



Manzanillo SUN

coastal Mexico's lifestyle magazine



Manzanillo Port
photo and art by Allan Yanitski

- On the Road
- Technology
- History and Mythology
- RV Travel
- Nature's Wonders
- So Much to See
- Food and Drink
- Learn Spanish
- Path to Citizenship

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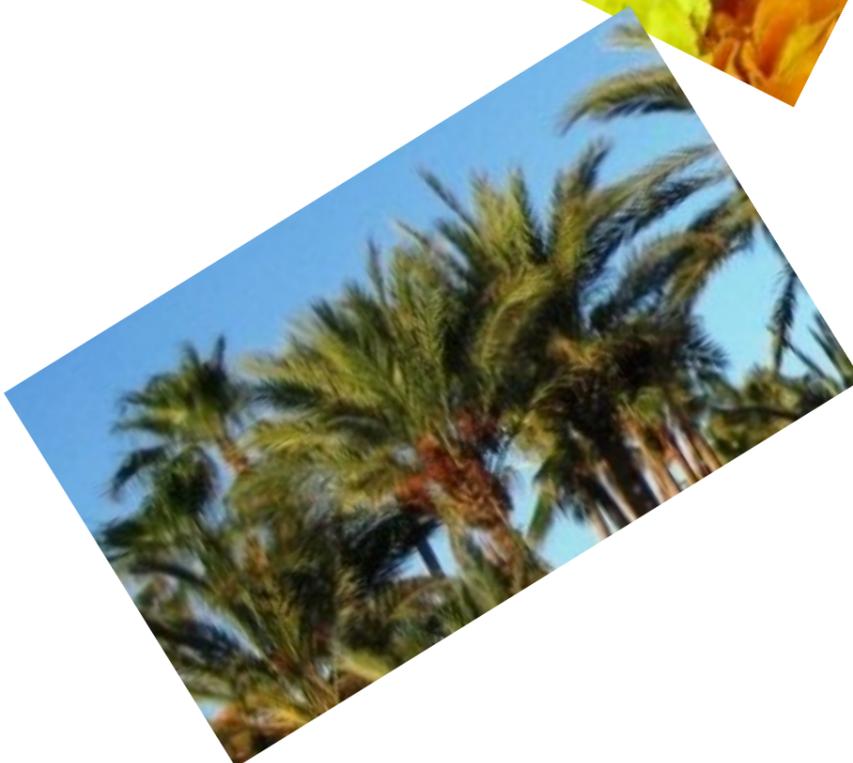
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To send submissions for possible inclusion in the magazine, please send to the editor by 15th of each month. We are always looking for writers or ideas on what you would like us to see as topics for the magazine.

Article submissions:

- Preferred subjects are Manzanillo and Mexico
- All articles should be 1000 words or less or may be serialized or 500-750 words if accompanied by photos
- Pictures are welcome
- Comments, letters to the editor, articles, photos and advertisements are always welcome

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To Jupiter and Beyond!

story and photos (unless otherwise note) by Ken Waldie

Having lived most of her life in various parts of Mexico, Dana, our fearless editor and my lovely wife, has undertaken to show me the Mexico she knows. As a result, every year we travel to new areas and often we bring family and friends along for the ride.

In January, we stayed close to home base, Manzanillo, with a tour to the Archaeological Zone [La Campana](#), in Colima, a pre-hispanic townsite, as well as [El Chanal](#) and, the highlight: a tour to the Colima volcano (Volcán de Fuego) that sits above Comala, which included a coffee plantation tour, a trip to an avocado farm, and a stop to see the famous, majestic tree, El Guardian.



Jupiter Rivera is a general federal tourist and a nature guide as well as a noted ornithologist with a specialty in birdwatching from the federal board of tourism in Mexico.

I like Comala. The streets are buttered like chunky peanut butter with cobblestone, high curbed sidewalks, many coffee shops. It's a country town with a homey feeling to it.

Enter Jupiter, our tour guide; an unassuming fellow, who loaded us into his tour van. I thought this would be a quiet (yawn) day...but then he started to explain why the buildings are painted white and from then the day became fascinating. Every detail of the journey was filled with anecdotes, stories and history.

This entrepreneur has a degree in marketing and also an MBA and a specialty diploma in managing tourism organizations. He lived in the US for some time but came back home. He owns a coffee shop, [Casa Volcán](#), and his wife runs [Casa Alvarada](#), a lovely boutique hotel. In between all this, he offers unique tours including kayak, hiking, mountain trekking, visits to ruins, viewing of the chocolate-making process, a craft beer tour as well as our volcano-coffee tour.

We drove up into the mountains, creeping the van through a river crossing, to an avocado plantation at the base of the volcano for a look while Jupiter explained about the birds and wildlife as we passed by. He has a knack for bringing that which seems subtle alive and interesting.

We started down again, stopping at a coffee shop and processing farm where we began to understand how labor intensive coffee is to produce. Over a cup of very fresh coffee, Jupiter gave us a short lecture on vulcanology. He explained how this volcano worked. We even got to see a laughing falcon (*Herpettheres cachinnans*), with its white body and black wings and eye bands, at the end of our journey!

[Admire Mexico Tours DMC](#), under the care of Jupiter, is still doing trekking and kayaking tours as well as sightseeing tours, following all safety guidelines in place. Summit tours are on the roster from now till the end of May, 2021 for the brave and adventurous.

PS: Don't miss a chance to see the beautiful hummingbird on the main page of their web site!

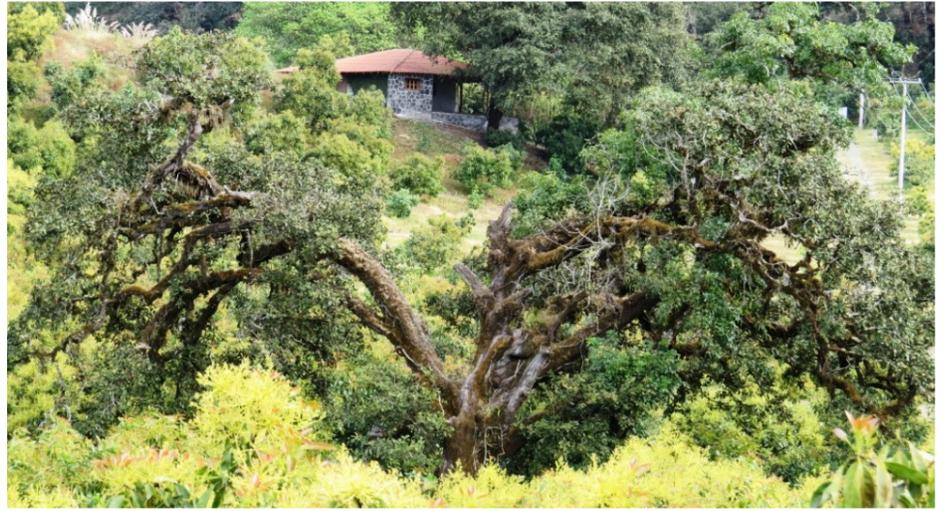
you can reach Ken Waldie at ken@manzanillosun.com

... more pics follow

...To Jupiter and Beyond



Wildlife keeping us company at breakfast
photo credit: Len Mallette



...To Jupiter and Beyond



Flowers for Day of the Dead

Most *panteones* (cemeteries) in Colima and elsewhere in the country will be closed this year for Day of the Dead. People will be celebrating at home with their altars.

The public is encouraged to buy the flowers from the vendors. They have been working on them for months. These would normally be laid on the graves.

A popular movement on social media suggests to buy them and give them away to someone to show your appreciation and good wishes.

If you know someone with an *ofrenda*, you could also give candles or flowers for the altar.



Don't get Hacked on Facebook

story by Señor Tech

My wife, Mrs. Señor Tech, just got a notification from a friend on Facebook. When she clicked on the "Like Button" it asked her to authenticate her Facebook account. Never! Never! And, I do mean, NEVER, provide your username and password when asked for authentication when you are already logged in to Facebook. You will give that information to an Expletive Deleted hacker.

The link took her to a site harvesting Facebook accounts and passwords. They would then be able to harvest her contacts and send messages out as if they were her. If you have ever gotten a message from a friend stating they have been hacked, this is probably the way the hacker got their login information.

So, if you don't want to have to go through the hassle of cleaning up your Facebook profile, do not ever authenticate your Facebook information when you are logged in to Facebook. And you will not have to walk the shame, stating "My Facebook account was hacked".

Stay safe and stay healthy! (Both your body and your computing devices)

If you have questions and would like more information about technology topics in this article, email me at senortech@manzanillosun.com

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The Day of the Dead

story by Kirby Vickery

I find it intriguing that two cultures could put together ceremonies to be celebrated at the same time during a year and dealing with the same aspects, more or less similar ceremonious methodologies, and reason for a festival, one not having any concept of the other's existence and in two different very different time eras. I should explain.

Our spreading western celebration of Halloween comes originally from the Druid (Priest class) of the Celtic people. It had its origins in the festival of Samhain (Fall equinox, harvest, etc.) among the Celts of ancient Britain and Ireland. All this started during 5500BCE to 4500 BCE. During the late Bronze Age, the Catholic priests enfolded the ancient pagan rituals into modern comitatus chivalry [As an example, look what happened to Beowulf. -Ed] and the story of Samhain was all but lost, with people running around paying little ones tribute to keep their alter egos from running the stock off or burning the outhouse down.



Mictēcacihuātl as depicted in the Codex Borgia

Much later, on the other side of the Atlantic, the Olmecs passed on to the Maya, who passed on to the Toltec, a developing creation story that culminated with the Aztec around 1195 CE. It was at this time in Europe that the Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy were making their split and North America was seeing the great Mississippian culture run its course.

In Aztec mythology, Mictēcacihuātl (Nahuatl pronunciation: [mik.te:.ka.'sí.wa:t̪]), literally "Lady of the Dead") is Queen of Mictlān, the underworld, ruling over the afterlife with Mictlāntēcutli, her husband. Her role is to watch over the bones and preside over the ancient festivals of the dead. She now presides over the contemporary festival of Halloween as well.



Goddess of Death

She is known as the "Lady of the Dead", since it is believed that she was born, then sacrificed as an infant. However, the Codex tells that she grew up a beautiful woman (see below). Mictēcacihuātl was represented with a flayed body (skeleton) and with jaw agape to swallow the stars during the day. Her name has morphed into Día de los Muertos, or "Day of the Dead." Please don't misunderstand me. That's not her position title, but her actual name. Her title is The Goddess of Death.

According to myth, Mictēcacihuātl was once alive countless ages ago and a member of an ancient pre-human race of beings who lived when the world was new. But, her time in the living world was short since she was sacrificed to the underworld as an infant. After her death, she grew to adulthood as a magical skeleton deity of immense power. She has lived through countless cycles as a goddess of bones and death and the dead, rising ultimately to become queen of the underworld. One of her foremost duties as the ruler of the dark realm is to guard the skeletal remains of extinct earlier races.

...The Day of the Dead

In the past, Mictecacihuatl failed in her duties and Xolotl, god of sickness and lightning, stole one of the sacred corpses of those who lived long before - which the gods of the sky then fashioned into living modern human beings. Now, Mictecacihuatl must also guard the bones of dead humans, for she believes that our remains could be used by capricious sky gods to build an even more ruthless group of alien new beings.



Mexican Marigold - Cempasúchil

There is one odd but interesting fact about Mictecacihuatl and that is that she loved flowers and one in particular. The Mexican Marigold is a very fragrant and bold orange flower with a storehouse of medicinal qualities. It was used more in the ancient times than today: "May combat certain cancer cells. Calendula's (scientific name for Marigold) antioxidant content may provide anti-tumor effects. Test-tube studies suggest that calendula's flavonoid and triterpene antioxidants may fight leukemia, melanoma, colon, and pancreatic cancer cells." (credit: see below). Another site tells of it reducing inflammation and being used as an antibiotic. Sort of a pre-modern CBD oil and there are ads all over the internet where you can purchase all sorts of stuff made from the plant that will make you live forever while being totally healthy. There is an interesting story of why and how that happened.

There were two young Aztec people, Xóchtitl and Huitzilin, who were neighbors as children and grew up together to become lovers and later married to live together in a perfect world primarily because they were together. They did everything togeth-



Tonatiuh (Sun God)

er and one of their favorite things to do was to climb to the high mountains and vistas near where they lived. The clean atmosphere, soft but warm grass with fantastic scenery, would lull them into sleep almost every time they went up. They really loved these little day trips into their 'special' places where they could also watch all the animals play and feed in these meadows. They would leave flower offerings to Tonatiuh, the Sun-god, while swearing eternal love for each other.

As time passed, Huitzilin was called to war as most all young Aztec men were from time to time. Tragically, he was killed and Xóchtitl took it pretty hard when she found out. She pined for a few days and then forced herself up and out of the house to take a long walk into the mountains where they had spent so much time. While she was up there, her grief rose within her and she collapsed into the grass in which she enjoyed the company of Huitzilin.

After a time, Tonatiuh took great pity on her because her sorrow was so intent, even he could feel it. He decided to grant her wish to join with her lover again and sent a special ray of sun that transformed her into a flower as golden as the sun itself and reincarnated her lover as a hummingbird. When Huitzilin the hummingbird approaches Xóchtitl the flower with his beak, her twenty petals bloom, filling the air with cempasúchil's distinctive and powerful scent.

...The Day of the Dead



From the Amantes de los Colibrís Facebook page

you can reach Kirby at kirby.vickery@manzanillosun.com

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Hotel Serenidad

by Dan and Lisa Goy

Remembering Baja Legend Don Johnson and the Hotel Serenidad



Don Johnson, a true Baja Legend and owner of Hotel Serenidad in Mulegé, passed away on September 15, 2020 at age 94. Don was synonymous with Hotel Serenidad, where he and Nancy welcomed everyone from Hollywood elite to Baja travelers for decades.

Don was born on December 20, 1925 in Springfield, Illinois and was raised in San José, California. His first visit to Mulegé was in 1959 when he and a friend spent a week navigating a panga from San Felipe all the way to Mulegé. That spirit of adventure led Don to leave his job as a custom tailor in San José to move to Mulegé, full time, in 1961, to become part owner of the Loma Linda Hotel, with his long-time friend Lou Federico, located on the north side of the river. Don loved Mulegé and the people that lived there, who universally loved and respected Don, his strong work ethic and gracious personality.

Don fell hook, line and sinker for a local girl, Nancy Ugalde Gorosave, and the two married in 1964. Nancy is the granddaughter of Mulegé area rancher Don José Gorosave and together they raised three daughters, Diana, Sara Laura and Sandra Lyn. The oldest, Diana, ran the hotel until a few years ago. It was a love story that would span more than 50 years until Nancy's passing in 2016. Don built a memorial to Nancy on the hotel grounds. The last time we were there, Don showed us and told us the story of its commemoration.



Don and Nancy

A regular stop for us on tour always includes the Hotel Serenidad, located just south of Mulegé, the gateway to the beautiful Bahía Concepción. The hotel has 7 RV spaces that include power, water, showers and dump stations at each site, all along the back of the parking lot. These are not particularly fancy, however very practical, reasonably priced and, best of all, a 30 second walk from the Hotel Serenidad, a real Baja treasure for sure!

Two different WiFi signals are available, one in the restaurant and another in the bar, which can be accessed from the outside patio and poolside. The restaurant opens at 6am for the early birds and closes late, as long as patrons want to stay and enjoy the ambience.

The Hotel Serenidad has a long and fascinating history. The Serenidad (Serenity) Hotel was originally developed in 1961 by Leroy Center. Don Johnson, who had earlier been part owner of the Loma Linda, was the Serenidad's boat manager during the 1960s.

...Hotel Serenidad

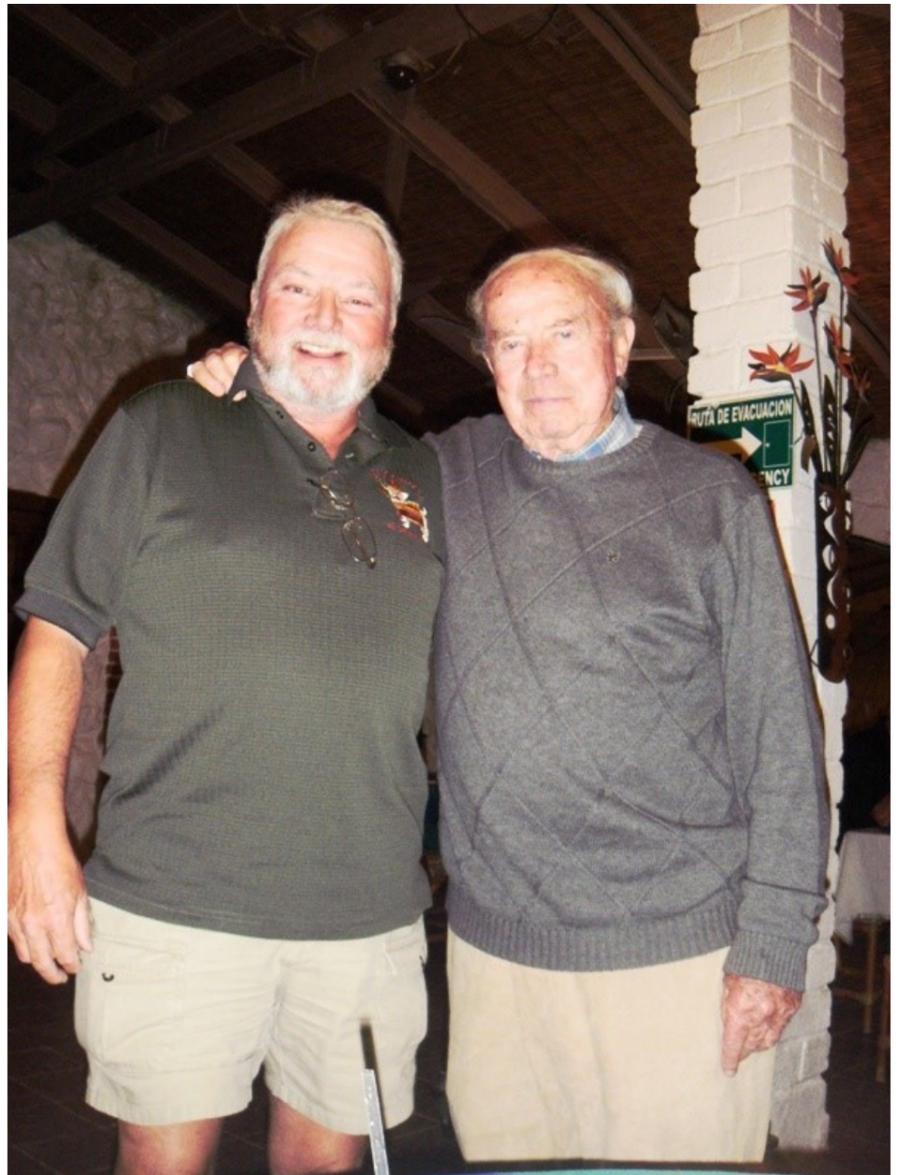
Later, with partners Fernando del Morel and Chester Mason, Johnson bought the resort in 1968. Don, together with his wife Nancy, has owned the Serenidad ever since, his name synonymous with the place.

He built a 4,000-foot airstrip that was an integral part of the business succeeding as the transpeninsular highway was still a dirt road at the time. The airstrip next to the Serenidad has always been, and still is, the main source of travelers for the hotel. The landing strip brought Hollywood regulars to the hotel such as Fred Astaire, Charles Lindbergh, James Arness, John Denver, Olivia Newton John, and John Wayne.

Don developed a deep friendship with "The Duke" who was a frequent visitor to Baja and Hotel Serenidad. Don was likewise a guest many times at Wayne's home in Newport Beach. The hotel became a lush oasis and an exotic escape for people flying in for a weekend of true relaxation and fun. By the early 1970s, the hotel offered modern accommodations, a patio dining, a bar and a new swimming pool.

The Serenidad became like its name, serene, with large, beautifully furnished rooms across tropical grounds. A large outdoor patio was built and is still used for dining alfresco.

We were hosting a booth at an RV show in California in 2017 and got talking with a visitor about his days as a young man flying a DC 3 into the Hotel Serenidad. He spoke fondly of the owner (an old guy as he remembered). He was stunned when we told him Don Johnson was still there welcoming guests.



Dan and Don



Don Johnson, John Wayne and others in Mulegé

Saturday Night Pig Roast

Don started a tradition that has been going strong for almost 45 years. We have attended many. Every Saturday night is a pig roast and Baja pilots still fly in just for the feast, which includes one margarita, all the roast pig you can eat and sometimes live music or other entertainment. The tradition began as an occasional weekend celebration.

Ray Cannon, author of the bestseller, *Sea of Cortez*, wrote about the Serenidad and the beginning of the pig tradition in 1970: "Most of our group stayed at the Hotel Serenidad, where another old friend, Don Johnson, is co-operator and where he sees to supplying gas and supplies to the boats at his pier. Don had a whole pig barbecued for us on an old style spit beside the outdoor dining veranda. The evening was a gay one..."

...Hotel Serenidad



Hotel Serenidad pool

Occupation of the Hotel Serenidad

On July 14, 1996, three decades of serenity at the Hotel Serenidad came to an abrupt end. It was a Sunday and the hotel was packed with such regulars including a Superior Court Judge from San Diego, when 94 Mexican locals invaded and occupied the hotel. This was a dispute over land ownership and the ejidatarios, or Mexicans who own land communally, evicted the owners and guests and seized the rooms, dining room, pool bar and airstrip. Locals in cowboy hats replaced well-heeled tourists beside a pool which was soon filled only with two inches of green pond scum.

Ultimately Don Johnson and Nancy Ugalde de Johnson, a fifth-generation Mulegé native, spent six months in court to prove that Nancy, Mexican born and bred, was the legal owner. Eventually, a federal judge in Mexico City ruled that they had legal title to the land.

The hotel did reopen; however things were never quite the same, with underlying tension amongst some members of the community in Mulegé years later.

Baja Legend Don Johnson

Don put his heart and soul into the Hotel Serenidad and was always a true Mulegé champion and promoter. He never stopped working on ways to improve the hotel, which is remarkable given the multiple hurricanes and floods they have suffered just in the last 15 years. In 2015, we showed up with our Baja Amigos caravan and Don was in the parking lot directing a dump truck with a load of new gravel for the parking lot. When Don saw us, he grabbed a shovel to spread the piles around so to not catch on the bottom of the RVs. Not bad for a guy closer to 90 than 80 years old at the time.



Lisa and Don

For the last couple of years, he had been working on a new RV Park on the adjacent Shangila property. He knows that many of the larger RV caravans bypass Mulegé because they have nowhere decent to stay that accommodate 20 to 30 rigs.

Although Don has not run the hotel in years, he always served as the unofficial ambassador at the Hotel Serenidad, constantly visiting and chatting with his guests. It is a comfortable role for him, as in 1980 he became the American consul in Mulegé, a job he performed for 13 official years and 20 unofficial ones. Don loved to tell stories and engage the guests.

He always had time to answer questions about the area, the history or listen to whatever it is you want to talk about. You could always count on Don to be one of the most interesting and gracious hosts Mulegé has to offer.

Next time you are on Baja, make sure to drop in to the Hotel Serenidad and experience the unique character, tranquil ambience of this establishment that was decades in the making, and is a real Baja treasure.

Don will be missed but always remembered! He is survived by his three daughters, Diana, Sandra, and Sara Laura along with many grandchildren whom he loved dearly. We understand the family intends to upgrade Hotel Serenidad and continue its operations.

We already have our reservations made for the upcoming Snowbird season.

... more pics follow

...Hotel Serenidad



Hotel Serenidad office and restaurant entrance



Hotel Serenidad patio and Nancy's gift shop



...Hotel Serenidad



Hotel Serenidad runway entrance



...Hotel Serenidad



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by Tommy Clarkson

Texas Palmetto *Sabal Mexicana*

Family *Arecaceae*

Also known as Rio Grande Palmetto, Texas Sabal Palm, Texas Palm, Mexican Palmetto or Palmetto Cabbage

(We've been able to grow almost any palm in Ola Brisa Gardens. But not this one! I've striven, repeatedly, to acquire one from "the wild", from either of the small, selected enclaves in which I've found them. However, they have defied my every effort at transplanting - due to their long tap root. Besides that - and how embarrassing for me - I've not yet been able to grow one from seed. But, in "The Civilized Jungle" hope [and a lot of plants] springs eternal!)

As a genus, Sabals are all New World palmate palms that many folks call palmettos. Their leaves have unarmed petioles (no spikes, hooks or needles), terminating in a rounded, rather palmate fan having no few leaflets. A few of my botanical reference books state that the Texas Palmetto can grow up to fifty feet (15.24 meters). *H'mmmmmm*.

Those in the two enclaves in which I have found them appear to have mature specimens that are nowhere near that height. One of these locales is perhaps thirty miles south of Puerto Vallarta, in the State of Jalisco, and the other, maybe fifty miles east of Manzanillo in the State of Colima.

Having observed - and coveted - this species for over twelve years now, they appear to be slow growing and to not exceed



I don't ever recall seeing one much over twenty feet tall.

around twenty to twenty-five feet (6.10-7.62 meters). Hence, I am confident that they're not Dwarf Palmettos (*Sabal minor*) - which come quite close to the same description - as these grow to but five to ten feet (1.52-3.04 meters).

Furthermore, some secondary sources state that they like fertile soil near swamps or the coastline. *Double h'mmmmm!* Neither of the areas in which I have found them are such - both areas are at a bit higher elevation and in dry, not particularly rich, soil, appearing to thrive in the full sun.

...Texas Palmetto

Yet - other than this and their height - they meet virtually every other description, parameter and specification of the *Sabal Mexicana!*

Bob Harms of the University of Texas wrote a rather germane and applicable piece, which might help clarify this quandary, entitled "Distinguishing Texas Palmettos from Dwarf Palmettos". In it he stated, "A number of distinctive features...(differentiate) Texas Palmetto (*Sabal mexicana*) and Dwarf Palmetto (*Sabal minor*)...The inflorescence of the (latter) rises above the leaves, later arcing down under the weight of fruits...that of *S. mexicana* always remains within the leaves.



And in the background, my blue and faithful, plant hunting companion, "Shane" - remind me to tell you how he got his name!

The stem and leaves of *S. mexicana* are frequently several times larger than those of *S. minor*. Another key indicator of Texas Palmetto is its visible, emerged trunk...But the slow growing *S. mexicana* does not develop a trunk for many years - even with leaves as tall as twelve feet (3.66 meters)...the presence or absence of a trunk is somewhat misleading. Even Dwarf Palmettos have a trunk - but it remains below ground - one of the main reasons that it is virtually impossible to move larger plants from a natural site...The leaf of the Texas Palmetto has a central rib (costa) that runs almost the length of the leaf; the *S. minor* leaf has only a very short rib...which is an extension of the leaf stalk (petiole)...The segments of *S. mexicana* radiate along the full length of the central rib (strongly costapalmate) whereas the segments of *S. minor* are almost entirely at the leaf base (weakly costapalmate) and the rib itself is much shorter relative to the leaf segments."

This confusion regarding these specimens gives pause to seriously consider whether these might be yet another dwarf species, not yet generally recognized, in tropical botanical publications. Accordingly, I hereby grant myself the "As further data come to light, I reserve the right to change my mind" privilege! With an excellent fiber obtainable from the leaf stalks, the leaves are used for making baskets, chair seats and thatch. They are also used to make brushes - particularly those which have to remain stiff in caustics or hot water.

Get your copy of The Civilized Jungle: Tropical Plants Facts and Fun From Ola Brisa Gardens [Volume I](#), and now [Volume II](#) is here!!

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you can reach Tommy Clarkson at tommy@manzanillosun.com

Day of the Dead in Puebla

places the editors have been and recommend you visit
 article and image by Rebecca Smith Hurd

Few traditions in Mexico rival Day of the Dead in their mixing of ancient and modern beliefs. The national holiday, which is celebrated in Puebla, and all over Mexico, in late October and early November, honors lost loved ones by paying tribute to - and praying for - their spirits. Day of the Dead's origins can be traced to pre-Hispanic times, when the Aztecs held a month-long ritual for the goddess of death, Mictecacihuatl. These days, many families set up altars in their homes or businesses to remember people who've passed away, often during the preceding year. The notion is that, by doing so, they welcome, nourish, guide, and otherwise assist the souls in their journey after death.

"This holiday is a perfect example of the complex heritage of the Mexican people," observes Judy King of MexicoConnect. "The beliefs today are based on the complicated blended cultures of ancestors, the Aztec and Maya and Spanish invaders, layered with Catholicism." In Puebla, there's been at least one ofrenda dedicated to Pope John Paul II in recent years.

Day of the Dead altars range from modest displays of the deceased's favorite foods and objects to costly and elaborate monuments of affection. In some places, such as the town of Huaquechula, families welcome visitors in to their homes to appreciate their altars and to share a cup of hot chocolate or atole and a slice of sweet bread or a homemade tamal.

Note: It is customary to leave a few coins in the offering or add a votive candle to the altar if you do.

Atlixco

The city of Atlixco assembles a massive floral carpet for Day of the Dead, which is on public display in its zócalo. It features a Catarina modeled after the post cards of cartoonist José Guadalupe Posadas - comprising some 150,000 marigolds, chrysanthemums, and amaranth and coleus plants. Meanwhile, a giant altar erected by city employees is usually on display inside El Palacio Municipal. Atlixco also hosts a desfile de calaveras, or skull parade.



Huaquechula

The trek to and around Huaquechula, during the Feria de Todos los Santos, is well worth it. Its unique altars, which can cost tens of thousands of pesos to assemble, are towering structures up to 10 feet tall. These ofrendas are often made of cardboard and covered with white or pastel-colored satin, and the shiny fabric gives the multilevel tributes a distinctive look. As noted above, the townspeople open their doors to the public, including curious tourists who'd like to pay their respects.

Find the original article and many more about Puebla and Mexico [at this link](#)



by Tommy Clarkson

Watermelon Peperomia *Peperomia argyrea*

Family *Piperaceae*

Also known as Baby Rubber Plant, Blunt-Leaved Peperomia or Pepperface

In Volume I of "The Civilized Jungle", I wrote about the herbaceous perennial, Pepperface (*Peperomia obtusifolia*), which is the pure and basic, green-leafed species of the *Peperomia* genus. (By the by, the genus name comes from the Greek words *peperi* meaning pepper and *homoios* meaning resembling.) Experience has since shown, however, that many visitors to Ola Brisa Gardens are more intrigued by, and ask questions about, this form!

Robert Lee Riffle says that the Variegated Peperomia *Peperomia obtusifolia 'Variegata'* is "the most beautiful of these cultivars (with) markings of ivory and probably the second most, if not the most, widely grown in the genus." However, I wonder if he's seen this species as it is, quite simply, an absolute lovely!

If a person has read the earlier-cited article then, perhaps, they will remember that the *Peperomia obtusifolia* "is indigenous to Mexico, the northern jungles of South America and the Caribbean area". Beyond this is the fact that it is a member of the same family as black pepper (*Piper nigrum*). Use-wise for gardeners, they are generally employed as potted specimens or - in the case of certain varieties - as ground cover. Indoors, they may be enjoyed in terrariums, dish/bottle gardens, mixed planters or by a warm, sunny window. In the right conditions, they become a bit bushy and grow between six inches and a foot (15.24–30.48 cm).



Watermelon in appearance? You bet!

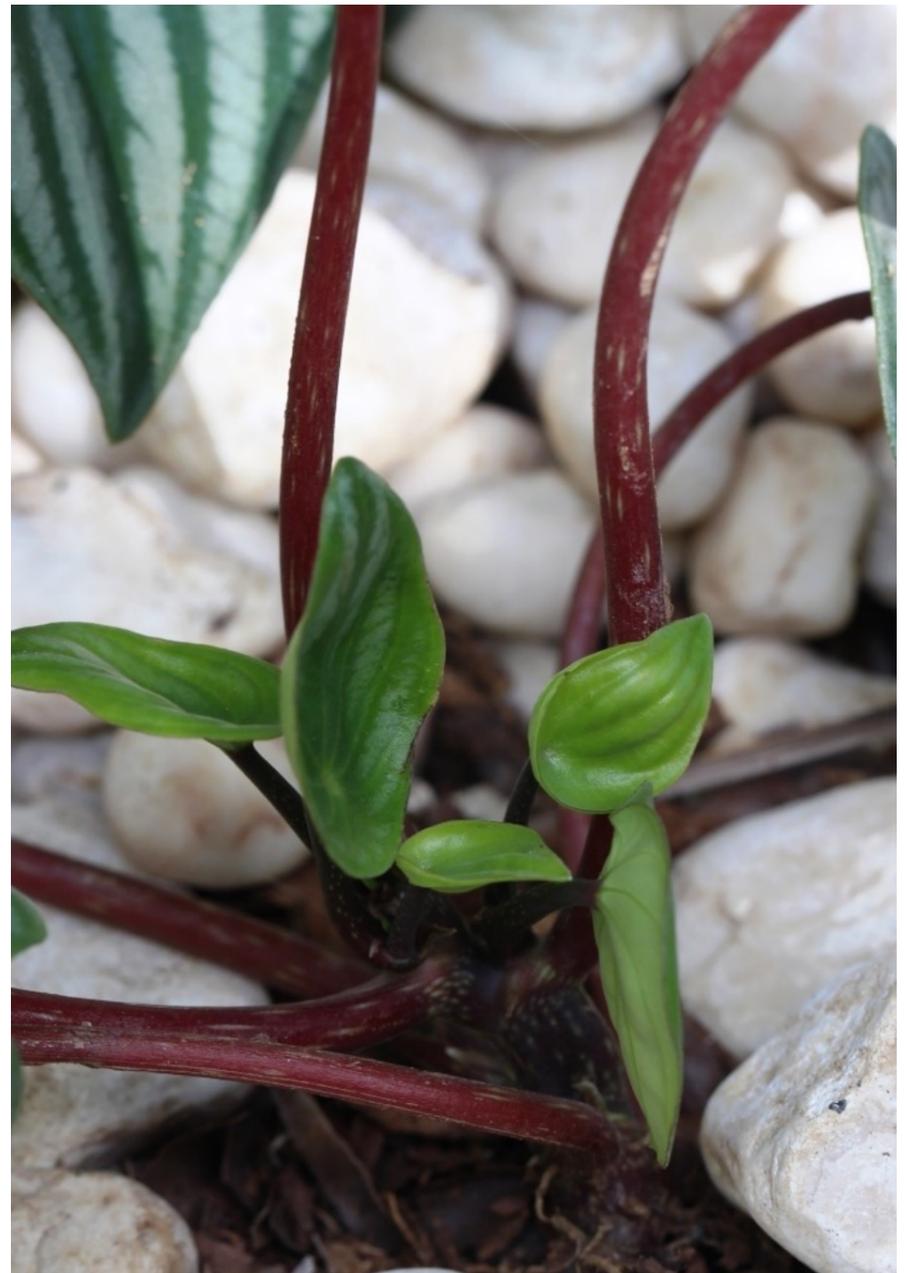
In the May 2, 2011 issue of the online "Plowing through Life," I noted this general, but germane and relative information. This plant "has more than 1,000 cousins in its Peperomia clan; the majority of the species are native to the tropical areas of Central and South America, but a few grow naturally in Florida. (They failed to mention those here in our adopted country, but they're forgiven!)"

Visually, Peperomias vary greatly in appearance; there are trailing, bushy and upright types with foliage that also varies greatly in colouring, variegation, texture and size (from one inch to six inches long). Leaves can be quilted or smooth, variegated or plain and succulent or thin – even hairy." While 'Variegata' has rather thick leaves of cream or yellow, striped with green, *P. argyrea* - what William Warren says in his book *Tropical Plants for Home and Garden* - "has heart-shaped leaves that are striped like a watermelon, (whereas) *P. caperata* has quilted dark, red leaves on red stems." *P. obtusifolia 'Minima'* is a dwarf form.

...Watermelon Pepperomia



They can grow up to nearly a foot tall in delightful clumps.



Their stems are a delight in reddish color.

In that they all have small and rather shallow root systems, they are subject to root rot if too heavily watered, but they still seek a bit of moistness . . . in well-draining soil. So give them a drink, sparingly, allowing the soil to dry as deep as five inches (12.7 cm) between waterings.

As to fertilization, do so occasionally with a balanced house-plant food and following their getting a drink of water.

All are susceptible to grey mold—some call it botrytis. If the air around which your plant is growing is too stagnant, it can appear at the base of the stems. Beyond that, brown-tipped leaves may be caused by sudden drops in temperature. Hence, strive to keep these plants in well-ventilated areas. If you note such a problem, remove the affected leaves immediately. And, it should go without saying, always keep your plants away from droughts and, if indoors, cold window-sills.

I'd like to quote, once more, from the "Plowing" piece mentioned earlier as it's good counsel. This plant grows "well in a variety of light levels, including shade, but does best in a bright

location that receives some direct sunlight. You can grow your plant in a location that offers bright, indirect light and it will do fine, but the preference is a spot where a little early morning eastern or some late afternoon western sunshine is available. Although it will tolerate it, do not place your *Watermelon Pepperomia* where it's too shady; the variegation of the plant will be lost. You may have to protect the plant from the direct rays of the sun during the warmer summer months; watch your plant for signs of discontentment."

Finally, if your dog or cat is a vegan (first they should see an animal shrink, then go into group therapy with carnivorous cows, water allergic fish and birds with a fear of heights) this may not be a plant you wish to have, as the leaves have a degree of toxicity.

For back issues of "Roots", gardening tips, tropical plant book reviews and videos of numerous, highly unique eco/adventure/nature tours, as well as memorable "Ultimate Experiences" such as Tropical Garden Brunches

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you can reach Tommy Clarkson at tommy@manzanillosun.com

Tortillas de Cempasuchitl | Marigold Tortillas

Ingredients

Marigolds, *Cempasuchitl* (cempoal-xochitl), meaning the flower of twenty petals in Náhuatl, are traditionally known as *flor de muerto* or the flower of the dead. From deep reds to bright yellows, the marigold's blooms can reach up to 2-inches in diameter and a stem up to 3-feet tall. During the pre-Hispanic era, the Aztecs selected this robust flower to cover the altars and take part of burial offerings dedicated to their dead.

Now, this beautiful flower is one of the major protagonists during the celebration on November 1 and 2, All Souls Day and Day of the Dead. Endless garlands are hung on altars as part of the holiday's offerings to the deceased, denoting strength of sunlight.

Not only is this flower pleasant to look at, but a flavor enhancer to poultry, teas, candies and tortillas. Celebrate *Día de Los Muertos* with your *tortillero* filled with these marigold tortillas. They are the perfect accompaniment to the festivity's mole, *cochinita pibil* or a simple *queso fundido* appetizer.

¡Buen provecho!

Ingredients

- ✓ 2 cups corn flour
- ✓ 1 ¼ cups water
- ✓ ¼ teaspoon salt
- ✓ 1 ½ cups fresh edible marigold petals

Makes 16, 6-inch tortillas

Instructions

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine corn flour, water and salt. Mix with hands until smooth. If dough sticks to hands, add water, 1 teaspoon at a time, until desired consistency.
2. Heat a *comal* or skillet over low-medium heat.
3. Divide dough into 16 separate equal portions and roll each portion into a ball.
4. Using a tortilla press, flatten each masa ball between two plastic sheets. Open the press and evenly distribute marigold petals on the pressed tortilla. Press the tortilla again gently enough to embed flower petals into the masa.
5. Place tortilla on hot *comal* and cook for approximately 1 minute on each side.
6. Keep tortillas warm in a tortilla warmer or wrapped in a tea towel.

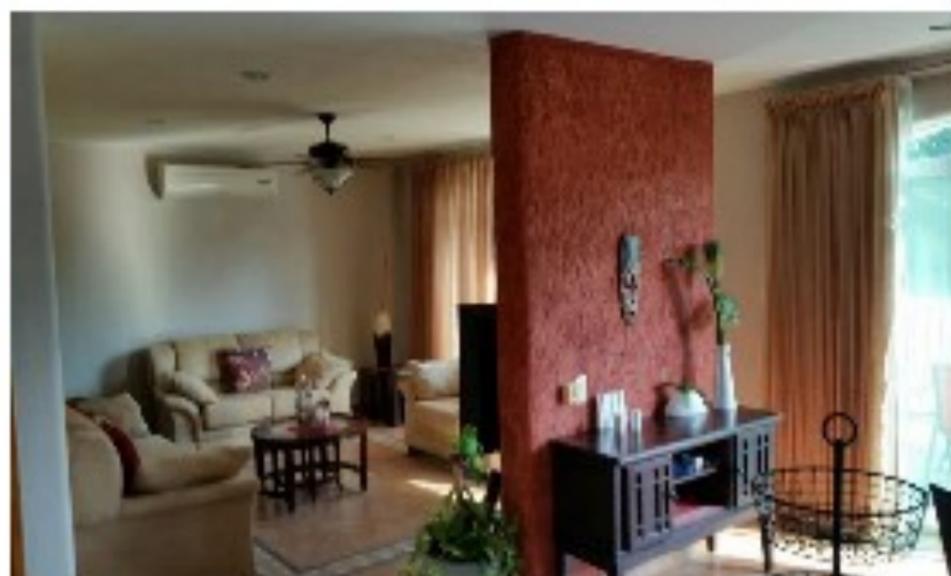
Source [Spanglish Baby](#), posted by [Ericka](#)



House for Rent

Golfers, take note!

Beautiful furnished home for rent, well situated in Real del Country next to the golf course.



The home has 3 bedrooms (each with air conditioning), 2 full, large bathrooms. One of the bedrooms is on the main (lower) floor and adjoins the downstairs bathroom. It comes with a fully equipped kitchen, a washer and dryer.



In addition to 2 patios, and an amazing view of hole 3 of the golf course, a third terraced deck overlooks the social area of the complex that offers a pool, tennis court and a palapa for your enjoyment.

This home comes with 24-hour security, wifi, cable TV and includes water, maintenance fee and covered, off-street parking for 1 car.

Rates:

\$2,100 USD monthly (3-6 months)

\$1,800 USD per month (7-12 months)

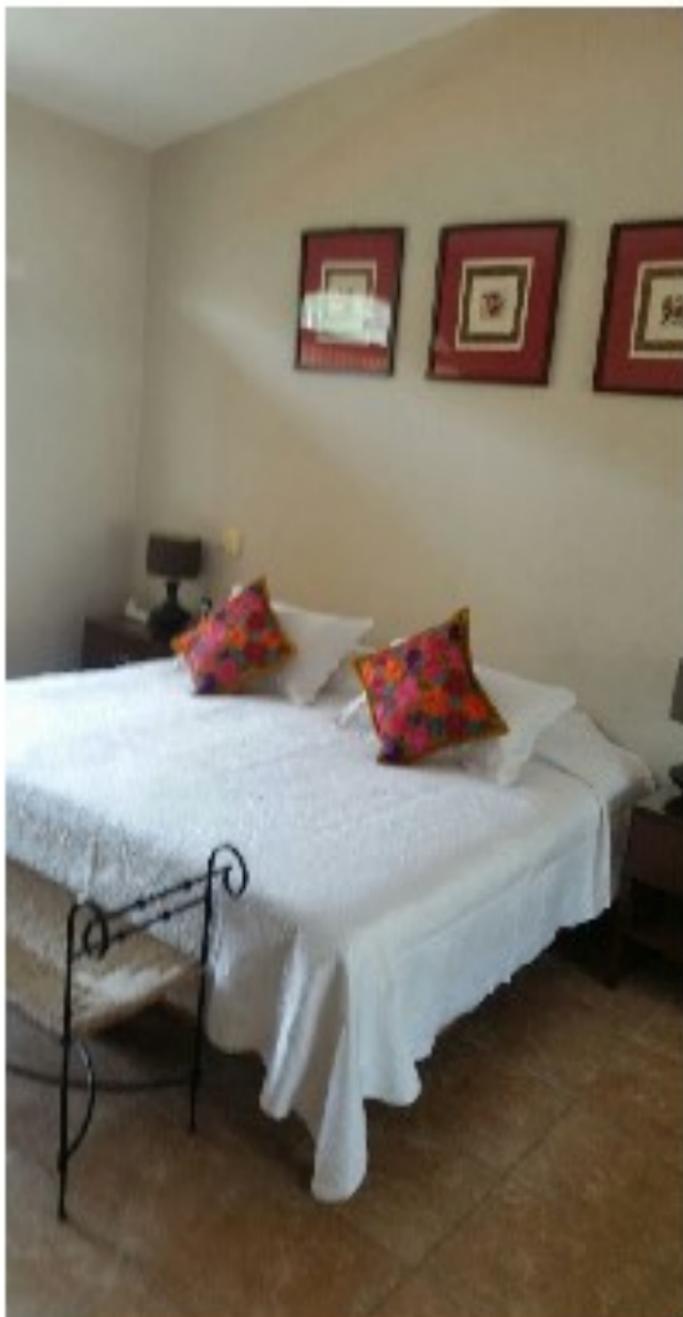
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Contact Yamil Achcar

yamil.achcar@gmail.com

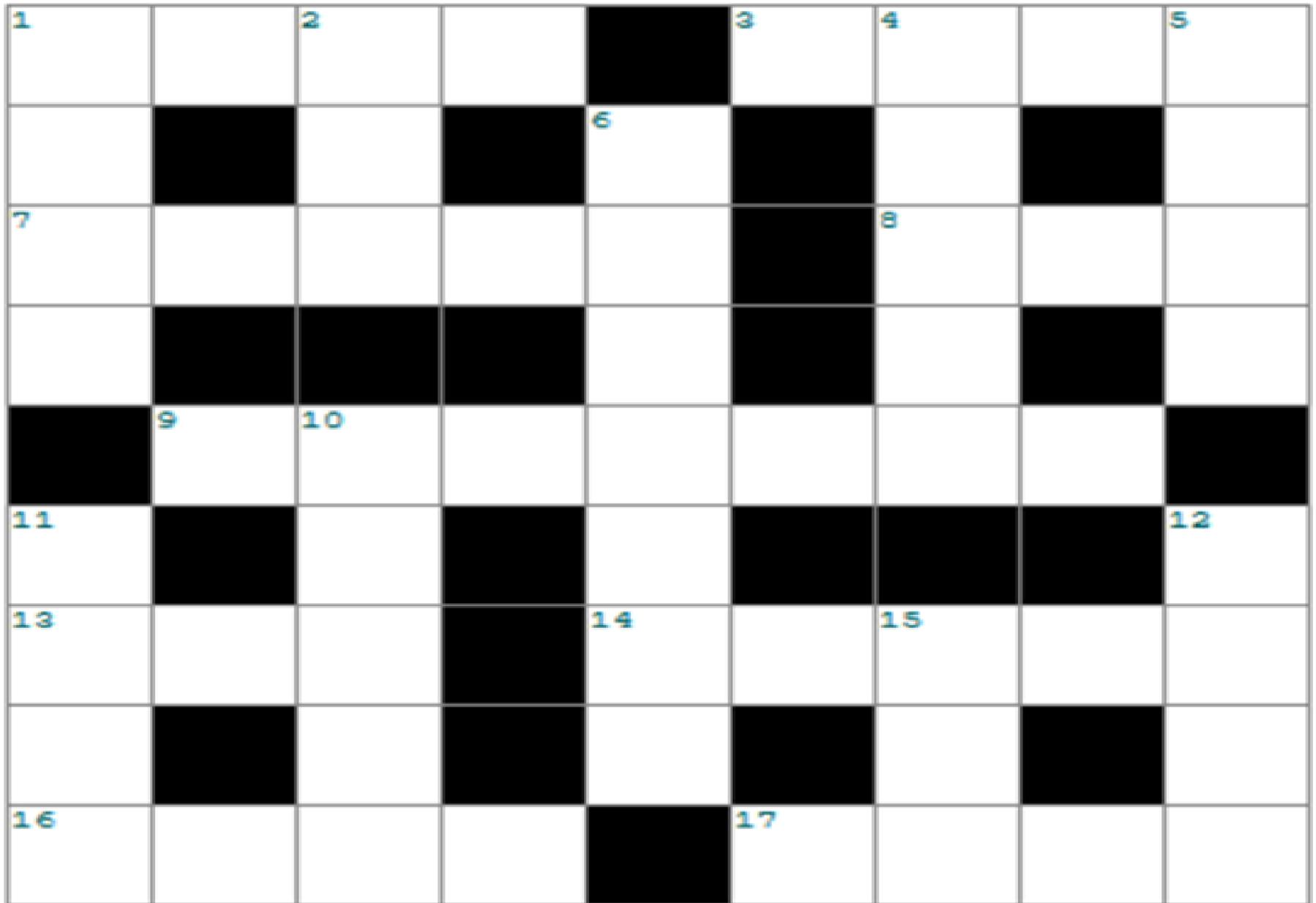
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Landline (+52) 314 138 2725



Crossword

solution posted in next month's edition



Across

- 1 branch, of a tree
- 3 son
- 7 same
- 8 use, act of using
- 9 door handle
- 13 net, mesh of string, cord or rope
- 14 (l) finish
- 16 other; another
- 17 broken, fragmented

Down

- 1 oar; paddle
- 2 more
- 4 equal, the same in all respects
- 5 odour
- 6 to cook
- 10 to burn
- 11 cold
- 12 crazy; mad, insane
- 15 garlic

Last month's crossword solution:



lexisrex.com

Day of the Dead Altars

from the Path to Citizenship series
 article and images from [Mexican Folk Art Guide](#)

Day of the Dead altars, known as *altares de muertos* or *ofrendas*, are set during the Day of the Dead celebrations on November 1 and 2 to honor the dead children and adults.

Day of the Dead celebrations are based on the belief that the souls of the ones gone can come back to this world on these days. The altars are the most prominent feature in the celebration because they show the souls the way to their home. Altars make the souls (animas) feel welcomed and show them they have not been forgotten.

The Day of the Dead altars for the children are set on the eve of October 31 with hoary stock (*Matthiola incana*) and baby's breath (*Gypsophila*) flowers; their white color symbolizing the purity of the children's souls. Children's souls are treated with sweet tamales, hot chocolate, atole (corn based hot drink), fruits, candies and toys. Every element in the altar must be suitable for children.

On the eve of November first, the children-oriented elements on the altar are eaten or removed; in time to honor the adults. Cempasuchil and other Day of the Dead flowers are added to the altar together with spicy tamales, alcoholic drinks and cigarettes or whatever the deceased enjoyed in life.

Day of the Dead Altar Elements

Day of the Dead altars are set with different elements depending on the region; these differences are established by the availability of seasonal flowers and fruits and the traditional food from the area. Other elements are shared everywhere in the country. Most altars would include some or all of the following elements.

Picture

A picture of the evoked relative is placed in the altar to make him present and revive his image.

Flowers

The altar is decorated with fresh flowers as it is believed that their scent will make the returning souls feel welcomed and happy. The flowers used to decorate the altars are known as Day of the Dead Flowers, and their use depends on local customs, local availability and financial capacity.



The cempasuchil or flor de muertos (flower of the dead, marigolds) is one of the most used flowers during the celebration. In some places, its petals are set to make a path from the house door to the altar, thus showing the way to the returning souls.

Different Levels

In some areas altars are made with two levels that symbolize heaven and earth. In others, they are made with three levels for heaven, purgatory and earth and there are places where altars with seven levels are placed. Each of these levels represents the steps a soul has to make to get to heaven.

An Arch

Symbolizes the entrance to the world of the dead. In the places where it's set out, it can be made with cempasuchil flowers like in Michoacán State, or of reed like in Puebla State.

Chiseled Paper

The papel picado or chiseled paper are paper flags chiseled with saints' figures or skulls and skeletons that are placed like a table cloth in the altar. To some people, they represent the element of air for the way they move.

...Day of the Dead Altars



Day of the Dead Bread

Day of the dead bread or pan de muertos is different in every region of the country and is one of the most important elements in the altar as it is a fraternal offering to the souls in the catholic tradition.

Candy Skulls

Sugar, chocolate or amaranth seed skulls represent the deceased and its presence.

Candies

Alfeñique (almond paste) fruits, donkeys, angels and skeletons and all kinds of homemade candies are set as treats the souls of the children.

Food

Every region in Mexico has a special dish that is considered the most festive and tasty and it's usually the main food offered in the altar. A good example is turkey with mole. These dishes are expensive and most of the families in the rural areas only make them for this occasion. Tamales, atole, fruits like oranges and apples and desserts like the calabaza en tacha (candied pumpkin) are also part of the offering.

Spirited Drinks

Tequila, mezcal and pulque (fermented agave juice) are offered to the adult souls so they can relax and enjoy with their family. If the honored one smoked, a pack of cigarettes is then set in the altar.

Candles

Candles show the souls their way to the altar and back to the dead world. They symbolize light, hope and faith. The number of candles in the altar depends on the local tradition, in some regions a candle is set for each honored soul, in others four candles, one for each cardinal point are placed in the altar while in most places the number of candles depends on the economic capability of the family setting the altar.

Religious Elements

The most common are crucifixes and Virgin Mary and patron saint images.

Petate

Petates (palm tree leaf woven carpets) are set aside for the souls to lie down and rest.

Water

A glass of water is set in the altar to calm the souls' thirst after their long journey.

Copal

The resin of the tree that has the same name is burned to purify the place and to attract the souls with its sweet smell.

Salt

A small plate with salt is set in the altar as a purifying element.

Personal Objects

In some areas the tools, clothing or toys of the deceased are added to the offering to make him feel at home.

Ornaments

Candle holders, incense burners, papier mache or clay figurines or animals, such as skulls or skeletons, doing a certain activity are included. In some areas, a clay xoloitzcuintli dog is set in the altar to make the children's souls feel good in their arrival to the celebration.

The souls will only take the essence out of the food and drinks so at the end of the celebration or in some places during the event, the family will gather and eat and drink the offered goodies and often share them with the community members.