I would like to begin this report with a big “Thanks” to all the members who participated in our State Tax Credit donation drive. Desert Survivors received almost $20,000 in much-needed donations at the end of 2013. Even with an improved economy, providing any type of human service in Arizona is challenging, and the State of Arizona is not particularly famous for raising or dedicating funds to programs supporting people in need of assistance. Luckily, our members came through for us again. Although Desert Survivors is a tightly run ship, meeting budget is always a challenge; we must keep a close eye on finances. Your support is critical. At the same time, I am proud that any time you spend money at Desert Survivors, you always get something meaningful in return. Financial support of Desert Survivors gives you Native Plants, Tax Benefits, and, most importantly, the satisfaction of helping People and Planet.

Jim is promising a super season of native plants, and at this spring sale we are likely to see plants sell like gangbusters. It will be great to see all our members again. Please remember, if you need anything from Desert Survivors, just call me at 609-8333. See you at the sale and all season.

Richard M. Bechtold  
Executive Director
**Featured Plants Spring 2014**

**Agave murpheyi**

*Asparagaceae*

*Murphey’s agave*

This unusual plant is one of three species of agaves that have only been found in Arizona in association with historic Hohokam cultivation sites. (The other two species are A. delamateri and A. philippiana.) Murphey’s agave has been found at archeological sites in Pinal, Gila, Maricopa, and Yavapai counties, between elevations of 1,350 and 2,950 feet, typically in desert scrub habitat. Evidence of human use of agave plants as an important food plant dates back about 9,000 years, and currently more than 500 historic agave cultivation sites are known in Arizona. However, *A. murpheyi* exists today strictly as a cultivated relic. It is one of only two dozen or so agaves that produce bulbils (or new plants) along the flowering stalks, which means it can be easily mass propagated by humans. Bulbil reproduction is believed to have been a factor in historical cultivation efforts that increased the variety of this cultivar.

*Murphey’s agave* is a medium-sized plant, the rosette of which reaches approximately 3 feet high. It is a low water-use plant, but requires a little more irrigation than wild-occurring plants (most likely a result of its strictly cultivated past), and it benefits several other families—many went to the plantago family (Plantaginaceae). *Buddleja sessiliflora* is extremely rare in Arizona, although its rarity is relatively unknown and undiscussed. Historically, in Arizona, there are about a dozen herbarium collections for this plant, almost half of which came from the Santa Catalina foothills near Sabino Canyon. Other historic localities in this state are from the Pajarito, Coyote, and Tumacacori Mountains, and from Fresno Canyon and Sonora Creek. These localities are often represented by a single or handful of plants. (This plant is common in Sonora but reaches the an area that receives more than minimal water; in fact, it would make an excellent waterplant. It is cold hardy to the high teens and does well in Tucson. *Rio Grande butterfly bush* blooms in the spring and is very attractive to pollinators. We are pleased to offer this rare and locally declining species. It is likely that the one known remaining plant in the Tucson vicinity will perish within a few years, as the spring continues to dry out from groundwater pumping, continued drought, and increased temperatures. It would be interesting to visit the historic localities to get an idea of just how many of these rare plants are left.

**Bromus anomalus**

*Poaceae*

**Nodding brone**

Many people become concerned when they hear about brone grasses in our region, as there are some really invasive nonnative species of this genus in southern Arizona—like red brome and cheatgrass (*B. rubens* and *B. tectorum*, respectively). Fortunately, there are many locally native species of Bromus, including nodding brone. This lovely grass is a small bunchgrass that reaches about 2 feet high or so, with somewhat wide leaf blades that turn a bluish tint as they mature. The bromes characterize havelarge, “chunky” seedheads. The large seedheads on this species hang downward, hence the common name. *Bromus anomalus* is found locally in the Santa Catalina and Rincon Mountains between elevations of 3,500 and 7,000 feet. It prefers partial shade and moderate water. This is a very attractive grass that works as a great accent plant in the right spot. We are pleased to finally add a native brone to Desert Survivors’ grass inventory.

**Succisa flaviculus var. flaviculus**

*Scrophulariaceae*

**Threadleaf groundsel**

Previously known as *S. longilobus*, and recently reclassified as *S. flaviculus var. flaviculus*, this showy composite is highly recommended for your garden—it makes a stunning landscape element noteworthy for its wooly silverish foliage and a profusion of large yellow blooms. It blooms during the monsoon season and into early fall. This groundsel typically grows to 3 feet high or more and can take full sun, but it benefits from a few hours of afternoon shade (as do so many plants in the desert). It needs moderate to minimal watering. Like all senecios, threadleaf groundsel is a huge pollinator plant, attractive to a variety of butterflies and bees. Unusal in cultivation and seldom offered at nurseries, *S. flaviculus var. flaviculus* is a staff favorite.

Jim Verrier
Director of Plant Nursery

*Photos by Jim Verrier unless otherwise noted*

Program Services: continued from back page

assigned to two main regions in southern Arizona. One works primarily in the southwest region, which includes the Tohono O’odham Nation, and the other works primarily in the southeast region, which includes Green Valley and Santa Cruz County. Things are going very well. It has been a learning process for everyone, but Easter Seals/Blake Foundation has provided support and training opportunities that have made a great difference. Families I have spoken with really like the new model, and the system’s glitches are slowly but surely being worked out.

Everyone is working hard in the Nursery gearing up for our spring sale. We hope you enjoy seeing all the little improvements to buildings (and even bathrooms) around the nursery. Our crews are working to get everything ready so that you can fully enjoy your experience at Desert Survivors. You are very important to us, and we greatly appreciate your continued support. I look forward to seeing you all at the sale.

Karen Wilson
Director of Program Services