

A MYSTERY AGAVE

By Sue Haffner



In the 1970s nurseryman Ed Hummel introduced a 'mutant' agave into the commercial trade. The story was that it had been discovered down in Baja California somewhere (though subsequent searches for it have been in vain.) I bought a plant probably in the early 1990s from the nursery that Tony Dinuzzo used to operate in Buellton, CA. He told me it was a mutant form of *Agave Americana marginata*.



The plant immediately looked odd, to me—small, with the leaf edges especially rippled and 'squiggly'-looking. The top photo is by Richard Stamper of the Houston C&S Society of his plant, published in their club newsletter, *Kaktos Komments*, and used with his permission. It very closely resembles mine that has been growing in the same big clay pot for years. It's about 20 inches in diameter at the longest leaves. For the first dozen or so years, it produced no offsets, but for the past few years it has been offsetting regularly.

Somewhere along the way, somebody started calling the plant by the cultivar name 'Quasimodo'. It's also called 'Cornelius', apparently after a Dr. Cornelius who was a friend of Mr. Hummel. (I'm indebted to CSSA historian Chuck Staples and his wife, Connie, for that last bit of information. They researched this for me, having to look through a number of books before finding an obscure reference to "Cornelius".)

The bottom photo is of a young plant from an offset. I have potted up a number of offsets that look just like this. The photo is from *Cactus world*, the journal of the British Cactus & Succulent Society, taken by the editor, Al Laius, and used with his permission.

My plant is mostly in semi-shade, near the edge of the patio where I can throw a cover over it when frost is forecast. I'm not entirely sure that such precautions are necessary, but sometimes mutants can be more sensitive than the species. Tony Dinuzzo had his plant growing out on a mound, but I don't think it gets as cold in Buellton as it does here.