



Desert Breeze

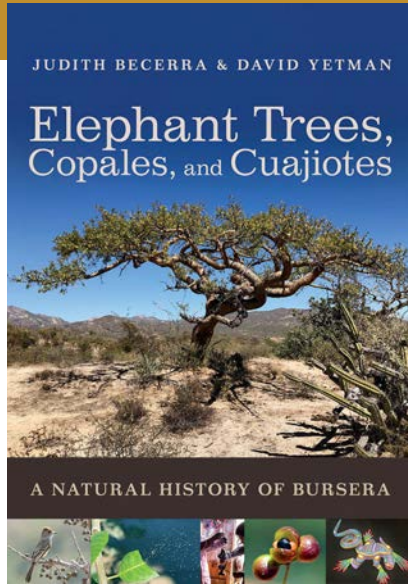
Newsletter of the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society

February 2024

Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society • In Person and Zoom Program Presentation • Thursday, February 1, 2024, at 7:00pm
Sky Islands Public High School, 6000 East 14th Street, Tucson, Arizona 85711

Elephant Trees, Copales, and Cuajotes

Presented by Judith Becerra and David Yetman



Judith Becerra is an associate professor at Biosphere 2, University of Arizona. A Fulbright, Beckman, and National Geographic award winner, Becerra's research interests include the evolution and ecology of the genus *Bursera* and its interaction with herbivores, with special focus on the chemical adaptation of plants and the behavioral counteradaptations of insects. She has published more than thirty articles on the phylogeny, ecology, chemistry, and ethnobotany of *Bursera* in scientific journals that include *Science* and the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*. She is currently studying the chemical and genomic links between stinkbugs and Alzheimer's disease.

David Yetman a distinguished outreach faculty and research social scientist at the Southwest Center of the University of Arizona, where he has worked since 1992. His research specialties include the peoples and ecology of northwest Mexico and the southwestern United States. Yetman has a PhD in philosophy and is author of numerous books and articles, including *Sonora: An Intimate Geography*, *Natural Landmarks of Arizona*, and *The Saguaro Cactus: A Natural History*. Yetman is the former host of the PBS series *The Desert Speaks* and current host and co-producer of the PBS travel/adventure series, *In the Americas* with David Yetman.

We are always thinking of your safety and if you are not feeling well we ask that you join us on the internet Zoom presentation. If you're doing well and would like to attend, you are welcome to come and join us for this special in person presentation (masks will be encouraged but not required). This meeting will also be a Zoom program and will be an important educational and informational event you must see. Also, if using Zoom, be sure

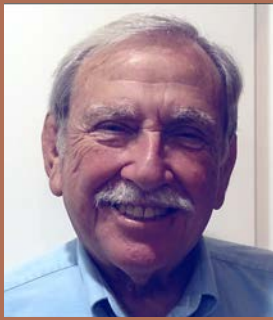
to log in to win a \$25.00 gift certificate from TCSS or choose a copy of the new 3rd edition of the *Field Guide to Cacti & Other Succulents of Arizona*. Excellent plant give aways will take place at the in person meeting but that portion of the program, because of the recording, will not appear on Zoom. When leaving the live in person meeting, please enjoy great refreshments provided by our member volunteers and also, everyone can get a special free plant offered to you by the TCSS.



Sky Islands Public High School • 6000 E. 14th St.

TCSS Meeting Refreshments

Please share and socialize with your fellow members at our monthly meetings by bringing some type of finger food for the refreshment table. For the **February MEETING** we are asking members whose last names begin with **"A" through "J"** to bring something that would serve 10-12 people.



President's Message

I want to thank all the members that helped make the January Silent Auction and sale a great success. It was a wonderful donated collection.

Everyone who participated in the rescue program in 2023 should have received their cactus and Amphi bucks. This is just another

way of saying "Thank You" for your support of our rescue program.

If you haven't renewed your membership a second notice is being sent to you. Remember, our insurance only covers current members. Over 1,250 members have renewed.

The recent rains have surely helped our plants especially at Pima Prickly Park. Please stop by and enjoy this collection of cacti and succulents. Winter is not over so take precautions to protect your plants certainly through the middle of March.

I want to again thank all the generous donors for 2023. There is a list in this issue of the newsletter. Many donors have requested that their gifts be anonymous and are listed as so.

Thank you for your support,

Dick Wiedhopf, President

Pima Prickly Park Volunteer



When I moved to the Sonoran Desert from Florida over 20 years ago, I knew that I had a lot to learn about the local flora and fauna here. I spent many hours walking through the desert around my house. I also attended many Pima County Master Gardeners' talks. But there is nothing like "hands on" experience. I began volunteering at Pima Prickly Park over 2 years ago.

Since then I have learned a lot and made many new friends!

Judi Marro

Thursday, March 7, 2024, at 7:00pm

**Wandering around central New Mexico,
a look at the interesting cacti of the region**

Presented by Rob Romero with an intro by Steve Brack

Volunteer Wish List

TCSS is looking for some volunteers to help out in the following areas

Pima Prickly Park is in need of additional help on Mondays. Work starts at 7:00 am and goes until about 10:00. During this time we plant, water and clean up the park. If interested in helping please email park@tucsoncactus.org

We are looking for volunteers to show their gardens this spring. If you are interested in sharing your garden with the members of TCSS, please email gardentours@tucsoncactus.org

Sales Volunteer



My introduction to cactus was when we lived in the Chicago area and someone gave me a prickly pear plant (from a friend in NJ!). Growing up in Auburn, NY, there were no cactus. When it came time for a winter retreat from Chicago's cold, my husband, Stu, and I said "Let's try Tucson!" We've had our patio home in Ventana Canyon for 27 years, 8 full-time. I'm active

in the Tucson Museum of Art League, a garden club, 2 book clubs, neighborhood Landscape Chairman and Pima Prickly Park on Thursdays. I've enjoyed TCSS with its mission and such knowledgeable members. I'm always amazed at the numbers attending our sales, even people from Phoenix! And laugh when a huge saguaro somehow gets attached to a car's roof for transport!

Tornie MacKay

New Year Silent Auction and Sale

For those of you that did not attend the New Year/Silent Auction Sale on January 14th, you missed one fabulous sale. In two hours we took in just over \$11,500 - \$8,300 from the silent auction and \$3,200 from HH/rescue plants. This is just the first of many sales we hope to have in 2024. Thanks to everyone that came to support this sale and especially to those volunteers that helped to make this a successful sale.

Instructions To Join The TCSS Zoom Meeting on February 1, 2024

If you have a laptop or other device where you can enter a web site address enter <https://bit.ly/tcssmm>

Copy this into your browser address line or just click on it. If this does not work and for all other types of devices see our Zoom Meeting Instructions page on our web site. It is

https://tcss.wildapricot.org/resources/pdf_files/ZoomInstructions.pdf

You can also find a link to it by going to our August Meeting notice information on the web.

Growing History

*This is the first installment on what the Desert Breeze hopes will be an extended historical account on the many cacti and succulent nurseries and growers in the Tucson area. Thanks to Greg Starr for starting us off. Next month the Desert Breeze will feature an account on **Plants for the Southwest** presented by Gene Joseph.*

The Birth, History, and Evolution of Starr Nursery

I became interested in plants in 1976 after taking a beginning Plant Science class my first year at the University of Arizona. I proceeded to take more Plant Science classes including two on plant identification, one taught by Dr. Lemoyne Hogan and the other taught by Professor Warren Jones. I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in winter in 1979 and tried my hand at the landscape profession. One summer of digging holes in Tucson was enough and I returned to the University to pursue a graduate degree in Botany. I finished that in May 1985 and shortly thereafter, Jane Evans and I decided to start growing landscape plants. At the time, she owned The Garden Flower Shop and had ample space available while I had time and energy to tend to the growing. After a year or so, Jane had to focus on the flower shop, and I started renting space to pursue making a go of the nursery full time. My primary focus was in experimenting with little known trees, shrubs, and perennials for landscape use. In 1986 and 1987, Ron Gass (owner of Mountain States Wholesale Nursery) and I made two extensive collecting trips to northeastern Mexico in search of desert dwelling plants to test for their landscape potential. We struck gold with several plants from each trip that are still in the trade.

Carol's and my son, Brian, was born in 1987 and when he was about 5-6 years old I moved the nursery to our house which allowed me to spend more time with him while still working the nursery and experimenting with little-known desert plants. I continued growing "leafy" plants but started transitioning to growing cacti and succulents and utilizing my MS in Botany around the turn of the century.



Figure 1: *Agave ovatifolia* at the type locality of the Sierra Lampazos in Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

The transition accelerated when I described *Agave ovatifolia* (Whale's Tongue Agave) in 2002 (figure 1), a project that also rekindled my passion for botany. I had previously described two new *Hesperaloe* species [*H. campanulata* (figures 2 & 3), *H. tenuifolia* and one subspecies *H. funifera* subsp. *chiangii*] that was later elevated to species level as *Hesperaloe chiangii* which stoked the burning fire of desire to spend more time using my botany degree.

Not long after describing *Agave ovatifolia* I decided to concentrate on growing agaves and various cacti from the southwestern United States and Mexico for mail order at my home-based nursery (figures 4 & 5). For years I had been producing plant information sheets and finally decided to put the information into book form. The result was my first edition of *Cool Plants for Hot Gardens*. While riding the high of having a book published and gathering more information about agaves, I decided to write a book on those sculptural plants. With those two projects under my belt, I decided to shrink the nursery footprint and the subsequent maintenance and expand my work in botany. I have spent the past 10 years researching agaves using various modes of transportation (figure 6) and with the financial help of the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society have described six more *Agave* species, including *Agave calciphila* (figure 7) from Nizanda, Oaxaca home to spectacular limestone outcrops, and one of the authors for the description of *Thelocactus tepelmensis*. I am fortunate to continue growing plants from seed, participating in the various sales sponsored by the Tucson Cactus and Succulent society, writing articles and books about desert plants, and give presentations on a variety of topics related to cacti and succulents. On July 1, 2024, Starr Nursery will celebrate 39 years of operation pretty much the same we have in previous years. We will suffer through another long hot day in sweltering summer heat by rising with the sun, communing with our plants until the heat becomes unbearable, and then fritter away the rest of the day drinking water, working on another writing project, and looking forward to the cooler days of fall.



Figure 2: *Hesperaloe campanulata* along Mexico Highway 57 in Coahuila, Mexico.



Figure 3: The bell-shaped flowers were the inspiration for the species name of *Hesperaloe campanulata*.



Figure 4: One of my current passions is growing a variety of *Astrophytum* species and multi-generational hybrids.



Figure 5: *Ferocactus* and *Thelocactus* are two of my favorite plants to grow.



Figure 6: Sometimes you go where even 4-wheel drive vehicles cannot pass.



Figure 6: *Agave calciphila* growing on the ridges of sharp limestone outcrops near Nizanda, Oaxaca.

Plant Alert!

This may be the tallest boojum (*Fouquieria columnaris*) in Tucson. It can be viewed at the Ghost Ranch Lodge on Miracle Mile and N Fairview Ave. If you have an interesting cactus or succulent in your yard or spot one around town please take a photo and send it on so we can feature it in the Desert Breeze.
newsletter@tucsoncactus.org



Acknowledgement Of Contributions

The Names Below Represent The Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society Members
And Friends Whose Donations Helped Make This Year A Success.
We Extend Our Sincere Thanks For Your Support.

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Phase Two of the Labyrinth Project Nears Completion

The landscaping of the area surrounding the labyrinth at Pima Prickly Park produced a dramatic impact on the appearance of the site. The team of dedicated and enthusiastic TCSS volunteers worked hard for several weeks to make the changes now evident. A trio of rescued saguaros and groups of golden barrels highlight a variety of plants, including velvet mesquite trees and several flowering plants that now adorn the site. Boulders complement the mounds created from the soil produced by excavating dry streams and basins. Riprap lines the dry streams and basins, as well as, the basins surrounding the mesquite trees.

A blanket of Coronado brown gravel unifies the site now where previously an unsightly scattering of three types of white and brown gravels along with native soil pockmarked with holes presented an unkempt appearance. The team trimmed the existing trees and shrubs to remove dead branches and promote new growth.

The team installed Irrigation boxes to house hoses for irrigating the plants.

Signage for the site is in progress. One sign posted at the entry of the parking lot with an arrow will point the way to the path leading to the labyrinth, and a second sign at the path's beginning will welcome guests to this part of the park. Near the labyrinth's mouth, an informational sign will provide a tactile labyrinth, and a QR code will link visitors to a menu of video and audio narratives, Q and A's, and access to additional information.

Whether walking the 75-foot diameter Chartres-style medieval labyrinth or sitting on one of the benches, the site is proving to be a relaxing part of the Pima Prickly Park that will invite park visitors to a continuing change of scenery.

The labyrinth site is a place of thinking, healing, celebration and peace. There are no right or wrong ways to walk. Just follow the path. It will take you to the center: a place for reflection and meditation. Stay as long as you want.

The labyrinth site, located at 3500 W. River Road—about one mile south of Orange Grove Road, is now open for park visitors. A date for the grand opening celebration has not been determined.



Photos are by Mike Rizzi, Ray Fisher, and Kermie

A Thursday at Pima Prickly Park

Alan supervising Bill - Bill supervising Alan

by Crystal Cannon



STEM Night at Edmond Station K-8 School

Last week, the K-12 Education team participated in a STEM Night at Edmond Station K-8 School in the Vail District. Students and their families had great opportunities to spark interest in the upcoming SARSEF Regional Science and Engineering Fair. We look forward to judging some of their science fair projects in March. Below is the current schedule of events for our team.

Wednesday, February 7
Harelson Elementary School

Friday, February 23
Mini Time Machine Museum of Miniatures

Thursday, February 29
Lineweaver Elementary School

March 2 - 7
SARSEF Regional Science and Engineering Fair Judging

Friday, March 8
Copper Creek Elementary School

Saturday, March 9
SARSEF Awards and Fair

Friday, April 9
St. Mark's Early Childhood Center

Saturday, April 27
Presidio San Agustin - Family Funday at Fort Lowell Park

A Very Little Cactus Chase

By Thomas Staudt

Between Christmas and New Year's Maria and I made a trip to Petrified Forest National Park. It's a 4.5-hour 250-mile drive from Tucson. We entered at the south end off Highway 180 and drove north along the 28-mile park route. After a quick gift shop check we were in the park and were immediately in vast fields of large and very large pieces of petrified wood. It was "Wow, look here!", "Wait! Look at that one—and that pile over there!", and "Oh, we have to stop for these!"



We did some short hikes at designated areas and made some random stops at others before leaving the park for our second destination. This was a spot near Holbrook that we had visited twice before. Here we were looking for a very little cactus with a long name, *Pediocactus peeblesianus* ssp. *peeblesianus*, an Arizona endemic. From the map illustration you can see it has

an extremely limited distribution.

On our first visit to this site in March 2017 (with a dedicated group of cacti chasers) we did not find this species. In 2021

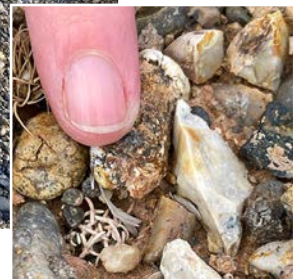


Maria and I visited again, following the same tour plan, and located three plants. On our recent trip after the long drive and frequent stops we ended up with barely an hour of sunlight to search for this cactus. We did have the advantage of location data from our previous trip but that only gets you close, and this is a small species that blends in well with the pebbled surface and small matching grass tufts.

There is always competition while searching and Maria won this round spotting the first plant. In fact, she was ahead 3 zip before I located a plant. The rest of the hillside and hilltop that we searched looked identical but no other cacti were found.



See it?; *Pedio*, Little cactus with a long name.
Pediocactus peeblesianus ssp. *peeblesianus*



For more information on this endemic Arizona species look at TCSS's Field Guide to Cacti and Other Succulents of Arizona. The map used in this account originated in that book.

For a shorter trip and a close look at some very nice pieces of petrified wood you can always go to Bach's Nursery but that will just encourage you to see more.

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Deadline for newsletter text or photos:

Thursday, February 22 by 4:00pm

TCSS Web Page:

www.tucsoncactus.org

Webmaster: Barb Watts • webmaster@Tucsoncactus.org

For general information and questions related to

TCSS, email TCSS@TucsonCactus.org

or call (520) 256-2447 during business hours.

Everyone is Welcome!

**Bring your friends, join in the fun and meet
the cactus and succulent community.**

130,655

Cacti Rescued - Since 1999

669 Rescues - 49,623 Volunteer Hours (updated 01-01-23)

Please see our under Activities Website Calendar for the next rescued cactus sale. They are scheduled at various times during the year based on our inventory.

TCSS Club Members receive a 10% discount

We need your "Eyes and Ears" to help us find new Cactus Rescue sites. Please email us as much information as you can from new project signs or from other sources to **Site@TucsonCactus.org**. Attach a photo of the sign if you can. Note, we do not remove plants from residences.

February, 2024

Thursday, February 1, 2024 at 7:00pm

Elephant Trees, Copales, and Cuajiotos

presented by Judith Becerra and David Yetman

Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 7:00pm

Teleconference Board Meeting

Transplanted Saguaros at the Waterman Mountain Restoration Site



The Waterman restoration site is a long-term project managed by the Arizona Native Plant Society to remove buffelgrass and reestablish native plants. This is an 18-acre site located just south of W Avra Valley Rd and east of the Silverbell Mine. TCSS has cooperated with this project and has donated some

of the saguaros that have been transplanted on the site.

Prior to the early January cold weather John Scheuring and a group of volunteers transplanted and placed these cages around several small saguaros. The cages help protect the plants from the cold, predation, and sunburn. The cages were designed and built by Dennis Leblond.

There will be scheduled tours at this site in 2024. Look for announcements in the Desert Breeze.