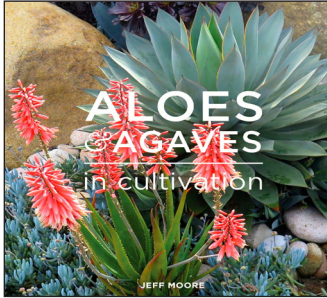


Our November meeting was held in the Witherbee Auditorium at the Los Angeles Zoo, with guest speaker Jeff Moore, co-owner of Solana Succulents Nursery, who shared with us a slide show based on his book *Aloes and Agaves in Cultivation*. He spoke briefly about his Solana Beach nursery, which has stocked common, rare, and unusual succulents for the past 25 years. His expertise with these plants was evident as he spoke about aloes, agaves and their relatives, with an emphasis on how they grow throughout California.



Jeff began his presentation by giving a short description of the differences between agaves and aloes. Aloes are Old World plants which have leaves that are easily broken off and rarely, if ever, will poke you. Agaves on the other hand are New World plants with fibrous leaves and have sharp spines on the margins of their leaves. However, they both have similar growing habits, and therefore make excellent planting companions, which Jeff showed in his slides, beginning with the aloes.

Some of the plants he showed were *A. arborescens*, the most common aloe in California for the last 150 years, *A. bainesii*, a tree form that can grow to over 20', *A. plicatilis* with its distinct fan-shape, *A. castanea* which grows horizontally, the somewhat rare *A. helena*, the misleadingly-named *A. striata*, and a species that Jeff calls *Aloe 'Dave Verity'*, which has pretty bicolored flowers. Most of his pictures featured aloes during their blooming season, and many also showed hummingbirds enjoying the flowers.

He spoke next about the true "red" aloes, such as *A. dorothaea*, *A. cameronii* and *A. vanbalenii*, and mentioned that

many other species' leaves turn reddish when they are stressed or have too much sun exposure. Before moving on to agaves, Jeff mentioned a few other aloe features, including: many can be grown from seed; blooms can be used as cut flowers; and they have very few health problems, except for aloe mite infestations which are non-fatal and easily treated.

Agaves, originating primarily in Mexico and Central America, made up the remainder of his talk. Agaves are monocarpic, meaning they can only flower once before dying, but they can produce off-shoots, and there is much diversity within the genus. There are large specimens such as *A. americana*, *A. ferox* and *A. vilmoriniana*; smaller species and cultivars like *A. victoriae-reginae*, *A. 'Little Shark'* and *A. 'Royal Spine'*; plus everything in-between. Some specimens he highlighted were the tentacled *A. bracteosa*; the stunning but hard-to-grow *A. pelona*; the scary-sounding *A. horrida* with its nasty spines; and designer favorites such as *A. 'Blue Glow'*, *A. 'Red Margin'* and the only "soft" agave, *A. attenuata*, which does not need to have its tips clipped.

Jeff encouraged questions during and after his talk and, in addition to sharing his beautiful images, design tips and botanical information, he brought along plants for sale, plus copies of the book that inspired the presentation, as well as his first publication, *Under the Spell of Succulents*. His latest book, *Soft Succulents*, will be available by the end of 2017, and all three titles can be ordered through his website at [www.solanasucculents.com](http://www.solanasucculents.com).

Sabine Steinmetz



Both photos courtesy of speaker.

## SHARING SECRETS RESPONSES

### What is your favorite So Cal deciduous or "winter" tree and why?

I have several "favorite" deciduous trees, including: my just-harvested Meyer persimmon; my new Babcock peach which will bear fruit this late spring for the first time; my 'Near East' crape myrtle for its bark; and my Sicilian honey fig. I also love my evergreen, dwarf Meyer lemon for its yellow fruit against the dark of winter.

- Shirley Marneus

My favorites are the ginkgo and the liquidambar. Ginkgo leaves turn seasonally until the entire tree is a mass of golden yellow with the ground underneath covered by a golden carpet. I look forward to this each year and have two favorites in my neighborhood that I try not to miss. Liquidambar provide interest for a longer period of time, and depending on the tree, leaves can turn maroon, red, gold, yellow or brown (generally a mix) before dropping. When the tree is bare in winter, many seed "balls" dangle down. Small birds attach themselves upside down to the balls to take seed from the pods. If your tree is planted in the right location you can enjoy watching this tree in the winter from a comfortable warm spot inside your house!

- Barbara Crane

Ginkgo – because it makes beautiful yellow snow.

- Kathy Musial

In late fall, I love our California black walnuts where they coexist with the (evergreen) toyon in the canyons, especially in the Santa Monicas. Walnut leaves turn a bright, golden yellow and make an exquisite companion to the green leaves and red berries of the toyon. But if the question is about favorite "winter" tree, then give me those wonderful Chinese magnolias that drop their burnt brown leaves (ugh), to reveal silvery trunks and stems, soon to be decorated with either white star shaped flowers (*Magnolia stellata*), or pink, white or purple cup shaped flowers (*M. soulangiana*).

- Anonymous

## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY ANNUAL APPEAL

During this season of giving we ask that you consider making a tax-deductible donation to the SCHS to support our on-going programs including student internships, oral histories documenting the horticultural contributions of our treasured members, and the guest speakers / programs / events we present at our monthly meetings.

A letter detailing SCHS objectives will be arriving soon, as well as being posted on our website. Any and all donations are welcomed and appreciated. *Thank you!*