



Succulent Morsels

News of the Chinle Cactus & Succulent Society
August 2013 Vol. 5, No. 8

To promote knowledge, enjoyment, cultivation, and conservation of cacti and other succulent plants among its members, other individuals and organizations throughout West-Central Colorado

AUGUST ACTIVITY - VACATION!!!

AUGUST REGULAR MEETING OF CC&SS POSTPONED TO SEPTEMBER

Vacations, out-of-town activities, and maybe a little bit of Autumn dog-days has prompted the Chinle Board to cancel the August meeting. Actually, the meeting has been moved to September, to include an interesting program by Ann Barnett, Meadowlark Nurseries, on combination gardening. We will still have our plant exchange/sale/show & tell activity---and for those of you were were worried--we will still have our ice cream social!!! The September meeting will be on September 12th, 6:30 pm, at the Sagebrush Room, Mesa County Fairgrounds, as usual. So be sure to put the September meeting on your calendar!

EUPHORBIAS: HANDLE WITH CARE

This huge group of shrubs and perennials includes about 1,200 slow- to fast-growing succulent species. They range from small cactus-like plants to bushy or treelike ones. They are members of the milkweed family, also known as spurge. These plants originate in tropical and subtropical regions and thus are typically grown indoors. In moderate weather, they can tolerate being out of doors.

Most everyone has seen these plants as they are quite common, particularly the tall-growing ones that often outgrow their pots---and the rooms they are in! Keeping the tall plants under control can be done by chopping off sections, usually at a stem junction. The "amputations" will root quite nicely after a callousing period.

However, this is where one must "handle with care." Being in the milkweed family, all Euphorbiae have a milky sap that freely flows when the plant is cut, or even when it is brushed up against or bumped. This sap is toxic, irritates the skin, and if it gets into one's eyes, it is considered an ocular emergency because it can cause blindness. If you do come in contact with the sap, wash the area with copious amounts of water as soon as possible.

To stop the flow of sap from a "bleeding plant", immerse it in warm water or if too large, spray the area with warm water. To protect yourself, wear gloves and protective eyewear.



Euphorbia trigona

As you can see by the following photos, Euphorbias are unique and quite beautiful.

However, because of the toxicity of the sap, the plants should be located in a place that children or pets cannot touch them.

The July 2013 issue of "Scientific American" featured an article titled "Prickly Painkiller" which discussed the research that the National Institutes of Health on a compound called resiniferatoxin for relief from intractable pain. This naturally occurring chemical is found in *Euphorbia resinifera*, commonly found in Morocco, and in *Euphorbia poissonii* found in northern Nigeria. It is an ultra potent analog of capsaicin, the active ingredient in chili pepper.

The toxin works by destroying the neurons specifically responsible for inflammatory pain. According to David Maine, director of the Center for Interventional Pain Medicine at mercy Medical Center in Baltimore, there are other ways to kill pain fibers, but they can cause the pain sometimes to come "roaring back". "When you can streamline where a drug acts and avoid consequences outside of that, you potentially have winner," Maine states.



Example of oozing sap from cut stem of an *Euphorbia tiricalli* - "Pencil Tree".



Euphorbia lactea cristata - "Elkhorn" or "Candelabra Plant"



Slightly etioliated *Euphorbia* (*phillipsiae* or *susannae*)



Euphorbia trigona f. *rubra*



Euphorbia milii - "Crown of Thorns"

So like many other cases, there is good to be found even in a toxic material.

CRUMPS TOUR VERY "COOL"!

"It's like being a kid in a candy store" said one Chinle member when visiting Mike & Rita Crumps' greenhouses in Buena Vista over the weekend of July 13th. Fifteen Chinle members and two members of the Walking Stick Chapter (Don and Donnie Burnett) enjoyed wandering through the myriad flats of rooting stock and plants being rooted. Most members selected and purchased plants. Other members shopped and confirmed plant names of plants they already had.



Mike & Rita Crump, our hosts



Above photos show Chinle members exploring the myriads of cacti & succulents in the Crumps Greenhouse



Taking a break for lunch in Mike and Rita's cool and shady backyard.



Maryann Benoit's red shirt competes with the brilliant colors of the grafted chimera cacti!



Three sisters, Deb Jensen, Kathy Murdock & Shari Skeie enjoyed the tour!!!



Glenn Mallory gets the "perfect" shot!



On the left, Donnie Barnett & Kenton Seth compare landscaping notes while sisters capture more photos.



(LtoR) Kenton Seth, Bill&Janet Hassell, Glenn&Deb Mallory, Julie Bursi, Loren&Maryann Benoit and Dennis Seth, Kenton's dad.



Chinle president, Bill Hassell, trying not to be tempted by all the unique plants!

That evening, eight of us went to a nice Mexican restaurant in Buena Vista, then visited an old cemetery where the grounds were literally carpeted with *Echinocereus viridiflorus* and *Pedios*. All of us appreciated the cool temperatures and a break from the Grand Junction's heat.

Many thanks to Maryann and Loren Benoit for coordinating the tour, dinner arrangements, and other activities. Everyone felt that the tour was a great success and were pleased to have participated.



One of the lovely blooming specimens at Crumps.

THE CONSERVATION CORNER

BETLES MUNCH INTO BATTLE—BUT WHO WINS?



A few days ago, my husband, Bill, asked me to scratch an itchy place on his back. Following his request, I felt a hard lump in the area of the itch, scratched it, and felt it give way. Looking under his shirt, I discovered that a “tamarisk beetle” was the culprit causing the itch!!! And we found two more little critters on his neck and shoulder!

This discovery set me on a search for information about this little “muncher”. I had noticed that about half the tamarisk along our creek bed had been killed over the past year or so, but in the spring some new growth had taken place. Apparently, the beetles had discovered the new growth as well and had arrived on the scene to lay the eggs that produce the caterpillars that would defoliate at least some of the remaining trees.

An excellent article by Melissa L. Lamberton titled “Thirst for Water” (found on the Tamarisk Coalition Website, www.tamariskcoalition.org), discusses the tamarisk, aka salt cedar, and the history of the “war” against salt cedar which began in the 1940’s to kill trees for “water salvage”. For a variety of reasons, by the 1960’s few people questioned the perceived worthlessness of the salt cedar tree due to its strong taproot that greedily siphoned up ground water. Edward Abbey, champion of the desert wilderness, wrote in “The Journey Home,” that non-native Tamarisk is typical of other exotics, spreading and driving out native species such as the willow, the cottonwood, the hackberry and the box elder.



However, research studies began to show that the changing conditions of rivers over the past 200 years, groundwater pumping, overgrazing and the construction of dams altered the natural pulse of a river’s seasonal cycle, which creates an environment that encourages the growth of the salt cedar. However, the push to remove the tamarisk continued. First and foremost, environmentalists felt the salt cedar was didn’t belong here. It provides poor habitat for most wildlife (other than the willow flycatcher) and kindles quickly in fires. The tree’s extensive root system channelizes streams that increase the danger of floods. Ultimately, environmentalists argued, a tree from Asia had no place in the fragile Southwest ecosystem.

A non-profit organization called The Tamarisk Coalition led the way in Colorado to restore native ecosystems along Colorado’s streams. One of the Coalitions founders, Tim Carlson, stated that “Our goal is riparian health, not killing tamarisk.” Consequently, he insisted that every eradication effort have a carefully designed revegetation plan. Eradication efforts by the Coalition volunteers have included chainsawing, bulldozing, and chemically spraying tamarisk.



Beetle larvae munching on tamarisk lunch!

And now, enters the tamarisk beetle, *Diorhabda elongata*, which was identified by Culver “Jack” DeLoach, an entomologist with the USDA. While the beetle was effective in killing the trees, it was so successful, it was feared it would eliminate the nesting areas of the southwestern willow flycatcher, which had been deemed endangered.

Additional study showed that the beetle, because of its 14.5 hrs of daylight need to reproduce, would be confined to the region north of the 38th parallel (southern Colorado and Utah) which skirted the willow flycatcher’s habitat in Arizona entirely.

Unfortunately, in 2004, a county weed supervisor introduced a slightly different strain of beetle, from Kazakhstan, not China, into southwestern Utah near Moab. These beetles' daylight need to reproduce was shorter than the China beetles, and the invisible barrier of protection for the willow flycatcher habitat disappeared. By 2006 the beetles had entered Arizona and began munching on trees that cradled willow flycatcher nests. The beetle's effectiveness had now become a double-edged sword. The *Diorahadba* beetle is no silver bullet. While it might limit the spread of salt cedar, it can not eliminate it entirely. It's unintended consequences has become a liability.

Our human involvement and ever-increasing need for water has also produced unintended consequences. DeLoach states "Killing tamarisk alone doesn't return health to a river. Humans would have to follow in the beetle's wake to remove stands of dead trees and replanting cottonwood saplings and willow sprigs." In time, the beetle and the tamarisk will reach an equilibrium even as the tamarisk spreads northward and upward.

Author Lamberto concludes that "A healthy ecosystem, given the chance, will heal itself from damaging invasions, or accept new species as belonging within its web of interactions. And, to preserve that health, she continues, "we need to recognize our own voracity (for water) and relinquish some from the demands of human consumption for the sake of the environment that sustains us."

So if a tamarisk beetle gets down inside your shirt (as it did with my husband, Bill), it's probably just a sign that Mr. Beetle's GPS gave him incorrect directions, and needs to "recalculate" to a nearby tamarisk tree!

JULY GARDEN PARTIES A WEEDY CHALLENGE



A good number of Chinle gardeners attended the July 6th Garden Party at the WCBG--which was a good thing as the weeds had really multiplied.

Gardeners included Maryann & Loren Benoit, Tom Burrows, Janet & Bill Hassell, Kate Kossa, Kay Klausmeier and Deb & Glenn Mallory.

July 17th Garden Party



The weeds were not as bad at the CSU Garden on July 17th, and the recent rains made weed pulling and plant relocations very easy. Gardeners at this session were Maryann & Loren Benoit, Tom Burrows and Janet & Bill Hassell. And we were visited by several swallowtail butterflies and a hummingbird or two during the party.

PLANT OF THE MONTH: *SEMPERVIVUM ARACHNOIDEUM*



Photo from "Hardy Succulents"
by Gwen Kelaidis

This charming little succulent is very often taken for granted due to its commonality and ease of cultivation. Nevertheless, these "Hens & Chicks" can be an important, versatile and colorful addition to our outdoor gardens.

According to Gwen Kelaidis in her book, "Hardy Succulents", the *Sempervivum arachnoideum* is a distinctive species, with long hairs that join the leaf tips, forming a perfect white spider web in each rosette (hence the species name *arachnoideum*). She notes that somehow the plant produces the spiderweb-like hairs that stretch as the rosettes grow wider.

These sempervivums originate from the southern slopes of the Alps, which get a considerable amount of moisture but they require excellent drainage. Gwen cautions, may not do very well in the extreme dry conditions in hot climates.

The white color of the plants is a nice addition to a succulent garden, and combining with other sempervivums and/or sedums can produce an attractive container gardens. Both plants are good partners as they have approximately the same growing requirements: good sandy or clay loam, a soil just heavy enough to hold them in place (don't use a soilless, peat-based mix) and a moderate supply of water.

In rock gardens, sempervivums can fill narrow spots between rocks, keeping the soil in place, and providing a background for larger plants and complementing other small plants. They can even be used at the base of taller plants to serve as a living mulch.

This is the time of the year when the sempervivum bloom, and our gardens are producing numerous bloom stalks on the many sempervivum plants there. Here's an example from the CSU garden, 7/17/13.



CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS AUGUST 2013 - DECEMBER 2013

- AUG 3 GARDEN PARTY - WCBG - Saturday - 8 am
- AUG 5 Chinle C&SS Board Meeting - 10am - CANCELLED
2666 Summer Hill Ct., GJ
- AUG 8 Regular Meeting of the Chinle C&SS - CANCELLED
- AUG 14 GARDEN PARTY - CSU EXTENSION - Wednesday, 8 am
- SEPT 3 Chinle C&SS Board Meeting - 10 am
2666 Summer Hill Ct., GJ
- SEPT 7 GARDEN PARTY - WCBG - Saturday - 8 am
- SEPT 12 Regular Meeting of the Chinle C&SS
Program: Anne Barrett, Meadowlark Gardens
"Companion Gardening"
Plant Swap/Sale, Ice Cream Social
6:30 pm - Sagebrush Room - Mesa County Fairgrounds
- SEPT 18 GARDEN PARTY - CSU EXTENSION - Wednesday, 8 am
- OCT 5 GARDEN PARTY - WCBG - Saturday, 8 am
- OCT 7 Chinle C&SS Board Meeting - 10 am
2666 Summer Hill Ct., GJ
- OCT 10 Regular Meeting of the Chinle C&SS
Program: Randy & Marcia Tatroe
"How Cacti & Succulents are used in Commercial Plantings, and
Southern California botanic gardens and missions."
6:30 pm - Sagebrush Room - Mesa County Fairgrounds
- OCT 16 GARDEN PARTY - CSU EXTENSION - Wednesday, 8 am
- OCT 26 LAST GARDEN PARTY FOR 2013- WCBG - Saturday, 8 am
- NOV 4 Chinle C&SS Board Meeting - 10 am
2666 Summer Hill Ct., GJ
- NOV 7 Regular Meeting of the Chinle C&SS
Program: Members to discuss favorite species; demonstrations on
propagating by seed; photographing cacti & succulents; & other
topics
6:30 pm - Sagebrush Room - Mesa County Fairgrounds
- DEC 2 Chinle C&SS Board Meeting - 10 am
2666 Summer Hill Ct., GJ
- DEC 12 CHINLE ANNUAL DINNER MEETING
The Iron at Tiara Rada
5:30 pm - Registration, Social Hour, Silent Auction Bidding
6:30 pm - Dinner
7:30 pm - Business Meeting, Election of 2014 Officers
8:30 pm - Door Prizes, Gift Plants & Silent Auction Winners
9:30 pm - Adjourn

2013 Chinle Cactus and Succulent Society Board

President: Bill Hassell
970-263-0910

Secretary/Web Master: Tom Burrows
970-462-6767

Treasurer: Loren Benoit
970-254-7471

Vice President: Lynn Dunham
970-243-1822

Member at Large: Judy McCart
970-623-9279

Newsletter Ed: Janet Hassell
970-263-0910

Garden Committee: Maryann Benoit
970-254-7471

**Chinle Cactus and Succulent Society usually meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm.
Meetings are held in the Sagebrush Room at the Grand Junction Fair Grounds. Guests are always welcome.
Chinle Mailing Address: Chinle Cactus & Succulent Society
PO Box 20000
Grand Junction, CO 81502**

**CHINLE C&SS WEBSITE: www.chinlecactusclub.org
CSU WEBSITE LINK: <http://www.coopext.colostate.edu/TRA/PLANTS/chinlecactus.shtml>**