



# Desert Survivors

NURTURING PLANTS AND PEOPLE SINCE 1981

MARCH 2007

## Featured Plants for Spring Sale

This season we're featuring a new assortment of unique, tough, and loveable green companions for your Tucson landscapes. Check out the brief descriptions here, and be sure to come look them over for yourself.

*Amorpha fruticosa* (False Indigo Bush) – A beautiful, lush shrub to about 4 or 5 feet with large bipinnate leaves. False indigo forms striking dark purple flowers in late spring (April and May). It occurs in the Santa Catalina Mountains as low as 3200 feet, and up to 7600 feet. Preferring partial shade, it works great as an understory plant with moderate water requirements.

*Cathesticum erectum* (False Grama Grass) – A small bunch grass that sends out stolons spreading out from the mother plant. Previously not known from Arizona, false grama grass was discovered by John Wiens on Ragged Top, northwest of Tucson. Our original plants arrived courtesy of John. This tough and attractive little grass can handle full or partial sun and is low water use.

*Haplophyton crooksii* (Dwarf Desert Plumeria) – One of the few plants from the Dogbane (*Apocanaceae*) Family, this small shrub, to 2 feet, typically grows in well drained, rocky soils. It is a low desert, low water-use plant native to the Santa Catalina, Rincon, and Tucson Mountains. With semi

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Spring  
**PLANT SALE**

**PUBLIC SALE**  
**OCTOBER 6-7**  
**SAT. 8-5 & SUN. 10-5**

10% off on all purchases & no sales tax

**MEMBER DAY**  
**SAT., SEPTEMBER 29, 8-5**

20% off on all purchases & no sales tax  
discount for members extends thru 9/7

*Join Us!*

*Peruse the imaginative creations from "Studio Taj"*

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regular watering, this plant can flower from spring to fall, producing beautiful yellow plumeria-like flowers. It's not weedy, but can produce seedlings around the mother plants. Very unusual in cultivation.

*Gossypium harknessii* (San Marcos Hibiscus) – Back by popular demand! We can rarely keep this plant in stock, due to the incredible demand. This cotton relative can handle full or partial sun and is tolerant of salty soils. It produces attractive lemon



*Gossypium harknessii*

yellow flowers throughout the summer and has heart shaped leaves. A native of Mexico, San Marcos hibiscus is frost sensitive to the mid 20's, although ours in the ground handled last winter's snow rather well (died back about halfway). It uses little water, but prefers decent drainage.

*Albizia sinaloensis* (Sinoloa Silk Tree) – We will have about a dozen beautiful, large (15-gallon) trees of this subtropical tree from southern Sonora. The largest silk tree in town is at the University of Arizona (about 30 feet tall). In the right location, it is evergreen, with lush fernlike foliage. It provides dense shade, and produces creamy mimosalike flowers in the summertime. This species definitely needs a warm microclimate near a house wall or nestled near other trees.

**Jim Verrier**  
Director of Plant Nursery

## Executive Director's Report

Desert Survivors is programmatically, financially, and philosophically sound. Our company is blessed with great employees and a supportive community, and we continually give thanks for our good fortune. At the same time, the future is challenging—as it should be.

When I was a young child, I complained to my father about all the unbearable problems of a nine-year-old boy. He listened to me and then said, "If life is really good, you get *new* problems." As a child I found little comfort in his statement. As an adult, I find great wisdom in his statement. A new challenge to overcome means progress and the rewards that go with achievement. Dealing with the same unresolved problems over and over means a lack of progress and, ultimately, frustration.

Over the spring of 2006 Desert Survivors made \$50,000-worth of improvements to our facilities. We were the grateful recipients of a grant from the Tohono O'Odham Nation. We applied for and received funds awarded by the Nation from Proposition 202. The proposition allowed for the sharing of gaming revenue for non-profit agencies. That generous grant allowed us to make improvements that we would not have been able to do for many years if we had to raise the funds in sales.

The grant allowed us to make repairs and renovations, such as:

- Re-skin the main greenhouse with new clear polycarbonate siding
- Build wheelchair ramps
- Construct new outdoor bathrooms
- Repair and renovate our irrigation system
- Purchase two copiers
- Upgrade all our computer systems
- Buy the latest child-development assessment tools
- Put swamp coolers in all our ramadas for our workers
- Purchase supplies and equipment for all departments
- Build a sixth greenhouse

We are still reeling from being able to make so many improvements at one time!

The fall sale is upon us, and Jim and his staff promise to have a great selection of native plants, shrubs, and trees for our customers. Please remember how easy it is to support the mission of Desert Survivors. Every purchase of native plants beautifies your home, saves precious water, and provides jobs for individuals with disabilities, while raising funds to provide services to children and their families. We are confident that our friends will brave the I-10 construction woes and make it to the sale. See you there!

**Rich Bechtold**  
Executive Director

## Program Services Report

What a busy year this has been so far. Since spring we have completed several new projects around the Nursery that make our lives a little easier and help us help others. We now have a beautiful, new, handicapped-accessible ramp to the Programs Services office, and we have outside restrooms for the convenience of both our employees and our customers. Please be sure to check them out when you come by.

In **children's services** we have had brand new computers installed for all our early intervention staff, making it much easier to access the State mainframe system and be more efficient with providing services to families. We are so lucky to have eight

amazing early intervention specialists. Each one brings their own area of specialty that strengthens the quality of services we provide.

For **adult services**, we hired two new mentors who work with our disabled adult employees. A third new mentor who used to work in our retail plant nursery, cross-trained to work in adult services and now works part-time, mostly in "Studio Taj."

Our two indoor areas, which we use in the afternoons to provide some relief from the hot afternoon sun, have really come into their own this year. In one area we provide our workers with the choice of computers, TV, or just quiet time. In the second area we have a full-blown art studio,

which has been named "Studio Taj." The building got the nickname of the Taj Mahal due to all the time, effort, cost, and stress that went into putting it together many years ago. The name has stuck, so "Studio Taj" was a natural progression. We are most fortunate to have three mentors who have backgrounds in art, so we have some amazingly creative objects coming out of Studio Taj. At the fall plant sale, items that have been made by our workers will be on sale. The proceeds from these artworks will fund more materials for the Studio. We have lots of ideas, willing hands and hearts, but we humbly ask you, our friends and patrons, to complete our creative circle by considering

the purchase of one or two of our Studio sale items.

I feel very fortunate to have such an amazing group of professionals working for me in Program Services. We really have a great team, and you, our patrons and friends, make everything we do possible. So come on by; feel free to stop in at the program services office during the week and say "hi," or just shop at the fall plant sale. I will, as always, (this will be my 44<sup>th</sup> plant sale at Desert Survivors) be at the cash register. I look forward to seeing familiar faces and hopefully many new ones. Thanks for your support. We would not be here without you.

**Karen Wilson**  
Director of Program Services

*Will the real bryonoides please stand up?*

## A true story of mistaken identity and the quest for

# Arizona *Passiflora*.

Prior to my start with Desert Survivors in April of 2005 my interests were primarily arthropods (insects) and herps (reptiles). As a bug guy I wanted to be familiar with all the plants that made great bug food. This led me to our native species of passion vine, the larval food plant for the Gulf Fritillary butterfly.

In recent years, there has been quite a bit of confusion surrounding *Passiflora bryonoides* and *Passiflora arizonica*. Both of them have been represented in horticulture by misidentified species of *Passiflora*. *Passiflora caerulea* has been sold mistakenly as *P. bryonoides* and *Passiflora arida* has been sold as *P. arizonica*. It is still unclear where the mix-ups started, but from what I hear, it had been widespread.

### So, how do you tell the difference you say? Very simple.

*Passiflora bryonoides* has 3- to 5-lobed, pubescent or fuzzy leaves with lightly serrated leaf margins. Another characteristic feature on *bryonoides* is the bi-glandular petiole or tiny, paired, barrel-shaped thingies that are on the leaf stem right before the leaf surface. Flowers are smallish and cup-like, white with light purple toward the middle of the corolla. The fruit that follows is football shaped, glabrous or smooth, has smallish seeds and tastes like overripe melon. I think it tastes great and I am not known for enjoying wild foods as much as my co-workers. The imposter, *Passiflora*

*caerulea*, has glabrous or smooth leaves that are darker green, with deep lobes and smooth margins, and a comparatively huge flower that opens completely. *P. caerulea* is native to southern Brazil and Argentina and is commonly grown as an ornamental.

*Passiflora arizonica* (previously known as *P. foetida* var. *arizonica*) also has leaves with 3 to 5 lobes, with dentate or toothed margins. Their surface is pubescent but very sticky or resinous and STINKY. The leave surface and especially the petioles are covered in gland-tipped cilia or longer hairs that look like they have an antenna ball on the end. *P. arizonica* flowers are



*Passiflora arizonica*

the largest of the Arizona natives in this genus and are vespertine, or open in late afternoon. They are white with deep lavender on the outside ring of the corolla. The fruit of *P. arizonica* is finely pubescent, oval, has large seeds, and also tastes similar to overripe melon, but is a little more sour than *bryonoides*.

The species confused with *P. arizonica*,

*Passiflora arida*, has pubescent leaves that aren't resinous or especially stinky, no gland-tipped cilia, and finely serrate leaf margins. Its flowers are white and lilac and open earlier than *Parizonica*. The fruits are fairly similar, but *Parida* has smaller seeds. *Parida* is native to Baja California. *Parida* has shown signs of invasiveness, with records of escapees from Gates Pass in Saguaro National Park West to the Coyote Mountains.

Now that you know the difference, selecting your Arizona passion vines will be easy. Finding them correctly offered is the challenge. After extensive research, I have found that, so far, Desert Survivors

Nursery is the only nursery to sell all three natives and the only nursery to sell correctly identified *P. bryonoides*. We had limited numbers at the past Monsoon Sale, but the good news is we will have more at the Fall Members Sale, September 29th.

### So how did we get the correct *Passifloras* in the first place?

In August 2006, the *Passiflora* Goddess accepted the blood and sweat gift that I offered—I tell you those mimosas

have some wicked thorns. Anyhow, the *Passiflora bryonoides* we offer hail from the Pajarito and Atascosa Mountains in Santa Cruz County, from around 4000' elevation. They grew in an Encinal woodland habitat, with a grassy and sparsely shrubby understory. The mother plants were usually situated in clefts or cracks of

*continued on page 4*



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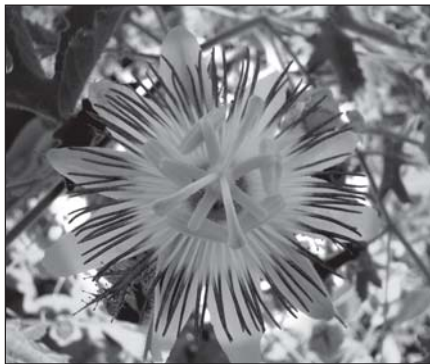
*Passiflora*, cont. from page 3

large boulders, on rock faces or under oaks, where they likely collected extra run-off. The solar aspect was partial shade to dappled sun exposure.

Finding my first specimen was no easy task. Anyone who has spent time in these areas in the monsoon season will agree that finding one vine species in a sea of vining plants is near impossible. Annual morning glory vines, *Ipomoea* spp., coated all manner of shrub, tree, or rock formation. Luckily, I spotted a Gulf Fritillary caterpillar in a tangle about ten feet up a vertical rock face, where *P.bryonoides* materialized before my eyes. I climbed carefully, scissors in mouth, determined to get cuttings that would solidify this plant in culture. Later, I found more accessible plants and even a couple good handfuls of fruit.

Less than a week later I made the acquaintance of *Passiflora arizonica*, and the setting couldn't have been more different—the Pozo Verde Mountains near Sasabe, Pima County, under 4000' elevation—a habitat more characteristic of Sonoran Upland, with saguaros and hopbush. The passion vines showed up on the southwest face of massive boulder outcrops, the roots tucked in large cracks or at the bases of

these large rocks. The place felt hot and nasty compared to the home of *P.bryonoides*. No vining plants obscured my vision here, far fewer plants grew here at all. When I first spotted a *P.arizonica*, it almost seemed out of place, and the sight of a full bloom only deepened that perception. Because the plants grew few and far between, I only collected a



few cuttings, but luckily enough of them rooted.

As the cultivation of these species is fairly new, I encourage those of you who are growing them to give us feedback. So far, we can see that in Tucson, *P.bryonoides* prefers dappled sun or morning sun with shade the remainder of

the day and moderate watering, while *P.arizonica* LOVES sun and takes less water. I expect both will be dormant in the winter, although *P.bryonoides* should be more cold-hardy than *P.arizonica*. So far the Gulf Fritillary larvae love *P.bryonoides*, but I have not seen a single one on *P.arizonica*. I can't wait to find out more about my favorite plants, and I'm sure if you get to know any of our Arizona passion vines you will want to know more, too.

**Aaron Chambers**  
Greenhouse Manager

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:  
**desertsurvivors.org**

**MEMBERSHIP:** \$50/yr  
- newsletter semiannually  
- 10% off plant purchases all year  
- members' day sale entry

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DESERT SURVIVORS is a unique human service agency founded in 1981 in and for the Tucson community. Desert Survivors is a nonprofit organization combining the appreciation and preservation of the Sonoran Desert with innovative and effective services to enhance the lives of people with disabilities.

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