

Last month the SCHS presented its second webinar, this time on the subject of agaves. While originally scheduled for June 11, the presentation by Jeremy Spath of Water's Path landscaping and Hidden Agave nursery was cancelled last minute due to unforeseen circumstances. However, SCHS's excellent program committee was able to book another agave specialist to give a talk on June 25.



In his presentation "Agaves for the Landscape", nursery owner and author Greg Starr covered the basics about agaves, broken down into fascinating "tidbits" and then shared what he considers to be some of the best species for landscape use in the Southwestern United States. Starr Nursery is a mail order business established in July of 1995 and specializes in cactus and



Photo from speaker's website.

succulents, with a particular emphasis on agaves. Born and raised in Tucson, Arizona, Starr grew to love flora and fauna of the desert, and eventually received a degree in horticulture from the University of Arizona in 1979. His first trip to Baja California was in 1981 with noted Sonoran Desert botanists Dr. Ray Turner and Dr. Tony Burgess, and from there on he was hooked on agaves. He has made many return trips to see these plants in habitat, and many of his slide show images showed them in the wild as well as in landscapes.

Starr began his presentation with an overview of this New World genus, comprised of 250-300 species, by describing their basic differences and

showing pictorial examples of each. For instance, agaves typically have one of two types of inflorescences – spicate and paniculate - and a third, intermediate type (racemose) usually indicative of hybrids. He also described the two basic vegetative forms (solitary and offsetting) and provided multiple photos of each. Further, Starr explained that while agaves usually grow in the full sun in their native habitat, they are not actually desert plants because they are mostly found above the desert proper and at higher elevations. He then presented examples of agave species grouped into five size categories ranging from approx. 12"-60+", and provided suggestions for landscape applications of numerous species. He also spoke about general planting and care guidelines for agaves, as well as the individual culture for many of his examples.

Following the presentation, the SCHS again offered a live Q & A session for attendees with Starr providing useful tips about the growing, propagating and general care of agaves. (All of the Q & A can be found at the end of the archived YouTube video. See link at end of article.) Also, SCHS's social media maven and Zoom host, Erin Castillo, "spun" our virtual prize wheel, awarding the winner a copy of Starr's 2012 book *Agaves: Living Sculptures for Landscapes*. His first book, *Cool Plants for Hot Gardens*, is currently out of print, but he is working on revising it by next year. He was also a coauthor for the *Field Guide to the Cacti and Other Succulents of Arizona* which will be heading into its third edition sometime this year.

For more information about Starr, agaves, and his nursery, please visit: [www.starr-nursery.com](http://www.starr-nursery.com).

Sabine Steinmetz

Click on the link below to see the entire presentation (including plant & resource lists) on SCHS's YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PBxLPjiA2I>

## SCHS MONTHLY GARDEN SHARE

During July, we suggest you:

- Continue monitoring your irrigation, especially for containers, annuals and trees
- Harvest your edibles to keep them producing throughout the summer months
- Protect your fruits and veggies from critters by covering plants with mesh bird-netting and consider picking self-ripening fruits before their peak, to store indoors
- Slow down on the big chores - enjoy harvesting, maybe do a little dead-heading - but relax, stay hydrated and try to take it easy in the garden!
- It's never too early to start planning for your fall planting...

Sabine Steinmetz

## Analyzing SCHS Webinar Data & More

The SCHS had good attendance at both our May and June webinars, as well as gaining almost a dozen new members (see list on page 1). We are analyzing data to ascertain to what extent our growing online presence is influencing virtual attendees who may be considering membership. Additionally, feedback from members

(and others) helps us when evaluating what speakers, programs and other events to schedule in the future.

Regardless, our increased presence online has translated into more engagement with the people visiting our various platforms, and that in itself is a positive thing. We cannot operate in a vacuum if we wish to grow and

meet the needs of future generations of Southern California gardeners.

Please support us in this effort to increase our outreach by encouraging friends to check out past events on our YouTube channel (link below). And please, let us hear from you too!

*Thank you for helping us grow!*

View SCHS on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYYBy88Q361IQVnV69qgmGg>