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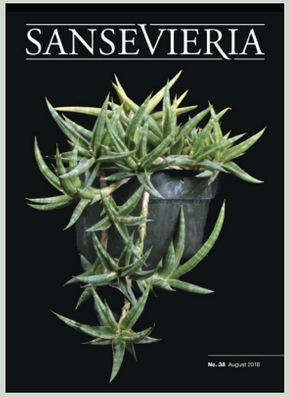
The International Sansevieria Society (ISS) was formed in 2000 to bring together people interested in growing or studying the family Dracaenaceae and in particular the Sansevieria species and cultivars. The aim is to promote interest in these fascinating plants and increase the available knowledge of all aspects of their cultivation, ecology and correct naming.

The society also aims to provide an opportunity for the free exchange of information between members and to increase the number of species and cultivars in cultivation.

Membership in the ISS is open to anyone interested in sansevierias, collectors, hobbyists, or scientists. Membership benefits include two issues of the journal Sansevieria and access to other information and resources on sansevierias through the website and members-only Facebook site.

The journal contains useful information which may not otherwise be available to the collector. Articles vary from aspects of cultivation, description of plants in the wild and in cultivation to more technical articles about naming and new species descriptions.



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www.sansevieria-international.org

For more information, or to join the International Sansevieria Society, please visit the website or email opuntia@comcast.net

Front: *Sansevieria sp. aff. rorida* (Lav. 23154); Back: *Sansevieria "Silver Bat"*
Photos by Irwin Lightstone

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Sansevieria

Sansevieria is a genus of plants with about 80 species along with at least as many cultivars and hybrids. These plants are commonly called “Mother-in-Law’s Tongue” or “Snake Plant.” Sansevierias are native to Africa, the Arabian peninsula, India, and Southeast Asia, and they have become naturalized in many other parts of the world.

Famed for their diversity and usefulness, Sansevieria was named by famed Swedish botanist Carl Peter Thunburg after Italian Prince Raimondo di Sangro (1710–1771) who led an illustrious career as a man of sciences. Sansevieria has a cultured and varied history and ethnobotany. In most African countries, the leaves are used to produce fiber for things like rope and baskets, and even as security hedges and fence rows. The sap can be used as an antiseptic, and the leaves are said to have other medicinal qualities used to treat various intestinal ailments. Sansevieria are renowned for their air purification qualities as they remove toxins such as formaldehyde and xylene from the atmosphere. They make very good house plants as they remove carbon dioxide and produce oxygen mostly during the night. For more than 20 years, NASA used the plants on their space shuttles. Some experts believe that having Sansevieria plants near children in school environments can reduce abrasive behavior. Sansevierias are commonly used in feng shui for their decorative and sculptural qualities.

Sansevierias are succulent plants with species ranging from thin flat-leaved types, to thick, round spike-leaved types. Some are fairly small, some are large, and some are variegated with yellow or white streaks or stripes. Sansevierias are easy to grow if given proper care and have few problems with pests.

Sansevierias offset by root-like rhizomes (underground) or stolons (above ground). Separation of these offsets is the typical way sansevierias are propagated as seedlings are very slow to develop into mature plants. The new offset plants can be separated from the mother plant by cutting the rhizome or stolon and allowing the cutting to develop a callus for a few days before potting.

Sansevierias should be planted in a well-drained soil mixture of organic and inorganic materials. Perlite, pumice, lava rock, or gravel should be added to garden potting soil. Sansevierias tend to prefer full shade for good growth, although some can be grown in partial or full sun. Water sansevierias sparingly in the winter, not more than once a month, because this is the dormant period. During the summer, sansevierias can be watered once a week or more when it is hot and dry. The most common reason for sansevierias to die is over watering. Make sure the soil is dry before watering again, otherwise the plant may rot. Fertilize during the summer months or use time-released pellets.

Sansevierias tolerate temperatures down to near freezing if they are kept dry. If the soil is wet, or the temperature dips below freezing, bring the plant inside, or cover it with frost cloth, or a dry bed sheet or blanket. Some species can be grown in the ground of outside gardens in subtropical and tropical regions of the world and these species can tolerate lower temperatures than the same species in pots.

Sansevieria enchiridiofolia prov. nomen; photo by Robert Webb.

Sansevieria braunii (type 4) Vitch; photo by Irwin Lightstone

Sansevieria ehrenbergii in a succulent-rich area near Al Khayami, south of Taiz in southwestern Yemen; photo by Robert Webb

Sansevieria aff. braunii ES 22442; photo Ziad Al-Witri

Sansevieria ‘Blue Kew’ (arborescence-powellii group); photo by Irwin Lightstone