

CACTUS CORNER NEWS

Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society

Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

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March, 2013

**Next Meeting: Thursday, March 7, 2013, 7:00 P.M. (Doors open 6:30 P.M.)
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Service Center (DHHSC), 5340 North Fresno Street, Fresno**

Program: The Great American Southwest

Presenter: Wendell S. (Woody) Minnich

No where in the world is there a more dynamic and picturesque region than that of the American southwest. This romantic and historical part of the USA is marked with drama from its indigenous peoples and landscapes, to its grandest plants and creatures. For the purpose of this title we are including the seven most cactus and succulent rich states; Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and Utah.

This presentation, The Great American Southwest, is an epic story and view of this magic land. Many people from all over the world have been attracted this special region, and for me, I will be sharing over 40 years of my field work in this most incredible part of our country.



Woody, as he is commonly called, has been in the cactus hobby for some 41 years and has become well known for his participation in many of the cactus and succulent clubs. He is an honorary life member of seven clubs as well as a life member of CSSA (Cactus & Succulent Society of America.)

He has served in almost all positions of leadership from president, to newsletter editor, to show chairman and so on. He is also known for his extensive fieldwork studying primarily the cactus family. He has traveled throughout the United States, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Africa, Yemen and Socotra. From these trips he has developed an extensive knowledge of the cactus family as well as many of the other succulent genera. He is also known for his cactus and succulent nursery, Cactus Data Plants, which specializes in show specimens and rare cacti. CDP was started in 1975 and is still in operation today.

Plants: Woody will be bringing a nice selection of plants for you to purchase.

For more information contact Woody Minnich at **Cactus Data Plants**, 4 Vida Del Agua, Edgewood, New Mexico 87015-6517
Telephone: (505) 281-5884; Email: cactusdata@msn.com

PLAZA VENTANA MEXICAN RESTAURANT ~ DINNER ~
5088 North Blackstone Avenue
Fresno, (559) 229-2189
www.plazaventana.com/menu.html
Dinner begins at 5:15 p.m.

**Contact Charlene Stebles by
March 6th to make reservations.**
Phone/message (559) 299-1039
Email: ronandcharlene@comcast.net
Members are invited to attend.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER –

Hi, all,

Be sure not to miss this month's meeting, as we will be welcoming one of our very favorite speakers, Wendell ("Woody") Minnich. His programs always feature top-notch photography and excellent narration. As usual, he also will be bringing a great selection of sale plants. See you there!

Renewals/membership: Joyce Quinn will have a preliminary draft of the 2013 club roster at this meeting. You can check it to make sure your information is correct. (And there are still a few of you who haven't renewed yet; please do, as we don't want to lose you.)

Bill Gale pulled out all the stops last month, hauling in a van-load of his show plants to illustrate his program. I'm sure everyone in attendance enjoyed getting a close look at those beauties. Thanks, Bill. It was a great effort.

Missing library book: "Australian Succulent Plants" by Atila Kapitany. The book has been missing for some time. The person who last checked it out claims to have returned it and I wonder if someone might have picked it up without signing the card. It's a large book, not likely to be overlooked. Would you please check your book shelves? Thanks.

While our big event this month is the Fresno Spring Home & Garden Show, March 1-3, we have to plan for our annual club show and sale, June 1-2, at Sierra Vista Mall. Cindy Duwe is Show Chairman this year. She will be asking some of you to help with various aspects of it; please say yes. I am sure she would be glad for some volunteers, as well.

Changing of the guard: Carole Grosch has taken over Sunshine duties from Val McCullough. Please let Carole know of any member who needs a get-well or sympathy card. I want to thank Val for her work these past few years. After five years as greeter, Rudy Rapisura has "retired" and Tom Meyer will succeed him as greeter and sign-in honcho. Thanks for your good work, Rudy. To everyone: don't forget to sign in when you come into the meeting; it helps us to know how many people are in attendance.

Well, we've finally started to have more spring-like weather, these days. The temptation to chop back those top-frozen succulents is strong, but it's still best to be patient. Many succulents will self-prune once it's time to begin growing again—that is, it will form an abscission layer between the dead and living tissue, making the dead part dry up and be easily removed. And as for those plants that didn't make it, well, some people say that, for every plant that kicks the bucket, you have permission to buy two more to replace it. I can relate to that!

Good growing – and, see you at the meeting!
Sue



SPRING HOME AND GARDEN SHOW

This will be a busy weekend for us—three days out at the Fresno Fairgrounds. The plant societies will be in the Junior Exhibit Building this year; it's the first building on your right as you enter via the Butler Avenue gate. Most of the societies will be on the right side of the building—side by side with no aisles between the areas. We will need to set up on Thursday. Dan Gale is in charge, so give him a call if you have any questions (787-2415). Be sure to bring your own chair, as none will be supplied. If you helped out last year, I hope you kept your badges, as they are used year after year. If you don't have one, be sure to wear your club badge. Tell the gatekeepers that you're with the plant societies in the Junior Exhibit Building.

Hours for the event are: Friday—11 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Saturday—10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Sunday—10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Master Gardeners will be presenting seminars throughout the weekend. On Saturday at 2:45, our own Madeleine Mitchell and Ruth Saludes will give a talk on cacti and succulents.

Dan may still have some gate passes, so give him a call.
Sue



Club access: President, Sue Haffner, 292-5624, sueh@csufresno.edu; Programs, Charlene Stebles, 299-1039, ronandcharlene@comcast.net; Treasurer, Joyce Quinn, 270-5520, j_quinn@att.net; Editor, Sue Haffner, 292-5624, sueh@csufresno.edu; Refreshments, Marian Orvis, 226-0145, mforvet@comcast.net; Librarian, Madeleine Mitchell, 638-2784, madeleine43@comcast.net; Webmaster, Vickie Veen, vickieveen@gmail.com; Sunshine, Carole Grosch, 323-8602, cgg266@comcast.net.



Chuck Thew (3rd); Larry Carlberg (15th);
Jenny Swartzbaugh (20th); Karen Ocheltree (21st);
Veone Gale (22nd); Sandra Alvarez (24th);
Bob Kliss (31st).

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**Visitors last month:** Ben Brase, Dianne Malloy.

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Our thoughts go out to **Don La Mont**, as he undergoes surgery this month. We hope he makes a swift recovery.



Former member and past President **Bill Cross** passed away February 15th. He and his late wife Diana were active members of the club years ago. She served a term as Secretary. Bill was a retired lieutenant of the Fresno Police Department; Diana was a crime scene investigator. Our sympathies go out to their family.

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Former member **Charlie Nelson** has issues of the Cactus & Succulent Journal he would like to sell. He has complete volumes for 1988, 1989, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1998, 2009, 2010; and scattered issues for other years. Get in touch with him if you are interested: (559) 673-0320; [nelson6171@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nelson6171@sbcglobal.net).

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CLUB WORKSHOP

We had a lively workshop February 20th at the Succulent Shack. **Mary Drumheller** has agreed to take over as chairman and has suggested a structure for our meetings:

- ✓ “Orphans” – who is this plant?
- ✓ Tips – any new growing tips to share
- ✓ Sales – anything going on in California
- ✓ What should we be doing now?
- ✓ Oh, those great plants! – your specimens here
- ✓ What’s wrong? – a problem and how to fix it

This sounds like a great way to share information, as the aim of the workshops is to help ourselves be better growers. We own many thanks, also, to Rudy Rapisura for his years as chairman. In January and February Vickie Veen displayed succulents she is growing hydroponically (or semi-hydroponically). They are in plastic freezer containers which are filled with hydroponic media with water placed in the lowest inch, or so, of the container. I know it sounds counter-intuitive to grow succulents in this manner, but her plants seem to be doing fine. Talk to Vickie to find out the details.



BOARD MEETING: Sunday, March 10th; 1 p.m.,
Fig Garden Branch Library, SW corner of Bullard and Marks.
All members are welcome to attend.

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**Newsletter submittal deadline: March 22, 2013**

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COMING EVENTS

Plant Give & Take, Saturday, March 9th; 9 a.m. to noon,
parking lot, VFW Post 8900, 3585 N. Blyth
(between Dakota & Ashlan).

Artist Day in the Garden, Friday, March 15th, Shinzen
Japanese Garden, Woodward Park; 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.;
free entry; info: (559) 840-1264.

Children’s Spring Event, Saturday, March 16th,
Clovis Botanical Garden, 10 a.m. to noon.
Info: (559) 323-5974, 2marge@comcast.net

Plant Give & Take, Saturday, March 16th,
First United Methodist Church, Reedley, 1461 Eleventh St.
(parking lot); 9 a.m. to noon.

3rd Annual “Spring into Your Garden” festival,
Saturday, March 23rd, Clovis Botanical Garden;
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.; workshops, plant sales, landscaping ideas;
info: (559) 298-3091.

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**March workshop:** Wednesday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 6 p.m., at the  
Succulent Shack, 1302 Wishon. For the “Oh, those great  
plants” feature, bring plants in genera starting with A or B. (Of  
course, you can bring anything that looks good.)

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BRAG TABLE

Madeleine Mitchell did a fine job of standing in for Fred Gaumer, who was home with a bad cold. Eighteen plants were displayed: Madeleine brought *Euphorbia* ‘Sweetheart’; Dan Gale brought *Ariocarpus bravoanus*, *Geohintonia mexicana crest* and *Pachypodium namaquanum*; Elke Kuipers brought a nice dish garden; Sue Haffner brought *Dudleya candida*, *turbincarpus macrochele*, *Haworthia arachnacantha ssp venter*; Charlene Stebles brought *Crassula* ‘Morgan’s Pink’; Bruce Hargreaves brought *Euphorbia bupleurifolia*, *E. pubiglans*. Robert Scott brought *Haworthia maughanii*, *H.* ‘David Grigsby’ x ‘Donuts’, *Aloe* ‘Coral Fire’, *Crassula mesembryanthoides*, *Euphorbia medusa crest*; Joyce Quinn brought a succulent dish garden; Larry Carlberg brought *Ibervillea sonora*. Thanks to all of them.



Getting to Know You . . .

Robert Scott

An interest in plants was developed early for Robert Scott when his grandmother first taught him to grow vegetables, then fruit trees and roses. “She got me hooked on growing plants,” he remembers.

Later, at Fresno State, Robert became a Plant Science major, after first being interested in majoring in Biology then Veterinary Science, while taking plant classes for fun. Once he realized his true passion was plants and geared his study in that area, he met Nick Deinhart, who in turn, introduced him to the wonderful world of cacti and succulents. Up to that point, Robert raised a few succulents, but his interest was more on the food aspect for his turtles and tortoises rather than on the plants themselves.

Robert was familiar with Aloes – he grew them for tortoise food from the time he was 8 years old – but it was Nick who introduced him to the many different types as well as hybridization. Now he has over 40 species and on the lookout for more.



“Along with the Aloes, I grow Haworthias and Gasterias,” says Robert. “These three types are what I have been focusing on when it comes to making seed and hybrids. I grow other varieties of succulents (I like them all!) and am slowly getting into cactus. I just wish I had more room!”

A Fresno native, Robert is well aware of weather in the Central Valley and feels it is vital to learn about the natural habitat of the plants you wish to grow. “This determines everything,” he says, “from what soil to use and more importantly when to water. If your plant comes from a winter rain only area and you try watering in the heat of the summer, your plant will die. These plants have evolved to grow in certain conditions and there is no way you can change that. Research what your plants need, in order to know how to care for them.

“When it comes to soils, I have learned that drainage is very important. You can use different soil types, but if you don’t have good drainage, your plants will suffer.”



Since he was 10 years old, Robert has been raising, adopting and rescuing turtles and tortoises. At one point he had over 100 animals, but now has less, concentrating on certain species. Specimens come from the US, Europe, South America, Africa and India. They range from the relatively small Indian Spotted turtles to Sammy, the 90-pound African Sulcata, who, at maturity, will grow to be 300 pounds.

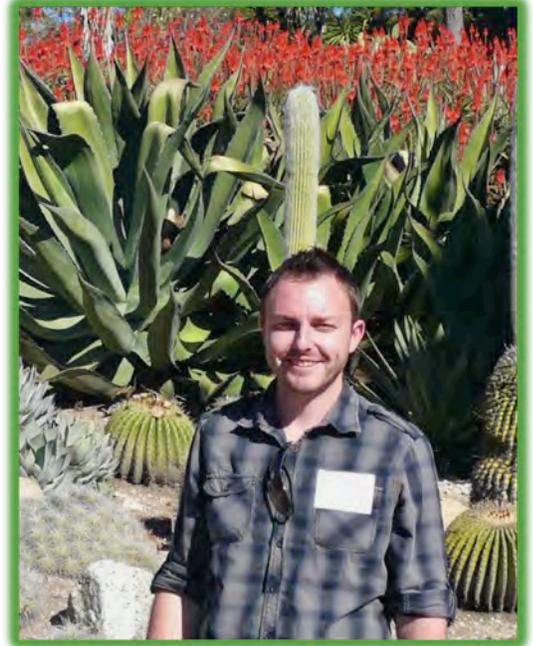
For 7 years Robert has been the President and acting Vice President of the local Cen-Val Chapter of the California Turtle and Tortoise Club. He enjoys travel and goes often to cactus and succulent shows and reptile events. One day he wants to visit Africa and Madagascar, an excellent choice of locations to study both plants and reptiles in habitat.

Nick acquainted Robert with the FC&SS and he has been a member for the past two years. “I have met so many friendly and knowledgeable people that have all become friends,” he says. “It’s great when you can chat with others who share your passion, learn from them and their experiences. That is why a club is so important; it’s a great way to get information but also valuable experience, either growing plants or raising reptiles.”



Carole Grosch

The Cen-Val Turtle & Tortoise Club meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at Del-Mar Elementary School on Ashlan, one block west of Blackstone, (Ashlan and Del Mar.) Meetings start at 7 pm and all are welcome!



THE MANY-HEADED ECHINOCACTUS

Echinocactus polycephalus is a long-lived and very slow-growing plant, native to a wide area which encompasses southern Nevada, southeastern California, western Arizona and northwestern Sonora, Mexico. Its habitat is very inhospitable—dry, rocky slopes and volcanic plains and outcrops in areas where summer temperatures can reach close to 120 degrees. Winter temperatures can be very cold and sometimes snowy.



Photo: Elton Roberts

This species is well-known among cactophiles for its distinctive web of stiff, interlocking spines. It produces dozens of individual heads, about 6-8 inches wide, and can grow into clumps of up to a hundred heads. *Elton Roberts writes: “To see these really large clumps you have to get out and hike and look for the plants. I have seen plants growing in cracks on a solid rock mountainside ... Go to where the soil is a bit deeper and you can have some really huge clumps.”

E. polycephalus produces yellow flowers which sometimes have a battle to get through the spines to open fully. They are reputed to be fragrant.

Elton says you can tell when the plants are going to bloom: they start producing “cotton balls.” Not all the cotton balls will produce a flower; sometimes they abort for unknown

reasons. In cultivation, at least, it seems to be a shy bloomer. Elton again: “When the seed pods are getting ripe in the desert mice search out the seed pods and eat the seed. To get to the seed pods many times they have to chew off the spines covering the pods. The mice have to get through the cotton and they spread it all over the top of the heads. They make quite a mess of the cotton. I have heard the term of “cotton tops” for the plant and I guess that is the reason why.”

Elton recommends giving the plants a fast draining soil mix. “For best plant growth, give them a hot and very bright spot in the hothouse. Do not kill with kindness by over-watering them. Allow the soil to dry between watering. It will not hurt the plant if the soil is dry for weeks at a time, but keep it damp a bit too long and the plant is a goner. If once they lose their roots, it can take a long time to get them to root again—then only if you are lucky!”

Sue

(*Email dated July 19, 2007)



Photo: Elton Roberts

OCOTILLO

The Ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*) is in much demand for Southwest-themed gardens. Its upright architectural structure, the zigzag lightning of its branching pattern, and the flaming orange-red flowers make a bold statement. Hummingbirds love those flowers and depend on them for food as they migrate north out of Mexico. The plant is so attuned to its environment that it can alternately leaf out or go deciduous five or six time a year. During drought, the plant looks all but dead, but within 24 hours of rain it produces new leaves which cover its skeleton with a thick green fur.

The Ocotillo has been used by indigenous peoples of Mexico and the Southwest for fencing. They would stick cut canes into the ground to corral livestock and poultry. Often, the canes took root, forming a distinctive living fence. Gardeners still do this with Ocotillo. The only deterrent is the size the plant will get once it's established. A mature plant can sport as many as 100 thin stems. I've seen photos of how a Tucson landscaper arranged Ocotillo stems into a fan shape, braced by a trellis, creating an espalier. It restricted the width of the plant while showcasing the tracery of its branches, and helped cast interesting shadows on an otherwise unremarkable cement wall.

If you've travelled much in Arizona, you may have seen truckloads of Ocotillos that have been “harvested” from the desert on their way to a nursery. They're stacked up like firewood. About half of these won't survive, I understand. So many plants have been removed from habitat that it's rumored that the hummingbirds' migration patterns are changing because of it.

Over the years, we've had a number of people ask about Ocotillos at our annual show and sale. I don't recall ever seeing any for sale at a local nursery, but I'm sure you could find them in southern California. Seed-grown nursery stock is now available—a much more environmentally responsible choice--and these are much more likely to survive.

Sue



Photos: Wikipedia