES President Sean Minogue joked that we are also the San Diego Christmas Cactus Society. But there is real truth in that joke.

Our Society By-Laws direct us to promote the Epiphyllum's closely related species as well. During the holidays this mandate becomes a joy.

In this issue we proudly present two more articles by San Diego's foremost Schlumbergera hobbyist Helen Barkdoll.

Epi News is indebted to Helen and the others in our group who supply us with informative articles and other items of interest.

AND SPECIAL THANKS FOR THE PHOTOGRAPH ... to photographer Bob Barkdoll (and his assistant Helen) for sharing the photo with us and to all those whose extra efforts are necessary when a photo is included in the newsletter.

The photographic print was made from a slide and produced by Color Craft labs in San Diego.

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deadline for January

is December 20

AWARDS BANQUET  
LAST MINUTE NOTES

December 16th is the date for the annual SDES Awards and Installation Banquet. REMEMBER, this is not our usual meeting day. This event will be held on SATURDAY EVENING.

Join over 100 of your friends for a delicious sit down dinner in ROOM 101 of the Casa del Prado (our usual meeting room). Host Gus Schlapfer advises that the door on the Prado side of the room will serve as the entrance. Please use this side door and not our usual courtyard entryway. Nate and Dorothy Ogdon will greet you at the door.

President Sean Minogue will be serving wine and (non-alcoholic) egg nog starting at 6 p.m. Dinner will be served promptly at 7 and will be followed by awards and Christmas music by the two quartets from the Sweet Adelines.

The official installation of our 1990 officers will be performed by George Plaisted.

The society will present gift plants (4" rooted Epis from our Special Cutting Selections).

Members wishing to exchange rooted epis, should bring their decorated 4" pots before 7 p.m.

Our uniformed security guard will be on hand to escort one and all back to their cars after the event.

Gus and Marge Schlapfer will answer your last minute questions 460-3920. Ticket sales ended Dec. 1st.

#### THE PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

Each year the SDES President is required to make a report to membership. Many presidents choose ignore this task, but I am particularly proud of our group this year and I would like to reflect on YOUR accomplishments.

In hard facts it is true that we exhibited at more flower shows and raised more money in plant and cutting sales than ever before.

We added a day to our annual show and the extra effort paid off in both dollars and new Epi friends made. SDES and the other Epiphyllum interest groups are promoting Epis like never before with obvious results.

Our Epi Caravan reached new heights of success as both a garden and social event. Based on the continued success of this outing you can be sure that tickets for the 1990 Caravan will be sold out quickly.

Our membership grew and grew, we now are close to having 400 individual SDES members. However, repeatedly this year we were saddened by the death and illness of dear members.

Our monthly meetings were expanded to include a half-hour epi culture workshop. These were attended by over 250 people.

Our educational activities included in garden workshops and classes as well as articles written for the ESA Bulletin and our own Epi News.

Color photography returned to Epi News and for the first (and now the second) time each member received a full color photographic print.

SDES published a comprehensive guide to Epiphyllum Culture called EPI BASICS. Copies have been sold to epi growers locally and across the nation.

In June our society reached out to the residents of North County with a special Epi Program at the Quail Botanical Gardens.

Our society and our Executive Board finally said "Yes, we will commit ourselves to the ongoing program at the San Diego Wild Animal Park." Two major private collections were added to the beautiful exhibit. Even as we our friend Jim Gibbons moved on to other pursuits, new energies have revitalized the world's largest publicly displayed collection of Epis and made it better than ever. I will ask our 1990 Budget Committee to include this activity in the Budget proposal that they will present to you. I hope that you will agree the time has come to formally accept our continuing financial obligation to this outstanding project. Thanks are due to both the long time and newer volunteers.

Thanks to other volunteers our library reopened on a full schedule and many new titles were added to the collection. Best of all members actually checked out books and read them.

Our attention focused on our organizational policies and we changed, for the better, our

society by-laws.

Again and again membership voted to tap our substantial financial reserves for various, important projects. We used our funds for the purpose intended, programs which promoted Epiphyllum and educated the public and ourselves about the various aspects of their culture and care.

But we can be proudest of one very significant achievement. We have adopted a new attitude. A friendlier more positive approach to the tasks to which we are dedicated ( a "can do", "kinder, gentler" attitude).

This is not a list of my personal accomplishments. These are milestones we have passed together, because of the efforts of many individuals united for one purpose.

We will celebrate our society's 20th anniversary in the Fall of 1990. Our programs next year will be a little more special and our agenda a little more ambitious. We have plenty to do and plenty to enjoy.

I would like to thank the many friends who have offered their support to me personally. Many of you have been kind enough to advise me about proposals, ideas and projects for our group. More recently you have offered your prayers and kind wishes, and also your ideas and opinions as my family and I faced more private crises.

Happy Holidays to each and every one of you.

See you on the 16th.

Sean Minogue, President

#### ENJOY SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY, CAJUN FOOD AND EPIS

The Louisiana Cactus and Succulent Society and the Texas Association of Cactus and Succulent Societies invite you to attend the 2nd Southern Succulent Conference, March 2, 3 & 4 in New Orleans.

The three day conference will feature some outstanding speakers including Dr. Gerald Barad (President-elect of CSSA, on the topic of Stapeliads), Chuck Hanson (with the titillating lecture "Sex in the Greenhouse") and Norwood Miners (with a discussion of the genus Epiphyllum) as well as others.

Special hotel and air fare rates have been arranged (like 40% off regular fares on Delta Airlines and \$45 single \$55 double per night at the hosting Holiday Inn). Plenty of time has been allotted for sightseeing.

In addition to a garden tour another lure might be the fact that the event takes place the weekend after Mardi Gras. So you can go wild in the streets of New Orleans and then get some good plant knowledge on one journey. Not bad.

Price for the conference itself is \$60.00 per person. Details may be had by contacting

Beverly Siemssen  
106 Aster Lane  
Waggaman, LA 70094

Sean Minogue will have a very limited number of fliers about the conference available at the January General Meeting. Deadline for reservations is February 1st 1990.

BRISTOL QUEEN  
by Helen Barkdoll

One of the newest Christmas Cactus hybrids is *Schlumbergera x reginae* cv. "Bristol Queen", a strikingly beautiful flower with a white tube and petals edged in a deep fuchsia/purple-wine color. The flowers bloom early in the season, often in October in San Diego, and sometimes they bloom again in February. The flower's shape and color clearly show its inheritance from its famous parent *S. orssichiana*. This recent discovery of a new species of *Schlumbergera* was named after the Countess Orssich after she had noticed it growing amongst a field collection of bromeliads and orchids. She later traced back the route of the expedition in Brazil, and hunting along the jungle paths, she finally found it in habitat.

Hybridizers all over the world were excited when it was found that the new species had flowers almost twice as long and twice as wide and had a shorter tube than those in cultivation. It bloomed three times a year and had an undetermined photoperiod, a very good quality useful for further hybridizing. Immediately there was a scramble to obtain a section for growing to be used as a parent plant. One single two inch joint, if it were available, often cost \$10.00 or more. Having just been found in the wild, domestic growing conditions had to be established. *S. orssichiana* proved to be very difficult for some to grow, with segments turning purple and finally the whole plant shattering into

individual segments. Others found it to be a strong hardy plant, taking near freezing temperatures and complete shade. These horticulturists managed to cross it and obtain seed.

Bristol Queen is one of the finest new cultivars resulting from this cross. It incorporates all the best qualities of its parents. The plant is a strong upright grower with dark glossy green segments. The flower bud resembles those of *S. orssichiana*, but the petals open wider and are more upright. Bristol Queen has a firmer textured flower that is crisp and sparkling. The striking color combination is one of pure white and intense ruby wine. Of all of the cultivars developed so far, Bristol Queen has been one of those chosen to be widely propagated because of its outstanding features; i.e. fantastic flowers on top of a strong vigorous plant which is easy to grow. Bristol Queen may be difficult to find in the general succulent plant section of your local nursery, but it is available in the cactus and succulent specialty gardens.

*Schlumbergera* is a genus of plants that grow well as companion plants among our epis. Since they flower during this season of the year when few epis are in bloom, they are a colorful addition to a mostly green epi house. Although the flowers are smaller than epis they make up for it in numbers and sparkling colors during the winter season. Christmas Cactus or *Zygocactus* (*Schlumbergeras*) should be in every collection of colorful epiphytes.

PHOTOPERIOD  
by Helen Barkdoll

People have asked me, "Why doesn't my Christmas Cactus bloom at Christmas time? I bought it a year ago and I had a beautiful display of 'White Christmas' on my holiday table. Now it has already bloomed and it is barely Thanksgiving. What did I do wrong?"

You didn't do anything wrong. It is just that all factors were not right for such a precise blooming time.

Schlumbergera, the botanical name for these plants, are basically if two types. Those plants that are commonly called Zygocactus, are the early blooming plants. They have been developed and hybridized with *S. truncata* and have segments that have teeth along the edge and across the top of the segment. Often called Thanksgiving Cactus, they come in many colors. The reds usually bloom first, followed by the purples. Later the oranges and yellows follow along with a few magenta colored blossoms.

The original Christmas Cactus was *S. bridgesii* (now called *S. buckleyii*), a plant that blooms closer to the New Year. This was "Grandmother's Christmas Cactus". It has scalloped segments that are slightly wavy and the flower is a bright magenta-pink. Since these plants flower after the holiday season they are seldom found in the neighborhood nurseries, most growers get starter segments from their friends. Harry Johnson's "Paramount" being one of the best cultivars available.

The two *Schlumbergera* plants with different flowering times have been hybridized, creating plants with a succession of flowering times. Thus, by careful selection, you can have flowers for more than six months out of the year.

But why do Christmas Cactus bloom during Yuletide? For the same reason a Poinsettia blooms at this time. They are both short day plants. Flower initiation begins when the day starts to get shorter at the autumnal equinox. This triggers the plant to quit growing vegetatively and to start flowering. It takes several weeks for even the slightest little bump to appear that might even suggest a flower bud. Is it a new segment or a bud? Another couple of weeks and the shape will tell. Flower buds are short, round and fat, new segments are flat and wavy.

Soon the bud will enlarge. Most will begin to show color and become pointed. Now this is where the nurseryman comes in. In his thermostatically controlled glass house, he can either hasten or delay the development of his flowers by adjusting the temperatures and/or lighting intensities. He can decide when he wants to put them on the market. You can purchase one of these plants as a blooming centerpiece for your holiday table one year, but the next year it may not bloom at the same time. You had it outside in your yard. You fertilized it as you did your epis. Watered it the same too, so it will bloom at its own natural time, unforced by commercial growers. Some warm years, like this year, the plants will bloom

earlier. The flowers will be small and the yellow colors more golden. Cooler weather will add a pink tinge to the yellows and the whites, but the flowers will be bigger, as long as it does not get too cold.

People who grow these plants have to make sure that they get the correct amount of light to initiate flowering. Here in San Diego, we can leave them out all year and the plant will flower at their own time during the holiday season. Plants grown indoors need to be placed in a room that does not have

artificial lights on during the evening or night. *Schlumbergera* need a long night period (short day).

If you want to hasten the flowering, put the plant in a warm bright location. Conversely, if you want to delay the flowering, keep it in a cool shady spot. Certain nurserymen are starting to call this genus of plants "Holiday Cacti", a more inclusive name, covering a longer selling period. However, my Jewish friend calls it her "Hanukkah Cactus".



## BLOOMING CHRISTMAS CACTUS

LAST YEAR'S SALE OF BLOOMING SIZED CHRISTMAS CACTUS WAS SUCH A SPECTACULAR SUCCESS THAT WE'VE DECIDED TO MAKE THE OFFER AGAIN. THESE HUGE PLANTS RANGE FROM 10" DIAMETER, ALL THE WAY UP TO 18" IN DIAMETER. BUD COUNT SHOULD RANGE FROM 20 BUDS ALL THE WAY UP TO 100 BUDS.

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GENERAL MEETINGS ARE HELD THE  
SECOND WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH  
AT 7:30 P.M. IN ROOM 101 OF THE  
CASA DEL PRADO IN BALBOA PARK.  
PRE-MEETING WORKSHOPS ARE HELD  
REGULARLY BEFORE THE GENERAL  
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104. ALL ARE WELCOME.

MEETINGS OF THE SD ES EXECUTIVE  
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