



1020 W. Starr Pass
Tucson, AZ 85713
open 8-5 Tue-Sat

nonprofit org
US postage
PAID
Tucson, Arizona
permit no. 337



Desert Survivors

NURTURING PLANTS AND PEOPLE SINCE 1981



SPRING 2016

Program Services Update

The time of rejuvenation is upon us once again. At Desert Survivors spring is always a magical time of year, as we watch our plants flourish and get ready for the spring sale. We are working on lots of new tasks in Adult Services, along with assisting our amazing Nursery staff with projects and with their lovely new retail building. Going into our 35th year, I can honestly say we have never looked better. Here are some updates.

David Garcia, who was our Lead Mentor until recently, has been promoted to the position of ETEC (Ecology Training and Education Center) Manager. In this new position, he is not only responsible for all the Desert Survivor mentors and our crews of workers with disabilities, he is also responsible for assigning work to the various crews, acts as liaison with our Nursery Manager, and oversees all the paperwork for our crews and mentors, maintenance of the grounds, and completion of tasks. And there are many other things that David does



Hoop houses provide space for plants and work for those we serve.

on a daily basis. He has become a vital part of Desert Survivors Program Services. **Daniel Ronquillo** has taken the title of Lead Mentor and assists David while also leading the crews out on the River Parks, which we maintain through our contract with Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation. We are extremely lucky to have them both, and all our wonderful mentors and workers. What an amazing team!

Just a little history for you since this is our 35th year; ETEC was

the name given to program services for adults back in the early days of Desert Survivors. It is still a good description for what we do even today. This is why we choose the title "ETEC Manager" for David.

Last year we suffered a bit of damage during the monsoon season. Our main hoop house was partially destroyed in a storm when a tree fell on it. As bad as it seemed at the

continued on page 2

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
desertsurvivors.org

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

DIRECTORY:

Richard Bechtold
Executive Director
609-8333

Jim Verrier
Nursery Director
791-9309

Karen Wilson
Director of Programs
884-8806

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.

design: LMBrewer/Bailiwick, Ink;

Executive Director's Report

Desert Survivors is 35 years old this year, and it is one of the last small "home grown" agencies left in the service system in Pima County for individuals with disabilities or mental health issues. Most people now receive services from large profit-making corporations. But, I am proud that we, as a nonprofit organization, put everything we have into the people we serve. It is my opinion that it is unconscionable to make a profit from people in need of medical and social services. There has to be other ways to make a "buck." Desert Survivors is here to provide services and products to our clients and customers as our first and only priority, as we have done for thirty-five years.

On to new and exciting happenings at Desert Survivors. Our 2015 Tax Credit Holiday Campaign was a

huge success. Many more members participated last year, and the campaign brought in \$25,000 in December alone! Since we don't sell many plants in December, the campaign kept us financially flush. Over 25% of our members went to our web page and used our Pay Pal payment system. If all of our 400+ members participated in the campaign, it would bring incredible financial stability to Desert Survivors. Remember, all participating members got their money "back" through the State tax credit system. I will have an even better offer for the next holiday season. Thank you so much.

I want to draw attention to an agency that provides outstanding support to Desert Survivors--the Stonewall Foundation, managed by Rick Small, his mother Susan Small, and their Board

of Directors. The Stonewall Foundation provides funds to support employment to three full-time workers, and funds to get new hires started while their State funding is in process. They provide over 750 work days of support to several workers. Stonewall funds also support school-to-work transition services. The Stonewall Foundation is a Godsend to our mission. We are eternally grateful.

Spring has sprung, and we are looking forward to another season of production from our workers and sales to our customers. I receive fairly frequent calls from our members, and encourage you to call me directly at 520-609-8333 if you have questions or suggestions. See you at the sale.

Richard M. Bechtold
Executive Director



Spring 2016 Plant Sale

MEMBERS SALE
SAT., MARCH 5 8AM-5PM
20% OFF EVERYTHING

GENERAL PUBLIC SALE
TUES. - SAT., 8AM-5PM
MARCH 8 - 12
10% OFF TO PUBLIC
20% OFF TO MEMBERS



Above left, penstemon (Penstemon parryi); right, a selection of mammillaria cactus. Penstemon photo, K.G. Anderson. Mammillaria, Jim Verrier.

Program Services:

continued from back page

time, we have been able to replace the hoop house with money made at our sale. We had our amazing “handyman” **Geraldo Valenzuela**, construct the new hoop house with assistance from David and another Mentor. We were able to salvage what was left of the damaged hoop house and in the next few months we hope to be able to use it again.



Workers removing an old shed.

In addition, we plan to build another hoop house with funds from a grant we have received through **CenturyLink**. My husband, who works at CenturyLink, nominated us for this grant. I thought it was a long shot, but went ahead and filled out the forms, and was surprised to hear in mid-December that we had received the grant. Having another hoop house allows us to grow approximately 3000 more plants every six months. This will provide more work for our adults with developmental disabilities and more plants to sell to you, our customers. The grant also covers the cost of three Tuff Sheds, which will replace the hand-built sheds we have used since moving to this site in 1986, and some other items. We are so grateful to CenturyLink for their recognition of everything we do at Desert Survivors Inc.

All this will contribute to our efforts to assist those we serve to find competitive employment in the community when they are ready to move forward from Desert Survivors. Toward this end, we are working closely with “WorkAbility,” an education program through United Cerebral Palsy. WorkAbility has a wonderful program called “Mia Patria,” which combines classroom and hands-on training, which is where Desert Survivors comes in. The goal is to teach young adults with developmental disabilities what it takes to be a landscaper here in the desert. We have found a truly amazing partner in the folks at WorkAbility, and it is so good to have people who believe in the same principles and have the same goals we do.

As always a big “thank you” goes out to the Stonewall Foundation. We cannot say enough about the wonderful people at the Foundation who continue to support our mission. It was a great pleasure to speak with them all in January.

I remember when our Nursery here at the base of “A” Mountain was just starting to take shape, back in 1986. Back then, the only plants I remember seeing were aloe vera. It’s amazing how far we have come since those early days, but our priority still is and always will be the individuals we serve and our wonderful customers.

As always, I will be at the cash register on Saturdays at both the members and public sale. Please stop by and say “hi.” Remember, plant questions are for Jim and his team, but I am happy to answer any and all questions related to our programs. Thank you all for your continued support. See you at the sale.

Karen Wilson

Director of Program Services



Dichelostemma capitatum subsp. *pauciflorum* (desert hyacinth, bluedicks)

This beautiful desert wildflower is one of the true treats of spring. The classification of this lovely bulb has moved from family to family, most recently the lily family (Liliaceae), before finally landing in the Asparagus family (Asparagaceae) like agaves, yuccas, bear grass, sotol, and several other flowering bulbs. You may notice that I am trying to encourage the use of the less common “common name” of desert hyacinth to minimize having to write or speak the more common name—bluedicks! (Although there is another Old World desert hyacinth, *Cystanche tubulosa*, it is not found in the Sonoran Desert Region.) Alright! Enough about this common name. This bulb is often found on open slopes (under 5,000 feet elevation), but there are still some historic populations hanging on in back alleys and lucky front yards in Tucson. Desert hyacinth is very hard to transplant, and can easily die when being transplanted; therefore, we recommend that you merely cut a square out of the bottom of the pot and plant the cut-out pot directly in the ground (leaving just the sides of the pot). There are many bulbs in our 3”-square pots, but please resist the urge to separate them or it could end tragically. This is only the second time that we have offered this rare plant in cultivation, so take advantage of this great opportunity. These bulbs leaf out in the late winter and produce spectacular light blue flowers from the end of March until the beginning of April. We have a limited number of plants available for the sale—slightly under 50 pots.

Featured Plants Spring 2016



Ericameria cuneata var. *spathulata* (cliff goldenbush)

We are very excited to finally be able to offer this sister species to our native turpentine bush (*Ericameria laricifolia*). Also an evergreen in the sunflower family (Asteraceae), cliff goldenbush is a much smaller plant, typically growing between 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 feet in both width and height (sometimes slightly bigger). The other main difference between the two is that this species has much showier blooms than the turpentine bush. Cliff goldenbush has longer ray flowers (the outer flowers in aster flowers, that look like flower petals to most people). The variety *spathulata* grows in Arizona, southern California, Utah, and Nevada. It is typically found between elevations of 3,000 and 7,000 feet and in the mountains. Locally, it is native to the Santa Catalina, Rincon, and Tucson Mountains (and many more). In the Catalinas, I tend to see these plants growing out of rock outcrops and boulders; however, the habitat can dramatically affect their size, like near the California border, where they grow much larger in the flats, like a typical shrub. Although I have not seen evidence in the literature confirming that caterpillars use this species, it probably hosts some showy painted moth caterpillars like those found on turpentine bush (*Cucullia* spp.). It is also an incredible nectar plant for pollinators, in bloom during the monsoon season and into early fall. This is a new offering at the nursery!



Plumbago zeylanica (native plumbago, wild leadwort)

This attractive species is in its own family (Plumbaginaceae) and is native to southeastern Arizona, southern Florida, Texas, Mexico, Central and South America, and the Pacific Islands. Luckily, it can be abundant in southern canyons of the Santa Catalina Mountains, along with many other Sky Islands in Pinal and Pima Counties, southeastern Arizona. Pima, Ventana, and Sabino Canyons (Santa Catalina Mountains) are wonderful places to view these plants in the wild. Native plumbago is typically found between 2,500 and 4,000 feet elevation. It has attractive 5-petaled white flowers with a light blue center. One of my favorite features of this beauty is that the green leaves will turn a purplish-red in the winter and then green back up in the spring. In extreme winter cold, plumbago will drop its leaves. It prefers partial shade (about half a day or less of sun), and is ideally placed as an understory plant. Plumbago is also a larval host for the marine blue butterfly (Lycaenidae: *Leptotes marina*), and a nectar source for butterflies and hummingbirds. The plants typically grow to between 2 and 3 feet, and appear to be cold hardy to 15 degrees.



Euphorbia xanti (Baja spurge)

This extremely showy euphorbia (family Euphorbiaceae) is endemic to Baja California. It can handle extreme heat and hot spots, but is a bit frost sensitive. It probably doesn’t suffer any frost damage until temperatures hit the low 20’s, as the mid to higher 20’s have not done any damage to plants at the nursery. Ideally, this plant should be placed in a warm spot or at the edge of an overhead canopy for winter protection. Other than that, it is very hardy and easy to grow. Baja spurge plants have thick stems and narrow leaves about one inch wide, and can grow to about 5 feet high. In the spring-time, pinkish-white flowers (one centimeter or more in diameter) form in profusion, providing a colorful show. Over time, after the plants are established and happy, they can form small colonies via rhizomes. Although Baja spurge is by no means rare in cultivation in Tucson, it is uncommon and unusual in the landscape.

Jim Verrier

Director of Plant Nursery

Photos by Jim Verrier unless otherwise noted. Desert hyacinth photo by Linda M. Brewer; workers with old shed, Desert Survivors archives.