

**Clear Expectations** - By Stan Southwick

**WHAT  
DO  
YOU  
EXPECT**



We deal everyday with new situations as we interact with family, friends, co-workers or new acquaintances. The manner in which we begin a new situation will largely determine if our future interactions will be eagerly anticipated or avoided at all costs. Let me give an example. A few years ago, we were awarded a large contract with a public agency. We worked with staff defining the scope and negotiating the fee. Shortly after we presented our first round of design concepts to staff, a meeting was called with us, the staff and the new department director. The first question out of the director's mouth was, "Do you know what the only goal of this project is?" (it

was obvious he didn't like our concepts). We began to reiterate the scope that we had developed with staff before he interrupted us. The only goal of this project, according to the director, was nowhere near what we and staff understood. The director left the meeting, leaving us and staff looking at each other in bewilderment. Needless to say, subsequent meetings did not go well and the whole management of the project was a struggle for both us and staff.

It's so important whenever you come into a new situation to get all the expectations out on the table. Make the expectations clear and explicit in the beginning. This takes a real investment of time and effort up front, but it saves great amounts of time and effort down the road. When expectations are not clear and shared, people begin to become emotionally involved and simple misunderstandings become compounded, turning into personality clashes and communication breakdowns. This is true whether we are giving cryptic directions to our spouse as we walk out the door, giving a team member a task to accomplish, beginning a project for a new client or literally any other situation we encounter.

Take the time in the beginning to get all expectations clearly laid out on the table. It will pay huge benefits in the end. The greatest leaders have developed this personality characteristic. Remember that the most important ingredient we put into any relationship is not what we say or what we do, but what we are.

"People with clear, written goals, accomplish far more in a shorter period of time than people without them could ever imagine."  
 — Brian Tracy

**Favorite Flora:**

**Agave parryi var. truncata- Artichoke Agave-** By Jon Marenfeld



Tired of seeing the same 3-5 shrubs and accents neighborhood after neighborhood, over and over and...well you get it. You know the ones. How about changing things up a bit and trying something new, or at least something your neighbors don't have? This month's favorite flora, the Artichoke Agave (*Agave parryi* var. *truncata*), is an accent that's evergreen and easily paired. With an extensive range that extends from central Arizona and down into central and western Mexico, it's well adapted to our desert climate. It is a gray-green agave with a tight rosette form,

sharp blackish-brown spines along the leaf margins, and a sharp spine on the leaf tip.

*Agave parryi* var. *truncata* reaches up to 3 feet high and wide and requires minimal care. In summer a once-monthly deep watering should keep it happy. Take care to not overwater it, it is susceptible to root rot. This succulent will produce "pups" that will spring out from the base. If you want to keep it a lone accent simply remove the pup and give it away or replant it in your yard or in a pot. Plant the Artichoke Agave with other cacti and desert adapted plants. In the ground pair it with boulders, Golden Barrel cacti (*Echinocactus grusonii*), Desert Spoon (*Dasyliirion wheeleri*), Purple Prickly Pear (*Opuntia violacea* 'Santa Rita'), Yucca's, columnar cacti such as a Cardon (*Pachycereus pringlei*), Argentine Saguaro (*Echinopsis terscheckii*), or Silver Torch Cactus (*Cleistocactus strausii*), and shrubs like Texas Rangers, *Daminitia* (*Chrysactinia mexicana*), Lavender Cotton (*Santolina chamaecyparissus*), or Green-Leaved Euryops (*Euryops pectinatus* 'Virdis' for a unique xeric, water-wise, look.

**Photo of the Month**



Marbled Godwit  
 La Jolla, CA  
 Caryl Davies