I am pleased to report that Desert Survivors had record-breaking plant sales last year, and for that we say Thank You! We are very fortunate that our community cares about our programs and, evidently, appreciates our native plants more and more each year. Purchasing plants has always been an easy and mutually beneficial way to provide financial support to Desert Survivors, and it has helped us stay alive and better serve our community. The sales income—and the many meaningful contributions from individuals, foundations, and other entities—have made it possible for both our Adult Vocational Services and our Family and Children’s Services staff to provide top-quality programs for individuals and families in Pima County. Desert Survivors continues to be blessed with very talented and professional employees working on all aspects of our mission of service to the community.

This year I am asking you—and all of our members, customers, and friends—to consider donating funds through a special Arizona State tax credit opportunity. Desert Survivors is a 501-C-3 charitable agency, and donations to us made under “Assistance to the Working Poor” are eligible for a State tax credit. Individuals filing as “single” or “head of household” can receive a tax credit of up to $200 by donating to Desert Survivors before the end of the 2012 tax year. (Couples filing jointly can get a credit of up to $400.) When you file your taxes for 2012, you simply report the amount of your donation to Desert Survivors on forms provided by the Arizona Department of Revenue. These special donations are tax credits, not tax deductions. In effect, this credit directs a portion of your Arizona State taxes to Desert Survivors. Usually, we have little control over where or how our taxes are used, so I hope you will be pleased at the opportunity to take control over where and how a portion of your State taxes get used.

Directing $200 of your state tax debt to Desert Survivors through this tax credit will benefit Desert Survivors greatly. Please consider participating in this special donation drive. Call me at 520-609-8333 for additional information. Complete details about this State tax credit can be found at azdor.gov. 

Richard Bechtold
Executive Director
Featured Plants

Fall 2012

Agave chrysantha x villmoriana

Naturally occurring hybrid agave (Asparagaceae - Asparagus family)

Although Desert Survivors typically does not sell hybrids, we are open to carrying certain species that naturally hybridize in their wild habitats. This agave is a cross between the Golden Agave (A. chrysantha) and the ever popular Octopus Agave (A. Villmoranii). Both species occur in southern Sonora, Mexico, and are known to readily hybridize where the two species overlap. Although the species are somewhat similar, the Golden Agave has narrower leaves and does not produce bulbils (which look like baby agaves) on the flowering stalk. The leaves of these hybrids are very attractive and the rosette will typically get to about 4 feet tall and wide. They can be planted in full sun, but will look better if given some afternoon shade. The Golden-Octopus Agave hybrid produces plants that are slightly more sun tolerant and a little more frost hardy than typical Octopus agaves. We estimate its frost sensitivity in the low 20s. The individuals we have for sale come from a cross where the seed parent was a Golden Agave, but there is not a lot of information available about the cultivation of these unusual plants.

Desmordanthus nativicolor

San Pedro tick clover (Fabaceae - Legume family)

This low-growing ground cover typically does not rise taller than a foot or two, and can trail up to 3 feet, often forming nice, dense clumps. Attractive trifoliate foliage provides dense cover to the ground, and then, during the monsoon season, a profusion of deep pink flowers form. Blooms typically occur between August and October, and are a great source of nectar for pollinators. San Pedro tick clover is also a great butterfly plant. It is a larval host to the following four butterflies: Dorantes longtail (Urbanus dorantes), silver-spotted skipper (Epargyreus cesius), desert cloudywing (Achalasia casica), and northern cloudywing (Thorybes pylades). San Pedro tick clover is a tough plant that can be grown in either partial shade or full sun; it requires moderate to little water. In the wild, they typically occur between 3000 and 7000 feet elevation and are often found in partially shaded canyons or slopes. This species of Desmordanthus is common in the nearby Santa Catalina, Rincon, and Santa Rita Mountains. It’s hard not to love this plant when you see it in its full glory in the mountains in August.

Mammillaria graminiflora

Graham’s pincushion cactus (Cactaceae - Cactus family)

This common small cactus species is abundant in the foothills of the Tucson Basin. Graham’s pincushion cacti are usually found near the base of other plants and shrubs, where they receive filtered sun. They generally occur between 2500 and 6000 feet elevation, most often in desert plant communities. Individual plants typically only reach a height of about 12 inches, with a width of several inches. Over time, they will form attractive clusters. Graham’s pincushion also produces beautiful pink flowers between June and as late as October, occurring anytime during the monsoon season. We are pleased to be able to offer clusters of this cactus for sale in individual containers this fall. Even in crowded yards, there is usually a spot to squeeze in this lovely little pincushion.

Desmordanthus nativicolor

Allium cernuum

Nodding onion (Amaryllidaceae - Amaryllid Family)

This lovely wild onion grows in southeastern Arizona in the Huachuca, Chiricahua, Santa Rita, Mule, and Dragoon Mountains. It is found in shady areas of the forest between elevations of 5000 and 8000 feet. That said, these plants fare quite well in Tucson with dappled or afternoon shade and are not bothered by the heat of the desert floor. The Nodding Onion has attractive, slightly wide leaves and forms beautiful clusters of pink to white flowers that droop somewhat (hence the common name). Onions prefer well-drained soils and do not like to stay excessively wet, but they do require moderate watering. These showy onions will reproduce vegetatively as well as by seed, and are edible! They grow well in the ground or in containers, where they can be easily separated and repotted when desired. This is a great plant for people that like wild edibles.

Jim Verrier
Director of Plant Nursery

We regret that we have no photo of the lovely little blossoms of the nodding onion, but you can look them up online.

Program Services

As another Tucson summer draws to an end, it is time again to reflect on Desert Survivors Program Services. Despite the tough economy and State budget cuts, we are still strong in our commitment to provide quality services to both adults and children with developmental disabilities.

Coming to Desert Survivors everyday to work truly is a blessing. I am greeted by all our workers in Adult Services, as if they haven’t seen me for a week, with hugs and handshakes. I get to hear all their latest news (along with anything that is bothering them). It is a pretty amazing feeling to know that you are such an important part of these extraordinary individuals’ lives. When the days get crowded with paperwork and phone calls, I can step outside and see our beautiful nursery. Walking around and looking at the plants is so rejuvenating.

Then I get to meet with Children’s Services staff and hear all the remarkable cont. on page 4