



You're Invited to the Succulent Swap & Share

Saturday, October 22 | 10 a.m. – Noon | 10805 Melva Road

Mark your calendars now to join us on Saturday, October 22, from 10 a.m. to noon, for an enjoyable and instructional morning. GMIA is dedicating this year's event to Paul Geldbach, a lover of nature and former board member who chaired many previous Succulent Swaps.

This year, we're also renaming our event the Succulent Swap and Share, a special acknowledgment of the generosity of GMIA members who are always willing to share the bounty of their gardens. And speaking of sharing, Wendy and Ron Caragher have volunteered to host the event at 10805 Melva Road, the second year they have done so.

The Succulent Swap and Share is an opportunity to discover new varieties, learn more about GMIA and enjoy the Caraghers' magnificent gardens. Early admission for GMIA members is at 10 a.m.—a good reason to renew your membership if it has expired (see mailing label on page 8). The event is open to the entire community from 11 a.m. to noon.

Susan Nichols and her team of GMIA volunteers organizing this event will provide coffee, water and light snacks. Whether you are swapping, sharing or taking home samples for your own garden, you will be welcome. And don't forget to bring along bags or boxes to transport the plants home. 🌱

Two Candidates Vie for Helix Water Board Seat

The November 8 election will determine a new representative for Division 2 on the Helix Water District board of directors. **JORDAN LEHR** and **ANDREA BETH DAMSKY** are candidates for the open seat, which represents most of the GMIA community.

Damsky is a retired professional acupuncturist. She is chair of the Environmental Sustainability Commission of La Mesa, a community representative for the Urban Forestry Working Group of La Mesa and a former member of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Lehr is a retired vocational educator at Grossmont High School with experience in management, communications, and budgeting. Currently chief financial officer at a commercial water distribution company, he also has a California general building contractors license.

GMIA encourages members to research these candidates and vote in the November election. To learn more about the Helix Water District board and see a map of its service area, go to <https://hwd.com/board/>. 🌱

January 7, 2023 Walk to the Top

How will you celebrate New Year 2023? Don't forget to include our 15th annual Walk to the Top of Mt. Helix in your plans. Join GMIA members on Saturday, January 7, 2023, for a great way to start your healthy new year!

The family-friendly and dog-friendly walk begins at 10 a.m. at the Fire Station on Vivera Drive. It's only .65 miles up and you'll find refreshments, music, and neighbors at the top.

If you want to help us plan this fun event, contact yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com. See you there! 🌱



GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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619-252-2295

Joan Camana, First Vice President
858-449-9796

Pat Ryan, Second Vice President
619-248-1619

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Viewpoints is a community newsletter published by the Grossmont – Mt. Helix Improvement Association. Letters to the Editor should be sent to P. O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

This newsletter reflects the efforts of your entire Board of Directors.

Editor: Coleen Geraghty
Design & Layout: Victoria Vinton,
Coyote Press Graphic
Communications

www.gmia.net

**Email us at:
yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com**

MISSION

GMIA is an 84-year-old non-profit 501(c)4 public benefit membership organization. Our mission is to preserve and enhance the character and quality of the community and foster pride in the area. We do not employ a paid staff and are served by an all-volunteer board.

President's Message

It was wonderful to return to the Water Conservation Garden for our annual meeting after two years away. It was clear our members also missed the Garden – we had twice the usual number sign up for docent tours before the meeting began.

The annual meeting was a great chance to catch up with friends and neighbors and enjoy a dinner from Phil's Barbecue. District Attorney Summer Stephan talked about some of the primary crime issues facing San Diego County, especially how fentanyl abuse has become a major concern. She also had some good news for Mt. Helix residents, citing statistics that showed our area has a very low crime rate.

As president, I highlighted some of GMIA's accomplishments this year. We returned to holding events in person, such as the Walk to the Top of Mt. Helix and the Art & Garden Tour. Our next major event, the Succulent Swap, is scheduled for Saturday, October 22, at the home of Wendy and Ron Caragher.

When Nathan Fletcher became our new county supervisor, GMIA built a relationship with him and his staff. They worked with GMIA to provide additional funding for a monument sign that will be installed at the corner of Fuerte Drive and Avocado Boulevard to welcome people to the Mt. Helix community.

GMIA also continued its advocacy and community awareness. When the county suggested creating safe parking for the homeless at a Park and Ride site at Avocado Boulevard and SR 94, GMIA organized two webinars with county staff so that the public could provide input and express opposition to the plans. The county no longer is considering the site.

GMIA can do its work because of the support of our membership and a strong board. Please let your neighbors know about us and urge them to join at gmia.net. If you would like to become more involved with GMIA, please contact us at vouremianeighbor@gmail.com. Thank you for helping to make GMIA a vital organization for our community. ▲

Anne Krueger



Thank You Donors!

Special thanks to these members who donated \$25 or greater in excess of their dues.

Edward Suhay
Robert and Holly Yarris
Paul and Janel Pehau
Gary Wyer
Marybeth Wilson
Janille Leslie

Ron Stahl
Gary Henderson
Suzanne Cadwallader & Arthur Raybold
Clarice and Gary Utt
Zita Gardner

Celebrating Our Volunteers

CAROLE AND BOB CAPARAS

by Linda Miller

Someone might ask Bob Caparas why he would invite dozens, or even hundreds, of people to walk around his self-made, creative garden. "It's for the community," he would reply.

Bob bought his Mt. Helix house in 1979. First he renovated the inside; then he got to work on the 1+-acre yard that has a natural stream running through it. Bob built two beautiful stone bridges over the stream so that visitors can easily cross.

"At first, Bob didn't want to open his yard to the public," said his wife, Carole. Then a neighbor told him he couldn't keep this amazing place to himself. We can all thank that neighbor.

Eventually Bob became comfortable inviting strangers to see his property because visitors are so respectful of it. In the intervening years, Bob and Carole

have opened their property at least three times for the GMIA Garden Tour. They have also hosted the San Diego Horticultural Society, the San Diego Museum of Art, an annual miniature golf tournament, weddings and other events.

The couple first met in 9th grade. Bob said he had a big crush on Carole because "she was one of the good-looking ones," but he was too shy to let her know. They went their separate ways for decades, and eventually met up again at the San Diego High School 35th Reunion. Both were available at the time, and they started dating. They married in 2003.

For their anniversaries, Carole seeks out unusual gifts for Bob, such as the huge cement turtles that decorate one section of the garden. Their yard has many tableaus throughout, including



prehistoric, Roman, African, Southeast Asian, Alaskan, tropical areas and more. The couple has created these original scenes out of stone, wood, authentic folk art, fossils, found objects and Bob's own artistic creations. It takes at least an hour to walk the entire garden.

In the 40+ years he has owned his Mt. Helix property, Bob has become accustomed to having people enjoy the fruits of his labor. You might say it's just something he does for his community. ▲

In Memoriam: Paul Geldbach

by Dania Barroso-Conde

GMIA is saddened to report the passing in August of former board member Paul Geldbach. He was 52 years old.

Paul loved his family, friends, and community. From 2015-2020, he served on the GMIA committees for the annual Walk to the Top of Mount Helix and the Succulent Swap. Eventually, he co-chaired these events, while also providing logistical support at every GMIA function. His efforts and guidance were vital to the success of so many events enjoyed by the Mt. Helix community. Paul demonstrated by example the importance of preserving and contributing to the community by bringing his daughter, Greta, to work alongside him at many GMIA functions.

The winding roads, stone walls, and abundance of trees in Mt. Helix persuaded the younger Paul that this was where he and his wife, Carey, would raise Greta and plant roots (literally). He was a man of nature, who gardened every weekend alongside Carey, beautifying their landscape and planting trees, wherever there was a bare spot, "for the next generation to enjoy." He professed a love for the "semi-rural character and unique history of our mountain," and was always proud to say, "We live in Mt. Helix."

Paul graduated from the USC School of Architecture and was recently applying his skills as Director of the Construction Projects Department at UCSD Health System. He was one of the good ones, a man of integrity, wit, humility and warmth, a caring friend, neighbor, and devoted family man. ▲





Larry Powers and sons



District Attorney Summer Stephan

GMIA Annual Meeting Returns to Water Conservation Garden

Enthusiastic GMIA members gathered at the Water Conservation Garden for the first time in two years to attend our Annual Meeting and learn how GMIA has worked for the community in 2021-22. There were lots of good questions for San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan following her thoughtful and informative presentation. Thanks to all who came out and to Holly Yarris and her committee for organizing a wonderful evening. 🌱

Liberty Charter School Status

The 8.8-acre lot on Chase Ave., just north of Jamacha Rd. in El Cajon, is on the market again. Colliers San Diego is listed as the agent on LoopNet.com.

The land was purchased in 2014 by Literacy First Charter Schools, which subsequently applied to San Diego County for a Major Use Permit (MUP) to deviate from the rural residential 1/2-acre zoning. The organization also sought a material revision of its charter to locate a new high school at the Chase/Jamacha site, along with a gym, sports field, and parking lot for 450 students and 33 faculty and staff. Both requests were approved over strong community opposition.

GMIA opposed the construction on environmental and traffic-related grounds and continues its opposition. "...we ask that you deny the project...because it is not consistent with the vision and goals of the County General Plan...and will have a harmful and dangerous effect on traffic in the area." the GMIA letter said.

SOS², an 854-member local community group, filed two lawsuits challenging the new school at Chase and Jamacha,

according to Marisa Janine-Page, legal counsel for the group.

"The first lawsuit challenges that the MUP approval violated environmental laws by, among other things, adversely impacting traffic in a manner that endangers the lives of students and the community," said Janine-Page. The second lawsuit "challenges approval of the charter's material revision for violating the education laws – again focusing mostly on student safety and adverse community impact," she said. SOS² recently won in court and has been given the green light to move forward in both lawsuits.

In a related development, Literacy First Charter Schools opened a new high school last month in Alpine, on the site of the former Alpine Elementary School. The organization signed a five-year lease agreement for the Alpine location with an option to extend for up to an additional 15 years.

Debbie Beyer, executive director of Literacy First Charter Schools, did not respond to multiple GMIA requests for comment. 🌱

News from the Casa de Oro Alliance

It has been an eventful quarter with significant board leadership changes. After several years of service which saw us through meaningful progress that wouldn't have happened without their experienced contributions, Bob Yarris and Ed Batchelder stepped down as president and secretary, respectively. Bob will remain as President Emeritus. Our new officers are: Lisa Stewart, president; David Shorey, 1st vice president; Allan Arthur, 2nd vice president; and Michael Herron continues as treasurer. Board members attended a retreat in July to brainstorm organization priorities, set goals, and make plans for future Alliance activities.

The Alliance also received a grant from The Union Bank Foundation to support businesses in the Casa de Oro area and held a focus group for business owners on Aug. 20. Participants

were provided with marketing resources and networking opportunities. As a recipient of the County of San Diego Neighborhood Reinvestment Program grant, the Alliance is surveying the community about their perceptions of the area. To contribute, please fill out a brief survey at www.casadeoroalliance.org/survey.

We also have changes to report along Campo Road. The former State Farm building has new owners who are giving it a facelift. The El Pollo Loco location (now a vacant lot) is in the final stages of permitting and during the building process, nearby offices are expected to get an updated look. Lastly, you might have noticed changes at the Helix South Tennis courts, where development has been going on for "The Hub," a 26-court pickleball club due to open in November. 🏐



La Mesa History Center Open House

La Mesa History Center, formerly the La Mesa Historical Society, is excited to announce the return of its annual home tour. The 16th Annual Historic Home Tour is scheduled for Saturday, November 5, 2022, so mark your calendar!

LMHC is actively searching for docents to help on the day of this popular event. If you would like to volunteer as a docent, please email: volunteers@lamesahistory.com.

Friends of the Casa de Oro Library

Join us for a friendly mixer and library update on October 7th at the Casa de Oro library. The event—our Annual Meeting—is complimentary and open to the community. Hear detailed info about our new library and how to add your ideas to the process from County Library Director Migell Acosta.

Please RSVP at www.casadeorolibrary.org to attend.

Planning for the 11,000-square-foot library is underway with the land acquired and \$22 million set aside for construction. We are excited about a commitment from Nathan Fletcher, chair of the County Board of Supervisors, to move forward with an accelerated design/build process targeting completion by the start of the 2024 school year. We need your input to ensure Casa de Oro gets the library it deserves and needs.

Immediately following the Oct. 7 meeting, we have organized a fun, informal, no-host (optional) dinner at one of the selected restaurants on Campo Road in the Casa de Oro business corridor to continue the conversation. We hope to see you there!

TIPS FROM A MASTER GARDENER

Succulents as Low Maintenance Shrubs

by Sharon Reeve

When you picture a succulent garden, you might see in your mind's eye many colorful tiny plants in a precious arrangement, but have you ever thought of succulents as shrubs in a low-maintenance and drought-tolerant garden? Many succulents have a neat and tidy domed habit that suits a low-water garden well. These mid-size succulents can perform the role of shrubs with much less water and maintenance. Be sure to have well-drained soil and full sun for these plants. Some of them can tolerate some shade but the colors will not be as intense.

Unlike shrubs, these neatly growing plants come in many interesting colors and shapes. One of the basic tenets of good garden design is a variety of textures, sizes, and colors. Succulents don't rely on flowers to provide interest; they do that all year long with their foliage. With these plants, you can have a beautiful garden 12 months a year.

Additionally, they are easy to prune should they get larger than you want. Cuttings quickly and easily make new plants somewhere else in your garden. For example, cut the head off an Aeonium and stick it in the soil, and soon you will have another shrub-succulent. Here are a few of my favorites.

Several Aeoniums make great succulent shrubs. The rosettes don't collapse in the summer heat like *Aeonium arboreum* and quickly make an organized dome of heads. In this case, *Aeonium* 'Jack Caitlin' is a small succulent shrub around two feet tall and wide with gorgeous wine and spring green rosettes. It is a hybrid of *A. arboreum* 'Zwartkopf' and *A. tabuliforme* made by John Catlin at Huntington Gardens. This succulent does best in full sun where the colors intensify, but it can tolerate light frosts. Repeat this succulent shrub in several places in your border to create continuity in your color scheme. This is a hardy plant that will get by on very little water, even in full sun. One good pairing is with *Sedum x adolphii*. This is a low-growing yellow succulent, that varies from chartreuse to golden with orange tips.

One of my favorite plants, *Aeonium* 'Sunburst' has easy care and color in spades. You might see it as a delicate fussy plant, but it is a robust, fast grower just looking for an excuse to show off in your garden. Once again, full sun and well-drained soil are required for best results. Skirt this succulent shrub with *Senecio serpens* for a pleasing combination. The blue of the *Senecio serpens* picks up the bluish green of the Aeonium. The coral pink stripe of the rosette is more evident in full sun and heat. Interplant with *Echeveria* 'Mauna Loa' to echo the coral edge of the Aeonium's rosettes. Any coppery succulent will work. You can also use shorter dark red *Phormium cookianum*. The rosettes root easily. Even when not watered they will hang out until there is some water to start growing. Aeoniums have a drawback in that stems will die back after bloom, but there are always plenty of rosettes to replace the plant stem. This succulent shrub gets about 2 feet high and wide.

There are so many forms of Aloe from groundcovers up to trees. There is a small group of shrub-sized Aloes that offer different textures and foliage colors in the garden border, plus blooms that last a month or more. The Aloe pic-



Aeonium 'Jack Caitlin'



Aeonium 'Sunburst'



Aloe camperi

Continued next page

tured is a species called Aloe camperi. This plant blooms in spring and grows about one foot high and three feet wide. If orange Aloe foliage is desired, plant Aloe dorotheae or Aloe cameronii. These shrubby Aloes have foliage that turns red with heat and drought. This is good to know in Zone 23 Sunset where summers can be challenging for landscape plants. These mid-size Aloes are great as you can have one blooming almost all year with careful selection. They clump and spread to create a small mass that is weed-free and lovely. Another good dense spring bloomer is Aloe 'Moon Glow' with yellow-tipped blooms and bluish foliage. Match this up with blue Senecio serpens and Crassula 'Sunset' to echo the colors.



Kalanchoe bracteata

Kalanchoe bracteata has blazingly white fuzzy foliage and is absolutely one of the easiest plants to grow. Succulents often have fuzzy white or silver foliage to keep the full intensity of the sun from reaching the leaves and cool the leaf surface. Kalanchoe bracteata grows to about two feet tall and wide. Its white foliage matches everything and can be happily sited in full sun next to almost any plant. It looks especially good with another drought tolerant plant called Teucrium marum with silver foliage and purple flowers. Both are easy and drought tolerant. Teucrium marum is a long-blooming plant favored by bees.

Hopefully, this article got you thinking about using succulents as shrubs in the garden. Succulents are better than thirsty shrubs because they are drought tolerant and grow densely to choke out weeds. Using medium-size succulents this way adds interest to the garden with color and texture and is a smart choice to reduce maintenance and watering. 🌱

Sharon Reeve is a UCCE Master Gardener since 1998. She has earned a BS in horticulture, a BA in landscape architecture, and a MS in ecology. Sharon enjoys studying, growing, and blogging about plants in her La Mesa garden. Her design business, ReWild, specializes in drought-tolerant, native wildlife gardens.

Cut and Save

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Emergencies	911
Non-emergency sheriff dispatch	858-565-5200
Rancho San Diego Sheriff	619-660-7090
La Mesa Police	619-667-1400
El Cajon Police	619-579-3311

CODE COMPLIANCE

858-694-2705

PDS.CodeCompliance@sdcounty.ca.gov

TO REPORT

- building & grading violations
- unauthorized construction
- graffiti on private property
- trash & debris on private property
- abandoned vehicles on private property
- illegal marijuana dispensaries
- noise violations
- dead animals (for pickup)

GRAFFITI COMPLAINTS

PDS.CodeCompliance@sdcounty.ca.gov

On right of way: 858-694-2212

At parks: 858-565-3600

askparks.lue@sdcounty.ca.gov

On state highways: 619-688-6699

ct.public.information.d11@dot.ca.gov

California Highway Patrol (non-emergency)	858-6373800
To report abandoned vehicles on public property	680-trafficcomplaint@chp.ca.gov
CALTRANS: Road closures, customer service	619-688-6699
SDG&E: to report damaged gas/electric line	1-800-411-7343

OTHER SERVICES

Animal Control	619-767-2675
Dig Alert: Call for a DigAlert ticket before any excavation	811
Hazardous Materials Disposal To schedule a drop-off	877-713-2784 619-596-5100
Helix Water District	619-466-0585 www.hwd.com
Mail theft complaints	877-876-2455
Mt. Helix Park Foundation	619-741-4363
Vector control	858-694-2888



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To ensure your membership is current: please look at your mailing label on this newsletter. On it you will find the expiration date of your membership. Family membership is just \$20 (2 years - \$40; 3 years - \$60). You may renew online at our secure website www.gmia.net or mail your payment in the attached envelope to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

Note: if the date is June 2023 or later, your dues are paid in full, but you are welcome to renew in advance.

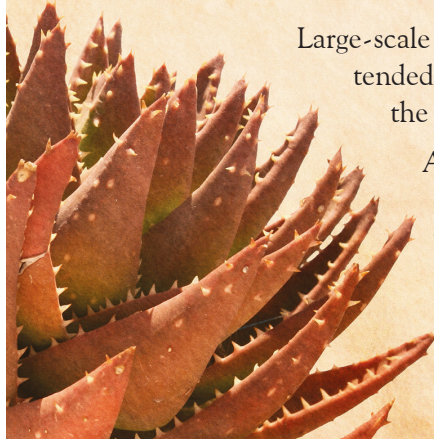
More for Succulent Savants

You don't have to wait until GMIA's annual Succulent Swap and Share to add to your collection and learn more about these popular plants. The San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society is an organization of more than 1,000 members with monthly Saturday meetings in Balboa Park.

Pam Badger, current president, said each meeting features a "plant of the month," a free exchange table and opportunities to purchase cacti and succulents at discount prices. The SDCSS invites international guest speakers to share their expertise with members. Speakers have hailed from Madagascar, South America and many regions of Mexico.

Large-scale shows and sales are held in June and February, attended by dozens of vendors from all parts of California and the southwestern United States.

Annual membership of \$15 includes a subscription to the monthly newsletter, Espinas y Flores, access to an extensive lending library, opportunities to participate in field trips and many other privileges. Visit www.sdcss.net to learn more. ▲



CALENDAR

Sat., Oct 22
Succulent Swap
10 a.m. – Noon
10805 MELVA RD.

Sat., Nov 19
Cleanup 9 am PARK N
RIDE - I8/ Severin Dr.

Sat., Jan 7
Walk Up Mt. Helix
10 a.m. Vivera Dr.