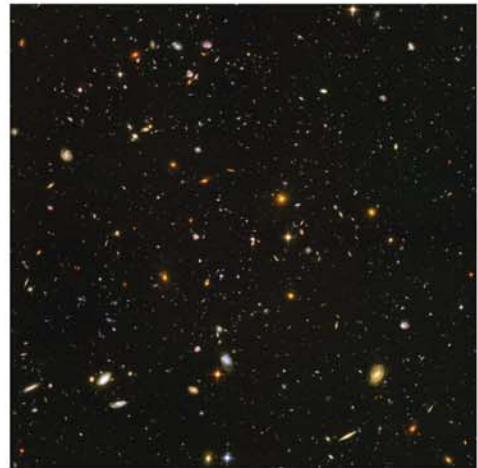


The Big Picture

A few weeks ago, I did a little camping on top of Kolob Mountain just outside of Zion National Park. The area I stayed out sits at about 8100 feet above sea level. As night fell, I looked up and saw something that we don't get to experience much around the bright lights of the city. The sky was so full of stars that it seemed as if there was no dark space at all. What a great way to put life into perspective.

Over the past several years, the Hubble Telescope has been orbiting earth taking pictures of the universe as we know it. It was noted that there are a couple of black spots seemingly totally devoid of stars. One is near the big dipper and the other near the constellation Orion. Scientists decided to point the Hubble Telescope at the empty spaces. After over a week of open shutter time it was discovered that there are millions of galaxies in those tiny black spots. We are but a small part of a bigger plan.



You can see a 3D animated model of what the Hubble Telescope saw in the black spaces at www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAVjF_7ensg. Two weeks ago you could also see it on NASA's website but due to the government slim down, the site is not available. Amid all the slim downs, political jousting, struggling economy and other day to day struggles you go through it is good to push your reset button once in a while. Get out away from the bright city lights and look up. It will do you a world of good.

"A man who carries a cat by the tail learns something he can learn in no other way."
— Mark Twain

FAVORITE FLORA: ENCELIA FARINOSA - BRITTLEBUSH



Have you ever wanted to bring some Southern Nevada desert character to your landscape? Brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*) is a native to not only southern Nevada but also Southern Utah, California, Arizona and Northern Mexico. It can be found in a variety of habitats ranging from the harshest volcanic rock slopes to more forgiving sandy washes. This fast growing shrub reaches heights and widths up to 4 feet. Brittlebush has large silver-grey leaves which can turn green when water is abundant. Bright yellow flowers cover this shrub in spring, contrasting with the foliage. Brittlebush was used regularly by indigenous populations within its native range as

well as by early pioneer settlers. Resins from different parts of the plant were used as glues, sealers for pottery and even chewing gum. Cowboys used the Brittlebush stems as a toothbrush after the bitter bark was peeled back.

Encelia farinosa is a fairly easy shrub to grow. Locate this plant in a full sun location; reflected heat is ok, with well draining soil. Water requirements are minimal and most plants only need supplemental watering after long periods of drought. Over watering Brittlebush can lead to rot and ultimately the death of the plant. Pruning is limited to removing seed heads after blooms finish and cutting plants back hard in the fall to promote new, herbaceous growth. Try pairing Brittlebush with other desert plants such as Agave, Creosote Bush (*Larrea tridentata*), and Palo Verde (*Parkinsonia sp.*) for a desert oasis that is low in maintenance and high in interest.

Photo of the Month

Summer Rain
Las Vegas, NV
Matt Durham

