Executive Director’s Report

The Fall Plant Sale is always a welcome milestone at the end of summer. And putting together the newsletter is a time to contemplate the various components of our organization. As I was contemplating what important topic I might write about in my report, it dawned on me that one of the most important ingredients in Desert Survivors is the people that work for us, so I would like to acknowledge them here.

Our agency is comprised of nineteen staff members who work in three divisions. Karen is the Director of Program Services, Jim runs the Native Plant Nursery, and I run the Administrative section. Karen oversees our Adult Vocational Program, as well as the Children’s Programs. Our infants and their families receive early intervention services from Kathy and Brooke. Emory, Lies, David, Pete, Mike, Daniel, and Hubert coach our work crews through very productive days.

In the Native Plant Nursery, Jim’s crew is comprised of Kelly, Jason, Nate, and Janine. They raise and nurture four acres of the native flora Desert Survivors is famous for. Gerard is our Jack-of-all-trades and he repairs, maintains, or builds everything the agency has or needs.

As director of Desert Survivors for almost 20 years, I am fully aware that the staff of Desert Survivors is what has made it a top notch agency. We have also had the invaluable guidance of our Board of Directors. Chris, Tom, Doug, Stan, and Jenn make sure the agency meets its mission. I could not do what I need to do without their direction. I thank the Lord for everyone at Desert Survivors.

On another note, Desert Survivors will run its State Tax Credit Campaign again in the late fall. It was a huge success last year. I guess our members like to know where at least some of their state taxes go.

I hope to see everyone at the members plant sale on September 28th, or Tuesday through Saturday the following week. We are so very appreciative of our members, who clearly understand and support the mission of Desert Survivors. See you at the sale.

Richard M. Bechtold
Executive Director

---

Members September 28, Saturday, 8am - 5pm 20% off everything

Members get 20% off during general public sale as well

Fall Plant Sale 2013

General Public October 1, Tuesday through Saturday, 8am - 5pm 10% off everything
**Featured Plants Spring 2013**

**Ferocactus cylindraceus** subsp. tortulispinus (California firebarrel)

This distinctive firebarrel cactus, which is native to Baja California and San Diego County, California, is not commonly found in nurseries. Although some sources do not recognize this variety (e.g. *Flora of North America*), in appearance it is a very different plant from the typical F. cylindraceus. Subspecies tortulispinus is a much smaller plant, often reaching just two to three feet tall, as opposed to the four to six foot tall F. cylindraceus and it has longer (incredibly long), more twisted, and redder spines. The taxonomy gets a little bit squiggly with this plant as it was once considered part of Ferocactus acantho- 
des, but has since been lumped into F. cylindraceus. A slow-growing cactus, California firebarrel can thrive in full sun, but appreciates good drainage. Yellow flowers bloom in late spring to summer. Several of these planted in a landscape would be striking.

**Tagetes lemmonii** (mountain marigold)

Most of us are familiar with this commonly cultivated native plant in the sunflower family (Asteraceae), or are we? It always seemed odd to me that the small plants seen at higher elevations in southern Arizona would turn into such large shrubs in the Tucson valley and then appear highly frost sensitive during cold winters. In fact, we learned that these plants in yards in Oracle or Sierra Vista would typically die during the winter. Unfortunately, in turns out most nurseries selling this plant (including us) were actually selling the Sonoran mountain marigold (*Tagetes palmeri*), a haphazardly perpetuated by wholesale growers offering plants under the wrong scientific name. We apologize for the er-
or, but are glad to finally set the record straight and answer these questions about this lovable, stinky plant.

Our local mountain marigold does not get quite as large as the Sonoran mountain marigold, but is much more cold hardy. In addition to its smaller size, *Tagetes lemmonii* is also very easily distinguished from its Sonoran cousin by the distinctive series of glands found around the margins on the upper por-
tions of the leaves. Our native plant is often erroneously called the “Mount Lemmon marigold,” for a variety of reasons. It does grow on Mount Lemmon, and the leaves happen to smell like lemons. The original herbarium plant specimens of this species was collected by John Lemmon from the Huachuca Mountains. In the wild, *T. lemmonii* is found between 2,000 and 5,000 feet elevation. This cactus typically does not get much bigger than three or four feet in height and width. The slender joints are complemented by long, attractive white spines. Greenish-yellow flowers form anytime between March and August, and sometimes blooms can appear in October as well. The blooms are relished by our native cactus bees, typically *Diodasa sp.*, which are ground-nesting bees. This small cactus would be nice tucked somewhere along the perimeter of your yard, safely away from pathways or frequent travel. Birds and rodents eat the fruits.

Program Services, cont. from page 4

We are happy to report two very special additions to our Program Services team. I have a new Office Manager, Mireya, who actually provides support for both our program services and our business operations. Mireya worked with families in Children’s Ser-

**Benthochloa laguvires** subsp. borreynana (Silver beardgrass)

This small bunchgrass is native to Santa Cruz, Cochise, and extreme southeast-ern Pinza Counties in Arizona, and its racemes stretches into New Mexico and beyond. It is similar in appearance to the commonly seen cane beardgrass (*B. borbinoidis*), but differs in its smaller size and its smaller seedhead. The folli-
age of these plants also take on a silver to pink appearance in the fall. Silver beardgrass does not seem to spread as aggressively as its larger cousin does. Typically around August, seedheads begin to form small clusters of whitish seeds at the tips of the culms (or stems).

As is the case with many grasses, the seeds are eaten by various birds and rodents, and the plants provide a great habitat for lizards. This bunchgrass is typically about two to sometimes three feet tall and wide, and it makes a great accent plant to accompany several other smaller herbaceous plants, like the delicate Pringle dalea (*Dalea prin-
gle*), or blackfoot daisies (*Melampodi-

**Violettia lemmonii** var. glabrata (violet wild petunia)

Although we have sold plants under the species name for years, we are pleased to finally have our local form of the plant, *v. glabrata*. Some sources place *R. nudiflora var. glabrata* under *R. nudiflora var. nudiflora*. At this point, we are not sure of the variety of the plants that we have been selling, but believe that they are from Mexico. A good key to this species has been extremely difficult to find up to this point, but we’ll keep looking. The variety of our local form has leaves that are glabrous (without hairs). Another distinguishing char-
acteristic is that it has narrower and longer leaves. But it does has attractive purple flowers. Violet wild petunia is native to the Tucson Mountains and into Santa Cruz County, typically found between 2,000 and 4,000 feet elevation. This perennial subshrub is in the Acanthus family (Acanthaceae) and is therefore a specialized larval host for several species of butterflies, including the common buckeye (*Ju-
nonia coenia*), and the Texas crescent (*Anthenassa teana*).

**Violettia lemmonii** var. glabrata (violet wild petunia bloom (close up))

**Tagetes lemmonii** fruit and stems

**California firebarrel**

**Mountain marigold bloom**

**Mountain marigold leaves showing glands**

**Christmas cholla**

**Violet wild petunia foliage**

**Silver beardgrass inflorescence with seeds**

Karen Wilson

Director of Program Services

Jim Verrier

Director of Plant Nursery

Photos by Jim Verrier unless otherwise noted

We have many friends and supporters, including all of you who make Desert Survivors the amazing place it is. I would certainly be remiss if I didn’t also reiterate our appreciation of The Stonewall Foundation. Thanks to The Stonewall Foundation’s support, five people who would have lost their jobs due to funding cuts over the last few years are still working here. A BIG thank you, from all of us to all of you, for your continued support. See you at the sale.