

# The Chuparosa

Chapter Newsletter

Volume 4, Issue 2 - February 2017



## Garden Tour is March 26th



Photo by Caroline Greyschok.

One of the major events hosted by Desert Horticultural Society of the Coachella Valley, the 12th annual Desert Garden Tour from noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, March 26, will feature desert-friendly, water conserving gardens, including a unique hillside garden, private homes, and HOA.

This event features self-guided walks through five colorful Palm Springs gardens. Created by homeowners and design professionals, these gardens offer insight and inspiration that speak to every garden style.

Guests check in and receive tour maps at a new location this year: Desert Water Agency at 1200 South Gene Autry Trail in Palm Springs. No checks or credit cards accepted onsite. Cash only, please.

Pre-registration is available online at <http://bit.ly/PSGardenTour2017>. Guests may also register on-site from noon to 2 p.m. at Desert Water Agency the day of the event. There is no cost for current DHSCV members. Admission is \$15 for non-members and \$5 for students.

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***To make this day work, we need the help of our members. Please consider volunteering to support this event.***

We need garden volunteers, registration volunteers, and anyone able to help us with heavy lifting or driving around among gardens during the tour. **You do not need to be a plant expert, just a plant lover.**

Learn more about becoming a volunteer for the Garden Tour at <http://bit.ly/PSGardenTour2017Info>

## Our Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 19 at 6 p.m.

### Cacti, Agaves and Yuccas of California's Deserts

Stephen Ingram's multimedia presentation explores some of the unique attributes of the cacti, agaves, and yuccas and highlights what makes them such intriguing components of our native plant communities. With stunning images of their colorful blossoms and unusual growth forms, this program showcases a number of species and varieties that occur in California's Anza-Borrego desert area.

The main slideshow-talk will be approximately 40 minutes, with time for questions. A second 10-minute show set to music illustrates the beauty of these remarkable succulents. Following the presentation, Stephen will sign copies of his book from Cachuma Press, Cacti, Agaves, and Yuccas of California and Nevada.

Ingram is a native Californian with a long-time interest in plants and plant ecology. He received a B.S. degree in biology from Lewis and Clark

College, and an M.A. degree in botany from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Following graduate school, he was employed as part of the Research Department at Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota, Fla. He now works part-time as a photographer/writer and biological consultant in the Eastern Sierra.

Ingram is past president of the Bristlecone Chapter of the California Native Plant Society. His photos have been used in numerous books, magazines, and calendars, and are also sold as fine art prints.

**5:30 p.m.** Free plant exchange before the meeting. Bring pups, cuttings, plants to share with others. Even if you cannot bring plants feel free to adopt and watch your garden grow.

**6 p.m.** Meeting and presentation by Stephen Ingram. Free, open to the public.

**Where:** Hoover Room, The Living Desert, 47-900 Portola Ave, Palm Desert

## More Upcoming Events

Here's a cache of events and meetings of interest to members of the Desert Horticultural Society of the Coachella Valley and fellow gardening enthusiasts. Read more at [www.deserthorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.deserthorticulturalsociety.org).

### Ongoing Mondays free help:

Through May 2017. Master Gardeners will be at the UC Cooperative Extension office in Indio to answer gardening questions, help solve gardening problems. Free. Drops-ins,

telephone calls, emails welcome. 81-077 Indio Blvd., Suite H. (760) 342-2511, [anrmgindio@ucanr.edu](mailto:anrmgindio@ucanr.edu)

### Ongoing "Ask the Gardener":

Master Gardeners set up tables Saturdays at Palm Springs farmers market; on second, fourth Wednesday at Palm Desert farmers market; on second, fourth Sunday at La Quinta farmers market. 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

### Ongoing: Docent tours of Moorten

**Botanical Garden:** By Master Gardeners, through middle of May 2017.

Scheduled between 10:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m. Free with admission (\$5 adults, \$2 for children 15 and under, no charge for children under 5). Garden houses: 9 a.m.-4 p.m. daily except Wednesday. 1701 S. Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs. (760) 327-6555. Call to confirm tours.

### February 23 Field Trip to Huntington Gardens:

8 a.m. to 3 p.m. This year our docent tour of the desert garden will be led by Professor Sean Lahmeyer. Walk through the Camellia Garden in full bloom. New entry gar-



## Events, cont'd

den, gift shop, and dining pavilion. A car pool will meet in Palm Springs at Wellness Park at 8 a.m. on the day of the tour. RSVP for this event: <http://www.deserthorticulturalsociety.org/events/2017/02/huntington-garden/>

**March 11-12 SOLD OUT Overnight bus trip to Arizona:** Boyce Thompson Arboretum, Superior on 3/11; Tucson Botanical Garden on 3/12. \$139 per person, double occupancy includes bus, hotel, one meal. Waitlist only.

### **March 16 Eco-Discovery Tour of Big Morongo Canyon Preserve:**

On this 3-hour stream-side excursion, Robin will identify native plants, and describe uses of these desert plants for food, medicine, tools, clothing, and shelter. Birds and other wildlife that may cross our path will be identified, and Robin will reveal fun stories about each. 8:30-11:30 a.m. Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, 11055 East Drive, Morongo Vly, CA. \$20 per person. For more information or to RSVP, call 760-363-1166, visit [www.powerofplants.com](http://www.powerofplants.com), or [robin@powerofplants.com](mailto:robin@powerofplants.com).

**March 26 12th annual Desert Garden Tour:** Noon-4 p.m. Registration noon-2 p.m. at Desert Water Agency, Gene Autry Trail, Palm Springs, where guests will pick up map of tour. Members free, non-members \$15. Pre-register at [deserthorticulturalsociety.org](http://deserthorticulturalsociety.org). Cash-only registration day of event. See [Deserthorticulturalsociety.org](http://Deserthorticulturalsociety.org) for more information.

## This & That

### **Officers elected for 2017**

At DHSCV Jan. 18 meeting at the Living Desert, a slate of officers recommended by the Board of Directors was approved by membership.

Officers for 2017 are: President Paul Ortega, Vice President Tracy Merrihan, Treasurer Judi Greene and Secretary Kai Kushen.

### **State increases water allotments**

The Department of Water Resources, in late January, upped the projected amount of water that the State Water Contractors (like DWA and CVWD) will get in 2017 from 45% to 60%, in a statement released by DWA Outreach and Conservation Manager Ashley Metzger.

"This means our Valley will be able to recharge our groundwater basin with even more imported water," she said.

The allotment is determined by rain, snowpack and reservoir levels. If the winter holds more wet weather, the allotment could increase further.

Since the drought emergency has not been declared over, many of the restrictions put in place during the drought will be permanent due to an executive order by Governor Brown, she said.

Also, in February the State Water Resources Control may decide whether to extend the drought regulations. They require local water districts to report monthly water use.

### **Planting after rain?**

It's rare that the Valley records as much rain as dropped in the later days of January. While it might be tempting to plant in our unusual wet soil (or sand), experts suggest otherwise. Immediately, anyway.

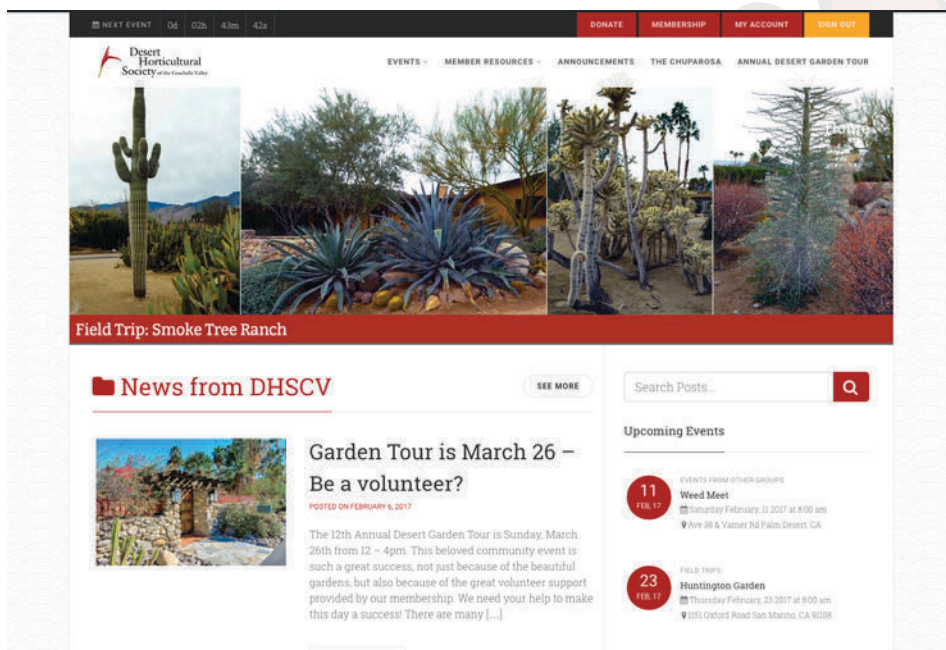
"Digging in overly wet soil can lead to 'compaction,'" according to a recent article in the Los Angeles Times. That's when water access and root growth are restricted and new plants will struggle to grow.

With sandy soils, as in the West Valley, there is "more latitude because they don't readily compact," said Rosalind Creasy, author of *Edible Landscaping*. However, gardeners in the East Valley where some of the soil contains clay might see compaction.

Another expert suggests avoiding "digging in waterlogged soil since that could cause soil texture to change" and become denser. Richard Hayden, head gardener at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, says "if you are tamping in wet soil around a plant you just

**Continued on page 5**

## We have a great new website!



DHSCV has a new website crafted by member Jessyca Frederick with assistance from member Carl Schoeneman. It's designed to allow the Society to operate more efficiently and to meet future growth needs.

One major new feature is better payment handling. You can pay by credit card without a PayPal account. PayPal will still be processing those transactions and you can still pay with PayPal or you can mail a check. This includes paid events (except the Garden Tour where we don't accept checks but you can pay by credit card if you pre-register online), donations and membership fees.

Membership renewals will be dealt with differently. Auto renewal via PayPal has been discontinued. Mem-

bers will be reminded via email to renew ahead of their renewal date. Renewal will be via the website.

It's now easier to RSVP for events. Members will RSVP only for themselves. Those who would like to bring a guest to an event will need to have their guest register and RSVP on our site. They do not need to become members; they just need to have an active email address in our system.

The website is at the same location—[www.deserthorticulturalsociety.org](http://www.deserthorticulturalsociety.org)—and the sign in button is in the upper right portion of the screen.

Once members have used their new sign-in credentials (members should have received information about

this already) they can access some of our members-only articles, RSVP for events, pay membership dues, etc.

Change is sometimes a challenge to implement, but this new site offers greater flexibility for you, and for those DHSCV volunteers who organize and maintain the website, events, and membership. We ask for your patience in converting to and using our new site. There will be the inevitable glitch or two, but hopefully it'll be at a minimum and not inconvenience you.

Please feel free to send questions or problems to Jessyca Frederick at [jessyca@deserthorticulturalsociety.org](mailto:jessyca@deserthorticulturalsociety.org) and she'll take care of the problems as quickly as possible. When you report a problem, please tell her what kind of computer you're using (Mac, PC, iPhone, or Android phone), what internet browser you're using (Safari, Chrome, Firefox, and Internet Explorer are most common), describe carefully what went wrong (what were you trying to do, what did or didn't happen that was unexpected, were there any error messages on the screen).

We are very pleased to be launching a new website and hope you will be, too. We treasure your membership and your participation in our Desert Horticultural Society family.



## Plant of the month: Dwarf Myrtle (*Myrtis communis*)



By Troy Bankord

Native to warmer, Mediterranean climes (and noted in Biblical times), Dwarf Myrtle is a popular, compact tightly branched evergreen shrub with creamy-white flowers that has fragrant foliage when crushed.

Its oil is known to be used in perfumes, soaps and potpourri's. Extremely useful, durable and dependable it is truly underutilized here in the Coachella Valley. It is popular in both formal gardens, utilized as tight, clipped hedges but also in desert, Mediterranean or transitional gardens, where fragrance or deep,

rich green foliage is desired.

When using the plant in more natural gardens, it can be cut back drastically in late winter and allowed to comeback loosely in a natural manner. Dwarf Myrtle blooms an insignificant white flower in the spring, it thrives in full sun, is a low-water user and appreciates our sandy, well-drained soils. With ample water, it is a moderate grower and is cold hardy to about 10 degrees. Dwarf Myrtle can grow up to 4 feet or larger, if left untouched. The 'dwarf' species, 'Compacta', is said to grow only 2-3 feet in height.

## This & That, cont'd

planted, you could be relegating that plant to the gardening equivalent of cement shoes."

### **DWA rate increase pays for new pipelines**

Most Desert Water Agency customers saw their bills increase a bit in January, most by less than \$4 a month.

That added revenue will help pay for replacing aging pipelines in DWA service areas. DWA's system has about 392 miles of pipeline and needs to replace about 80 miles of that. Most of the work will be done in the summer to avoid traffic.

In addition, from 2017 until at least 2031, DWA plans to install about 2.75 miles of new pipe each year.

In 2017, DWA officials say, these areas (mostly older areas of Palm Springs) have been prioritized: Linda Vista, Pasatiempo, Paseo El Mirador, Camino Norte, Broadmoor, Via Monte Vista and Stevens Road.

### **Dog park welcomes new desert landscape**

The dog park behind Palm Springs City Hall has been revamped, including adding landscaping that is less water intensive. The city removed about one-third of the turf area. Now edges of the park sport desert landscaping.

## Maintenance by the Month: February

By Troy Bankord

Timing is everything. And being a desert gardener isn't easy, with our temperatures potentially dipping below-freezing in the winter and then skyrocketing into the triple digits—sometimes up to 125 degrees—in the summer.

So, given these extremes, gardeners in the low desert must always be thinking months ahead. If plantings are cut back too late—into the late spring or even summer—their surge of spring growth can be missed. Furthermore, many of our desert plantings go dormant in the heat of the summer and cutting off their shade could most assuredly send them to the compost pile! Beautiful, natural-looking desert gardens require effective pruning and much of this is based on timing.

### Garden clean-up

As our days get longer and a little warmer in February, our desert plantings are showing signs of life. Many parts of the Coachella Valley had a bit of a freeze and we're not out of the woods yet. So, keep that frost cloth handy! I gave quite a run-down about frost protection in last month's *Chuparosa*, but watch for nights dipping down to 36 degrees

or below. Thirty-six degrees may be 36 in one part of the Valley, but may mean 31 in another; or even one's own back or side yard.

February is another great month for you and your plants to get a work-out! Removing dead wood from your evergreen trees and plantings is a good idea but cutting back of frost damaged plantings should be put off until around Valentine's Day



*Caesalpinia cacalaco* (Cascalote)

mid-month. Also, hardy plantings like creosote, sage, myrtle, olive, oleander should be cut back pronto, to ensure any spring and summer blooming. Cutting them back further than their desired size, allows for softer growth that will cover the stubs made from heavy pruning.

Many desert plantings may meet the fate of gas trimmers or shears and if so, one will find twice as much growth at the perimeter of the plant, while the plant's interior may simply be dead wood. If your desire is to have a garden with a more 'natural'

look, alleviating those "balls, cubes and gumdrops," is most assuredly on your agenda. And February is an effective time to get in there and thin out half the dense growth for a light, airier look. You'll want to cut the growth back to the center of the plant to avoid seeing any "cuts" you've made. New growth will now be encouraged within the center of the plant, now that the interior can "see the light!"

### Shy rosemary

Caution! Beware of cutting rosemary back too drastically—unless it is a young plant. Rosemary is simply one of those few plants that won't tolerate heavy pruning. The growth simply dies. Rosemary is best maintained with regular shearing or regular

monthly pruning to constantly encourage new growth and to avoid having it suddenly take over a space that it simply is too large for.

### Tough bird of paradise

Mexican bird of paradise (*Caesalpinia pulcherrima*) can be cut back now. Because it blooms more prolifically on new growth versus old wood, it's best to cut it back to about 1 foot in height. With adequate water, it will easily reach the 6-foot height by summer's end. If *Caesalpinia* is being used as a hedge or as a screen,



## February maintenance, cont'd

you most likely may not want to cut it back that heavily. Cutting it back by half will give you a fuller look—along with a plethora of spring, summer and fall color—while allowing you to keep more height. This is also the case with the *Caesalpinia mexicana*, which can be heavily pruned this time of year.

### Out with old *Lantana*

*Lantana* species also bloom more heavily on new, young growth versus old wood. Cut them back for a flurry of fresh, green growth, minus old foliage that may have hosted eggs and larvae for our pesky white flies and other insects.

Always remember... you'll want to turn your watering system on after cutting things back to give them a good drink and a good start. I've found that giving them a "shower"—washing down their leaves and branches—along with a good drink around the roots, helps promote new growth more quickly. In our dry climate, hosing bare wood down on occasion after heavy pruning helps "soften" the wood, thus allowing new growth to protrude through the hard bark more readily.

*Salvia* species—especially *Salvia greggii*—should be cut back as early as possible this month. It can be fertilized with a balanced or slow release fertilizer. Compost is good

and even a shot of Miracle Gro will do wonders.

### Hardy grasses

Waiting until temperatures are too warm often encourages our desert grasses to be trimmed into 2-foot high flat tops or gum drops. To avoid this look, most desert grasses should be cut back as early in February as possible. And don't be afraid to cut them down to an inch or two. If grasses are not cut back drastically in the late winter, care must be taken not to cut them back too drastically into the spring; especially not mid-summer. And again, avoid cutting back purple fountain grass until the first of March, after any chance of lingering frost.

### Treating citrus

If you have citrus in your garden, you'll want to trim, thin, shape and remove any dead wood as early in February as possible to avoid stunting the surge of new spring growth and inhibiting upcoming blooming. I've found that fertilizing citrus at holiday times is most effective for producing fruit and healthy foliage. The four holidays one should remember are: Valentine's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th and Labor Day. Organic, balanced fertilizers can be applied evenly around the root zone. Fertilizers should be mixed with water or water-in well after

applying for effectiveness and to avoid burning of the roots.

### February bloomers

*Aloe* species: x 'Blue Elf', *A. ferox*, *A. dawaii*, *A. barbadensis*, Partridge Breast, Coral (*A. striata*) and *A. farnesiana*, White and Giant Bursage, Sweet Acacia, Yellow Bulbine, Cascalote (*Caesalpinia cacalaco*), *Calliandra* species, Desert Holly, *Cassia* (*Senna*) species, *Dalea* species (*D. bicolor* especially), *Encelia farinosa* (Brittlebush), *Dyssodia*, *Eremophila* 'Valentine', *Justicia californica* (Chuparosa) and *J. candicans*, *Pedilanthus* (Lady Slipper), *Penstemon* species *P. eatoni* and *P. parryi*, *Salvia* species, *S. clevelandii* and *S. leucantha*, Globe Mallow, Texas Mountain Laurel, and *Tagetes lemmonii* (Mt. Lemmon Marigold).

Troy Bankord of Troy Bankord Design in Palm Springs has been a landscape and interior designer for 30 years. His award-winning projects have been featured in publications, on architectural tours and on television shows. In Arizona, his firm was the forerunner in native desert plant species maintenance via natural and selective pruning practices. He was named, 'Master of the Southwest' by Phoenix Home & Garden Magazine in 2006, and is a graduate of Marquette University.

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## Want to Get More Involved?

*We have so many opportunities for members to become more actively involved with the Desert Horticultural Society of Coachella Valley. Jump in!*

## Send Us Your Photos & Favorite Websites!

We like to show off photos of gardens or plants that horticulture society members have collected. Please send your jpeg photos at full size attached to an email with your name, where the photo was taken and information about the photo subject.

And, have you come across online gardens, educational sources or conservation links you like? Email links and photos to Jamie Lee Pricer at [jlp6@hotmail.com](mailto:jlp6@hotmail.com). We'll share them in future newsletters.