

The SCHS April meeting took place at the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, and consisted of a private tour of the 10-acre Desert Garden led by John Trager, Curator of the Desert Garden and Desert Collections at the Huntington, followed by a panel discussion on succulents with Laurel Woodley and Steve Gerischer in the Brody Botanical Center.

Guests gathered at the main entrance to the Huntington, and were led down to the California Garden for the start of Trager's walk and talk. He mentioned that some of the aloes planted in-ground in the gardens began as test subjects in pots in the California Garden, like *Aloe striata*.

Following the path near the Orbit Pavilion, he pointed out Ethiopian aloes, *Mangave* 'Macho Mocha', *Agave titanota* and a 'Blue Glow' agave that was in full bloom. Additionally, he spoke about dealing with aloe mites, and suggested the best treatment is to trim off infested leaves and burn them, saving any clean off-sets for future planting.



Photo: Sabine Steinmetz

Walking down the main road surrounding the Cactus Garden, Trager continued pointing out plants of interest, like *Kalanchoe luciae* and a blooming *Agave marmorata*. This brought the group to a large installation of *Echinocactus grusonii*, or golden barrels, artfully interspersed with a variety of "old man" cactus. First brought from Mexico and planted at the Huntington in 1908, the golden barrels are now endangered in the wild.

From there, he walked us through a part of the Cactus Garden that had many more succulents in full flower, including various aloes, Crassulaceae, and cacti, pausing to take questions under a large *Caesalpinia cacalaco*. Trager concluded the tour with some growing tips the Huntington uses for different conditions (i.e.: adding a mixture of compost and silica to new planting beds or using crushed lava rock as an amendment in flat areas to aid with drainage), and then took the group to the Brody Center for the panel presentation by two local designers and succulent experts, Laurel Woodley and Steve Gerischer.

Woodley, a past SCHS Horticulturist of the Year recipient, is a retired biology professor from Los Angeles Harbor College, who has been involved in Southern California horticulture since the mid-1960s, and was past director and president of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America, where she currently serves as advisor. She shared slides from her personal collection of gardens she considers to be examples of good design, which integrate other elements with plants to create a harmonious landscape.

She shared pictures of the Patrick Anderson estate in Fallbrook, where the yellow color of his house is used as a unifying background for a variety of plants in colored pots selected for their compatibility with the house. To create additional interest, plants are chosen based on varying shapes, sizes and heights. Sculpture, a pond and the repetition of orange and turquoise accents throughout the garden also tie various areas together visually.

Other slides Woodley showed included Sherman Gardens in Corona del Mar which uses miniature sempervirens to maximum effect, and shots of some favorite plants such as the *Agave lophantha* 'Tricolor', *Euphorbia* 'Snowflake' and a beautiful *Aloe castanea*

in full flower.

Steve Gerischer rounded out the evening's program with slides featuring well-placed succulents in designed landscapes as well as in their native habitat, to serve as inspirations for home gardens. Gerischer is the current president of the SCHS and owner of Larkspur Garden Design. He has an extensive knowledge of succulents and their myriad uses, which he shared in his presentation. He discussed the need to plan garden spacing for eventual plant growth as well as for plant replacements; shared thoughts on using containers, such as hypertufa, to showcase specimens; and offered design suggestions for mixing different varieties in one location to avoid having sections of the garden look like "plant ghettos." Additionally, Gerischer shared design tips for combining plants with other elements, such as including containers with groups of in-ground plants (Judge Hall Garden in Pasadena), or incorporating personal items among the plants (Woollcott/McCarthy Garden in the Hollywood Hills), to create unique focal points.



Photo: Sabine Steinmetz

He concluded his talk by citing some of his favorites, such as *Agave attenuata* 'Boutin Blue', and also suggested South Coast Botanic Garden, the Cactus and Succulent Society of America's website (cssainc.org), Desert Creations and the Cactus Ranch nurseries in the San Fernando Valley, plus speciality garden club sales as some resources for home gardeners to find the more unusual specimens they might want to try in their own gardens.

✂ Sabine Steinmetz

## SHARING SECRETS RESPONSES

*Do you know of any venues we could use for our monthly meetings? We are considering rotating locations to improve accessibility to more members.*



Members submitted a variety of alternate meeting places, which the SCHS board will be researching for feasibility (room capacity, cost, location, etc.) in the coming months.

We thank you for your many thoughtful suggestions and hope we will be able to implement some of them

in the near future. Check online and in the newsletter for updates, or speak to one of the board members.

We are always happy to receive member participation in our ongoing efforts to improve the SCHS experience for everyone, and encourage you to keep contributing...

*Thank you!*