

## The Development of the Huntington's Desert Collections

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Myron Kimmach, Director Emeritus of the Huntington Botanical Gardens, was awarded the Cactus d'Or at the 2011 IOS Inter-Congress in recognition of his contributions to the study of succulent plants. Among these contributions was the significant increase of the Huntington's collections into the world-renowned assemblage that it is today. In 1962 Myron succeeded William Hertrich as Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. Charged with maintaining Henry Huntington's horticultural legacy as implemented by Hertrich, Myron not only did that but developed the botanical division of the institution into a full-fledged botanical garden. He initiated a program of field expeditions as well as exchange with other institutions and collectors to develop a well-documented collection that could support scientific research. These efforts contributed to the already-established 10-acre Desert Garden but had an even greater impact on the expansion of the container-grown collection which, when Myron came to the Huntington, consisted of a single potted specimen, a mature *Pachypodium horombense* collected on a USDA-sponsored expedition to Madagascar by Swingle & Humbert in 1928. An accessioning system had been established with the assistance of Eric Walther in 1930 which numbered over 1500 taxa in the Desert Garden. Under Myron, accessions surpassed 70,000. Notable among these is accession number 1, *Agave mitis* ssp. *albidior* (originally accessioned under the synonym *A. albicans*), which still grows in the Desert Garden, and number 50,000, a specimen of *Alluaudia procera* that grows in the Desert Garden Conservatory. The latter 3000 sq. ft. glasshouse was opened in 1985 to display some of the potted succulent collection. Under Myron's regime this grew to include a diverse representation of succulent taxa including several hundred in each of the major succulent families: Agavaceae, Aizoaceae, Aloaceae, Asclepiadaceae, Cactaceae, Crassulaceae and Euphorbiaceae. Collections were especially rich in two areas that reflected Myron's research focuses: epiphytic cacti and New World Crassulaceae.