



Volunteer Times

Published for the volunteers of the UCI Arboretum

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The Lure of *Echeverias*

By Laura Lyons, Nursery Manager,
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Echeverias are a wonderful and diverse genus of succulents native within an area ranging from Mexico to northern South America. They are found in high mountain climates rather than deserts; a result is their preference for cool temperatures. Because of this many authorities classify them as shade plants, but on the coastal strip they do fine in full sun as long as they do not get a lot of hot, reflected light, say off a wall or concrete paths. In our valleys, and certainly in inland areas like Riverside and San Bernardino, avoid hot afternoon sun.

Until recently, only a couple species were commonly available, like *E. elegans* and *E. imbricate*, both of which gardeners have long been known as Hen and Chicks. However, the genus is wonderfully diverse with over 100 known species and many of those species, selections, cultivars, and hybrids, are making their way into the nursery



***Echeveria* 'Topsy Turvy'**
photo by Laura Lyons

trade.

Echeveria grow as rosettes with leaves that are wonderfully diverse in color, form, and texture. They feature bell-shaped blooms, usually in clusters, at the end of a 1-2 ft tall stalk, depending on the variety. Many of them seem to bloom in fall. Some varieties have very thick, fleshy, almost diamond-shaped leaves; while others have thinner, wider leaves, often having colored or ruffled edges.

These are low growing species making them great selections for rock gardens, borders, or under taller succulents. Most *Echeveria* offset readily; spreading over time.

I generally try to have at least a couple *Echeverias* available at each of our plant sales, and I am always trying out new selections. However, a few of my favorites are:

- *Echeveria* 'Blue Curls'—One of the larger mem-

See Favorites, Page 2

CURRENT VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>DAY AND TIME</u>
Nursery Group	Wednesday 9 a.m. – noon
Orchid Care Group	Wednesday 9 a.m. – noon
SA Bulb Garden	Wednesday 9 a.m. – noon
California Garden	Thursday 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Herbarium Group	Thursday 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Friday Club	Friday 9 a.m. – noon
Special Events	See Cover

For information on any of these or for general information on volunteering, call Laura Lyons at: (949) 824-5833 or e-mail: ldlyons@uci.edu

Upcoming Plant Sales

June 13 'June Bloom' Saturday Sale
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

July 11 Saturday Plant Sale,
9 a.m. to Noon

August 1 Saturday Plant Sale,
9 a.m. to Noon

Soil Mixes at the Arboretum

By Laura Lyons, Nursery Manager, UCI Arboretum

At the Arboretum all our plants are grown in custom mixes prepared on the grounds. We use a concrete mixer to make the large volumes of soil required for our nursery, but you can certainly use our recipes at home to prepare your own using a tub or wheelbarrow.



First, a bit about our ingredients: Redwood compost, peat moss, and fine perlite are quite readily available. Pumice, another key component, is being carried by more and more nurseries. Botanic gardens have used pumice for years to improve drainage and oxygenation at the root zone, but more and more home gardeners are finding its benefits. The final key ingredient is sand, specifically, a coarse silica sand. This might actually be the hardest item to find. The sand we use is much coarser than most beach sands, for example. In fact, it is closer to common plaster sand in texture. Looking for a very coarse play sand is your best bet; note however, at hardware stores most bagged play sand is much too fine for plant mix.

Our basic mix, sandy soil or sandy bulb, is a standard UC mix. Unlike commercial potting mixes, it contains a great deal of sand, as you see below. Nursery mix is a modified UC mix with less sand, though still more than you would find in commercial potting mixes. Our desert mix is ideal for most succulents.



Sandy Soil Mix (UC mix)

- 3 parts sand
- 2 parts peat moss
- 2 parts redwood compost
- 1 part fine perlite



Nursery Mix

- 2 parts sand
- 2 parts peat moss
- 2 parts redwood compost
- 1 part fine perlite



Desert Mix

- 2 parts sand
- 1 part peat moss
- 1 part redwood compost
- 1 part oak leaf mold (optional)
- 2 parts pumice

Laura on Vacation, May 16-23

By Laura Lyons, Nursery Manager, UCI Arboretum

It's been a busy spring, and I'm quite ready to spend some time in one of my favorite places on Earth, the Sierra Nevada. I'll be on vacation May 16-23 exploring Kings Canyon and Sequoia National parks. What better place for a tree hugger than among some of the biggest and oldest trees on the planet, Sequoiadendron giganteum, better known as the Giant Sequoia? As a bonus, Kings Canyon appeals to the amateur geologist in me, and I anticipate a wonderful week hiking the parks.

Meanwhile, back at the Arboretum, little will change. Only groups that I supervise directly—Herbarium, Nursery, and Friday Club—will not meet that week. All other groups—South African Bulb, Orchid Care, California Natives—will meet as usual.

I'll be back in the office Tuesday May 26, ready to write the tale of my adventures for a future issue of the Volunteer Times.

Favorite *Echeveria*

Favorites, From Page 1

- *Echeveria runyonii* 'Topsy Turvy'—Wonderful, silver convex leaves. Each rosette almost forms a ball shape with its curving leaves.
- *Echeveria* 'Black Prince'—This hybrid of *E. shaviana* and *E. affinis* has dark chocolate-brown leaves.
- *Echeveria* 'Doris Taylor' (Woolly rose)—This selection has a dense coating of fine hairs on its leaves.

Note: Botanists refer to such leaves as tomentose leaves. They leaves are common among succulents. These tiny hairs trap moisture from the plant's stomata (i.e., the pores it uses for gas exchange during photosynthesis.) With a lot of succulents, these hairs include needle fine spines, so beware! Fortunately, *Echeveria* 'Doris Taylor' does not have these hidden hazards making its curious leaves a welcome addition to the garden or patio.

- *Echeveria shaviana* 'Truffles'—A wonderful cultivar of *E. shaviana*. Its leaves are silver with deeply ruffled edges its leaves.

In botany, prickles, spines, and thorns are plant modifications having sharp ends: prickle - modified cortex and epidermis, spine - modified leaf, and thorn - modified limb.

IMPORTANT DATES

DATE	EVENT
May 16-23	Laura on Vacation
Looking Ahead	
June 13	June Bloom Plant Sale
June 27	Pacific Live Volunteer Day 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
June 27	New Volunteer Orientation 2 p.m.

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