

Olympic Spirit - By Stan Southwick



I enjoy watching the Olympic games that roll around every couple of years. It's good to see the world come together, leave their political hats at the door and cheer for everyone. The athletes train for years for the opportunity to come and perform at their best in front of a global crowd. Sometimes their best is good enough and other times it falls short.

I especially like to see the underdogs do well. It was fun watching the 5000 meter short track relay race. The announcer described the race as "carefully choreographed", although to me it looked more like chaos on ice. The four men on the Hungarian team were in the final medal race with the dominate Canadian and Chinese teams. The race started out as expected with Canada and China in the lead, but as most short track races go, things changed. When the finish line came around, Hungary was in first place winning the countries first medal in the winter Olympics... ever!

There are a lot of life lessons that can be gleaned from the Olympic Games. The one the always stands out to me is to keep doing your best and never give up. When the race is over, no matter what position you end in, you can feel satisfied that you left everything on the playing field. All you can do is your best. Life is most rewarding when your own evaluation of your performance yields gold medal scores.

"Failure I can live with. Not trying is what I can't handle."
— Sanya Richards-Ross

Favorite Flora:

Pedilanthus bracteatus- Tall Slipper Plant- By Jon Marenfeld



This month's favorite flora is a good vertical accent plant that is great choice for containers or in the ground in a rock or succulent garden. The Tall Slipper Plant (*Pedilanthus bracteatus*) is more tolerant of full sun and frost than some of its cousins. Hardy down to 20-25 degrees F this *Pedilanthus* is a great succulent that can thrive in a variety of exposures and is a thicker, more substantial, cousin to *Pedilanthus macrocarpus*. Native to dry deciduous woodlands in Mexico from Sonora to Guerrero, it's easily distinguished from its cousins due to its taller height, longer stems, and presence of leaves on its branch tips. The Tall Slipper Plant has somewhat shoe-shaped flowers (bracts), hence the common name, that are red-orange from summer through fall. Growing up to 6' tall it branches from the base with narrow cylindrical green stems with ovate leaves. The Tall Slipper Plant tends to produce more leaves in shady exposures. You can think of its overall form like a spineless Ocotillo with its upright vase shape.

Photo of the Month

Care of *Pedilanthus bracteatus* is as easy as most other desert cacti and succulents. Plant it in full sun to light shade but away from reflected heat. Planting it in a shadier location may produce more leaves but it may lose its tight upright form like it would normally have in sunnier locations. To protect it from freezing temperatures cover it at night, plant it in a warm microclimate, or keep it in a container that can be moved. Plant it in well-drained soil or, if you're going to place it in a pot, use a cactus/succulent potting mix. Once established it only needs water sparingly whether in the ground or in a container. Prune floppy or broken stems or stems that have frost damage. A note of caution, the Tall Slipper Plant, as with many in plants in the *Euphorbia* family, will release a milky white sap when cut which could irritate your skin. Wear gloves when handling the plant. Also, while not specifically called out by the ASPCA as toxic, the sap could irritate your pets mouth or stomach. Pair with other succulents or cacti for a cactus/succulent/rock garden or pair with Ice Plant such as *Delosperma cooperi* spp. *Pedilanthus bracteatus* could also be planted with other low water plants such as *Lantana* spp., *Gazania rigens*, *Sedum rupestre* 'Angelina', or other small desert adapted shrubs.



Super Blood Moon Timelapse
Kitt Peak, AZ
Pete Marenfeld