

Desert Plants

A quarterly journal devoted to broadening knowledge of plants indigenous or adaptable to arid and sub-arid regions, to studying the growth thereof and to encouraging an appreciation of these as valued components of the landscape.

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Volume 7, Number 3, 1985 (issued early 1986).
Published by The University of Arizona
at the Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum
P.O. Box AB, Superior, Arizona 85273

The Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum at Superior, Arizona, is cooperatively managed by The Arizona State Parks Board, The Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum, Inc., and The University of Arizona.

Editorial

Trivia, Computers, Research, American Society, and Plant Science. Are you a trivia buff? Actually, all knowledge—be it science, history or other—consists of innumerable particles of trivia. Research consists of discovering and identifying numerous “bits” of information and arranging pertinent ones in relation to one another (and in relation to any previously articulated bits) to produce a meaningful exposition. Americans are now exhibiting an interest in (and even an obsession for) trivia of all sorts. This interest has surfaced in the popularity of the personal computer. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Americans who once left typewriting to others are now happily typing innumerable “bits” of information into their personal computers and instructing the machines (through software programs) how to arrange the bits to produce meaningful expositions. This is in great contrast to times when Americans wanted to skip over trivia and go directly to “important” things: wealth, power, social status, to name a few. But as shown by the listing of the 400 wealthiest Americans by Forbes magazine, it was typically the immigrant to America (or other person of humble background) who started selling apples on the street corner (or some other trivia) who eventually amassed a fortune in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Unfortunately, the inheriting descendants, caring little for management of trivia, too often reduced the great fortunes to little or nothing in a generation or so!

But now the new emphasis by Americans on trivia, whether or not engendered by the popularity of the computer, has manifested itself also in the form of games with questions on trivia. Trivia is now popular! As a *Desert Plants* response, a dozen trivia questions are presented below. The answers can all be found in an article in this issue of *Desert Plants*. To play this game one must first discover the article and then look for the answers.

1) What plant science journal bearing a one-word woman's name of only three letters began publication in San

Francisco in 1890? 2) Who was the first woman plant scientist hired (in 1887) by the U. S. Department of Agriculture? 3) What plant scientist became the first woman faculty member of Columbia University in 1890? 4) What prominent Berkeley minister gave up the cloth, after being locked out of his pulpit amid charges of gaiety, to become the first instructor in botany for the University of California's young Agriculture Department? 5) What female plant scientist was at the heart of the biggest controversy to rock the largest scientific institution of western North America in the 1880's? 6) What prominent female horticulturist of nineteenth century California named Kate (but not Kate Brandegee) searched Baja California in company with Kate Brandegee's husband looking for plants to introduce into cultivation? 7) What plant scientist, having a free frank for purposes of the 1880 census, stopped stagecoaches in Colorado and demanded that the driver take on board huge 100-lb tree trunks as part of the U. S. Mail? 8) What woman famous for collecting plants in Nevada served as a student nurse in New York's Bellevue Hospital because, although she had an MD degree, she was professionally discriminated against as a woman? 9) What female plant scientist dedicated her life to “disembarassing the grain of truth [in plant science] from its attendant mass of chaff?” 10) Who discovered and named the Creeping Devil Cactus of Baja California? 11) What person, who later became a famous plant scientist, surveyed the railroad route that became the object of contention in Colorado's “Royal Gorge War” between the A.T. & S.F. Railroad and General Palmer's Denver and Rio Grande R.R.? 12) What person, later shot by a gambler (the latter being hanged shortly thereafter by the Vigilance Committee), presided over the meeting of the California Academy of Sciences in 1853 that authorized employment of women as scientists?

The above seemingly unrelated bits of trivia can be joined with others to shed new light on an old subject having present-day significance.

—F. S. Crosswhite