



Desert Survivors

NURTURING PLANTS AND PEOPLE SINCE 1981

FEBRUARY 2009

Executive Director's Report

With all the challenges our country faced in 2008, and all the challenges still ahead, I thought it would be a good idea to tell you how Desert Survivors is navigating our nation's troubled waters.


Desert Survivors is currently stable, but very cautious and vigilant about stewarding our resources. We have been very conservative with regard to agency expenses and we are making every effort to protect our savings account. The State of Arizona's serious budget deficit gives us cause for concern, of course, since we derive considerable funding from our State service contracts. We can only hope that when the State legislature reviews budget concerns that they keep in mind that the direct services Desert Survivors provides are critically needed by families and individuals.

Obviously, the revenue generated by retail sales in our Native Plant Nursery has become more important than ever to maintain the operation of Desert Survivors. In fact, retail plant sales have not been a bonus "fund raising" event for many years. Our Native Plant Nursery is an integral enterprise in our agency's operation. The plant nursery provides 20% of all operating revenue.

Compared to other businesses, we are fortunate, however. We are bolstered by the loyalty and dedication of our members, customers, and employees. Over my 15-year tenure at Desert Survivors I have regularly made this statement about the agency. I would like to say it one more time.

"You can't do more for yourself and your community than purchasing plants at Desert Survivors Native Plant Nursery."

Look at it this way. When you purchase plants at Desert Survivors:

-  You get beautiful flora to enhance your home.
-  You help cleanse our environment by adding vegetation that improves air quality.
-  You save water, because our plants are indigenous to the Sonoran Desert region or nearby arid habitats.
-  You employ 30 workers with special needs.
-  You support early childhood development programs for hundreds of local families.
-  You become part of a solution that improves the lives of people in our community.

I heartily thank all of our friends who have supported our mission during the last 28 years, and I ask all of you to stay with us in the future. See you at the Spring Sale!

Rich Bechtold
Executive Director

Spring Plant Sale

members only sale

March 7 Sat., 8AM-5PM

20% off on all purchases thru 3/15

JOINING on the day of the Sale COUNTS!



Geranium caespitosum, a Santa Catalina Mountain native

public sale

Saturday, March 14

8AM - 5PM

Sunday, March 15

10AM - 5PM

10% off on all purchases

20% off for members

& no sales tax

Salvia parryi

Parphochaete bigelovii

Convolvulus equitans

Agastache wrightii

Tridens muticus

Featured Plants

Salvia parryi (Parry's sage):

We are excited to finally be able to offer this lovely, southern Arizona native at our spring sale. Parry's sage is a modest plant, usually reaching two feet in height, with silver foliage and blue flowers. Curiously, the flower spikes form a pale fuzz before the blooms open. This sage can handle full or partial sun settings. Like most salvias, however, these plants will look a lot better in the summertime if they receive afternoon shade. In Arizona, this species is found in the Pajarito, Atascosa, Huachuca, Patagonia, and Mule Mountains between elevations of 3,500 and 5,000 feet. Typical habitat for wild *S. parryi* includes rocky, dry slopes or canyons—often on limestone. The plants are quite cold hardy in Tucson, and will bloom in spring and fall. They provide a good source of butterfly nectar in the fall.



We are grateful to Joe Billings for ardently encouraging us to cultivate this species and for lending us a mother plant. Because very few native salvias occur naturally at lower/mid elevations, this plant provides a special opportunity to try a beautiful native of this genus. (There really are not any lower-mid elevation, southern Arizona, perennial salvias currently in cultivation). Although we will have limited numbers available at our sale (about 30), we will carry larger numbers in the near future on a regular basis.

Convolvulus equitans (silver morning glory vine): *C. equitans* is a slender, groundcreeping vine found in Pima and Pinal counties. It is one of our perennial morning glory species (Convolvulaceae), which typically grows on dry slopes or canyons between 3,000 and 6,000 feet in elevation. This plant forms a small, carrot-like tuber, from which new foliage resprouts vigorously every spring. Its leaves are shaped like arrows with deep subhastate lobes at the base, and attractive flowers about the size of a dime, ranging from pink to white, form in the spring and fall. When placed near the base of a small shrub, the silver morning glory vine will twine through it, becoming quite showy in bloom.

This is a very easy plant to grow. Once established, it does not require a lot of irrigation, although it will do best if planted near some rocks, which help retain additional moisture in the soil. All



the plants I have observed in the wild and in the town of Oracle remain somewhat small—approximately a foot or two in length or height. With additional water, plants could get bigger. Scatter the seeds around your yard where you want more plants to sprout. We collected our seeds on the north side of the Santa Catalina Mountains, where they grow in abundance. This genus typically receives a bad name because of the infamous weed, *Convolvulus arvensis* (field bindweed). Fortunately, the only thing that our plant shares with this nasty invasive is attractive blooms.

Agastache wrightii (Sonoran giant hyssop, or Wright's horsemint): It's hard not to like plants in the mint family (Lamiaceae), especially those with deliciously-scented foliage. *A. wrightii* is one of those plants with sweet mint-like foliage and blooms. Locally this plant is found in the Santa Catalina and Rincon Mountains at elevations between 4,000 and 6,000 feet. In the wild, these plants grow along shady streambeds, washes or cliffbases. The fragrant leaves are triangular, and long flower spikes form during the monsoon season in the wild (spring or fall in Tucson) with multiple small blue flowers. Mint family plants are considered medicinal, and this one brews a tasty tea with the leaves, flowers, or even dried seedheads.



Sonoran giant hyssop is a partial-shade plant that requires moderate watering. In Tucson, plants will most likely reach two to three feet, but wild plants in lush settings can reach heights of up to five feet. All of the *Agastache* species are fantastic butterfly plants. At the spring sale, in addition to the Sonoran giant hyssop, we will also have a small number of a related species from Santa Cruz County, *Agastache barberi*. This plant, also known as Arizona mountain wildflower, has larger, attractive purple flowers. This is the first time we have had *A. barberi* available in 1-gallon pots.

Images this page by Jim Verrier/DS, unless otherwise noted.



Carpochaete bigelovii (Bigelow's bristlehead): This small, attractive plant of the sunflower family (Asteraceae) is typically found on rocky slopes and outcrops in desert grassland and oak woodland settings between 4,000 and 7,000 feet. This particular species is a spring bloomer with clusters of showy white flowers—blossoms with five petals that radiate outward in a starlike shape. The leaves of *C. bigelovii* are dark green and linear. Although this plant normally grows at higher elevations, it has translated quite well to our climate.

In its natural habitat it can handle full sun, but for around the city I recommend afternoon shade if possible. Its water requirements are moderate to low in Tucson. Bigelow's bristlehead normally grows to about one and a half feet high. Locally, it is found in the Santa Catalina, Rincon and Tucson Mountains and regionally throughout southern and central Arizona.

Tridens muticus (slim tridens) This perennial grass is locally native in the Tucson, Santa Catalina, and Rincon Mountains, where it is found at elevations between 2,100 and 5,150 feet on rocky slopes, dry hillsides, and along washes. About one and half feet tall and a foot wide at maturity, the small bunchgrass is a great choice for landscaping—neat and versatile. During the monsoon season, slim tridens sends up a slender inflorescence (flower spike) that bears alternating spikelets. Attractive in bloom, the whitish spikelets form an unusual and pleasing appearance. A member of the Poaceae family, this species can tolerate full or partial sun and uses little water.

A great feature of planting grasses is that they can become established in a landscape in half the time that herbaceous plants need, typically within one year. Combine *T. muticus* with a small, perennial subshrub like *Hibiscus denudatus* (rock hibiscus), *Gutierrezia*

sarothrae (snakeweed), or *Calliandra eriophylla* (native fairyduster) for a great effect. When *T. muticus* goes dormant in the winter, as most natives do, the then barren flower spikes provide an architectural element.

Slim tridens is a nice addition to the already huge native grass inventory at Desert Survivors. Later this year, we will offer several new native grasses, including two of my favorite muhly grasses, *Muhlenbergia polycaulis* and *M. pauciflora*.

Jim Verrier

Director of Plant Nursery



Conservation Alert

The Sky Island Alliance has put together a "State of the Coronado National Forest" report to submit to the U. S. Forest Service for consideration. Addressing natural history, current conditions, threats, and recommendations for conservation in the mountain ranges of the Coronado, this document was generated through the joint efforts of a broad coalition of organizations in the Coronado Planning Partnership. The report proposes up to four natural area designations within the Santa Catalina Mountains that would afford additional protections to these special areas. The recommendations include a research natural area (RNA) in Finger Rock Canyon, a zoological natural area in Agua Caliente Canyon, an RNA in Alder Canyon, and an RNA in the headwaters of the Cañada del Oro. The current revision of the State of the Coronado Report and the long list of contributors is available online at http://skyislandaction.org/state_of_coronado.html. Readers interested in supporting this effort are encouraged to contact the Coronado National Forest and urge adoption of the recommendations.

Western New Mexico University Dept. of Natural Sciences and the Dale A. Zimmerman Herbarium



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FREE NATIVE PLANT SEMINAR

COOL COMBOS FOR HOT GARDENS



Crossosoma bigelovii

ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28TH A FREE SEMINAR WILL BE OFFERED ON LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVE PLANTS AT THE DESERT SURVIVORS NURSERY. IN THIS SEMINAR WE WILL EMPHASIZE THE USE OF PLANTS NATIVE IN THE TUCSON AREA AND SURROUNDING FOOTHILLS. THE COURSE WILL BE PRESENTED BY AWARD-WINNING LANDSCAPER, GREG CORMAN, AND JIM VERRIER, DIRECTOR OF THE PLANT NURSERY AT DESERT SURVIVORS.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING, PLEASE SIGN UP WITH GREG CORMAN AT GREG@GARDENINGINSIGHTS.COM. THE CLASS WILL BEGIN AT 9:00 AM AND WILL LAST BETWEEN TWO AND TWO-AND-A-HALF HOURS. SPACE IS LIMITED TO 25 PEOPLE, BUT WE WILL OFFER A SECOND CLASS IF THERE IS ENOUGH DEMAND.



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Program Services Report

The year 2009 is well underway, and it is almost springtime in Tucson again. Despite our slow economy and difficult times, for so many of us there is also this amazing feeling of renewed hope and positive energy in the air.

At Desert Survivors, things have remained pretty steady in program services. We have an amazing team of **mentors** working in **adult services**, and we are very proud of all our crews; they have done an outstanding job of supporting our nursery staff and getting everything ready for the upcoming spring sale. Our mentors are paid staff who have completed specialized training, both on site and through the state, to work with people with developmental disabilities. We currently have a total of twenty-seven adults with varying developmental challenges and abilities working with us. Two of these folks are now working virtually independently in the nursery, needing minimal support from our staff. The rest of the team is making steady progress with support from six mentors plus five nursery staff members.

In these crazy times it is so important to remember to laugh every day, tell the people around you how much they mean to you, and tell yourself how special you are. (All of our members and customers are certainly special to us.) As always, I look forward to seeing your familiar faces at the spring sale.

In **children's services** we continue to stay very busy with families all across Pima County. We have an amazing team of early intervention staff. As some of you may remember from the fall newsletter, we have a special little addition to our early intervention family. Brooke Myers, one of my veteran staff members, has a little



Emily shares her smiles.

girl named Emily who is currently receiving services because she was born with Tar syndrome. Emily continues to grow and progress. Right now her low blood platelet levels are increasing, slowly but surely, and she does not need transfusions quite as frequently as she did last fall. Emily, who will celebrate her first birthday on March 17, always has a smile on her face; she is such a happy baby. We do believe the luck of the Irish is with her. Watch out for an update in the fall.

Karen Wilson
Director of Program Services

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
desertsurvivors.org

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

DIRECTORY

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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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