

CACTUS CORNER NEWS
Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society
http: www.fresnocss.org

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Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

September 2014

NEXT MEETING: MEMBER'S SALES NIGHT



Open to the Public



MEMBER'S SALES NIGHT

Thursday, September 4th - 6:30 PM

(Sellers set-up at 6:00 PM)

Pots, plants, plant cuttings, books, garden decorations and other hobby related items will be available for purchase from our club members at very reasonable prices.

Generous club members will contribute delicious refreshments.

Join us for an enjoyable evening!

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Service Center
5340 N. Fresno Street, Fresno

FROM THE PREZ ...

Hi, all,

September already—I wish it *felt* like September. Still, our plants detect the shorter days. If you look closely you can see some of your winter growing succulents already starting to push. If you have pots of dormant South African bulbs, you might soon want to haul them out from under the benches (or wherever they've been). They will start showing some green before long.

We have some busy times ahead. This month is the Members' Sale Night. Vendors should remember to have small change on hand, as well as boxes for the customers. If you're attending as a customer, consider bringing your own box to haul your goodies home. And don't forget the club sale table: anything you would like to donate to the table will be gratefully received. It all goes to help the club finances.

This year's bus trip is also this month, on Saturday, Sept. 20th. There are still some seats available, so you can still decide to go with us. Details are elsewhere in the newsletter.

The Fresno Fair is right around the corner, as well. September 6th is the deadline for sending in paper entries; Sept. 8th is the deadline for online entries. A few of us have been entering plants for years, but we really need to encourage more of you to become exhibitors. Jennifer Waite gave us all a pep talk at last month's meeting. I entered a lot of plants last year, but will have less this year. They (and I) took quite a beating from this awful summer. I always want us to have a great display at the Fair, as it is essentially an advertisement for the club.

Nominations for 2015 are on the horizon. Two board members' terms are up, so, at a minimum, we'll need two people to run for these positions. If you care about the club and would like to help with club business, let me or another officer know. If asked by the Committee, please think about saying yes.

Above I mentioned my plants having taken a beating this summer. Part of it was my own fault. I had a tree service come in to remove a tree and thin out five others. I've lived in my house for many years and the yard had gotten more and more shady. I thought I had done a good job moving potted plants out of the way and into what shade would be left. But a lot of plants got whacked, anyway. Ah, well: the leaf succulents will grow out of it—eventually; the bleached cacti—who knows?

Hope to see you at this September event—it's always a lot of fun. The general public is invited to the sale, so be sure to spread the word to people you may think would be interested.

Good growing!
Sue



A question asked last month at Robert Scott's excellent talk on cactus and succulent growing involved how to reduce the weight of potting mix in large pots. Of course, there are commercial products aimed at doing just that. Check this site: www.betterthanrocks.com



BOARD MEETING: Monday, September 8th; 6 p.m., 3733 N. Sierra Vista, Fresno.
All members are welcome to attend; board members should attend.

Club access: President, Sue Haffner, 292-5624, sueh@csufresno.edu; Programs, Rosanna Rojas, 999-0017, rfrojas96@gmail.com; Treasurer, Robert Scott, 960-3665, Rob_scott85@yahoo.com; Editor, Sue Haffner, 292-5624, sueh@csufresno.edu; Refreshments (vacant); Librarian, Madeleine Mitchell, 638-2784, madeleine43@comcast.net; Webmaster, Vickie Veen, vickieveen@gmail.com; Sunshine, Carole Grosch, 323-8602, cgg266@comcast.net.

FRESNO CACTUS & SUCCULENT CLUB BOARD MEETING AUGUST 20, 2014

President Sue Haffner called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Attendance: Rosanna Rojas, Vice President; Robert Scott, Treasurer; Cindy Duwe, Secretary; Fred Gaumer, CSAA Affiliate Representative, Tom Meyer, Board Member; Larry Homan, Board Member; Nell Lemke, Board Member; Dan Gale, Board Member; Carole Grosch, Board Member; Rudy Rulloda, Board Member.

Visitors: Doris Hooten, Mary Drumheller, Susan Cook.

Officer Reports:

Rosanna Rojas reported on the upcoming Member Sale Night. She handed around a signup sheet at the last meeting for members to bring refreshments. She said there were several people bringing goodies. The following club members have signed up for a table to sell at the Member Sale Night: Doris Hooten, Mary Drumheller, Susan Cook, Veone Gale, Larry Homan, Bill Gale, Dennis Anderson, Tony Sharp, Dan Gale, Rudy Rulloda.

Polly Dunklin has updated last year's postcard and will send them to the mailing list.

Robert Scott announced that the club has \$10,224.44 in the club account. He reminded everyone selling at the Member Sale Night to bring change.

Old Business:

Cindy Duwe reported on the upcoming Bus Trip to be held on September 20, 2014. There are 35 people signed up to go on the tour of the Botanical Gardens at UC Berkeley and to Annie's Perennial Garden in Richmond.

Sue Haffner told the board that Sue Coulter from the DHHSC showed Paul and Madeleine Mitchell and herself how to lock and set the alarm on the building after the club meeting. Sue now has a key to the club meeting room.

Change date of summer picnic: **Rosanna Rojas** moved and **Carole Grosch** seconded that we change the summer picnic from the first Thursday in July to the first Thursday in May. Motion passed unanimously. This change will be brought before the members at the club meeting in October.

New Business:

Carole Grosch, Dan Gale and Nell Lemke are ending their terms as Board Members this year. A Nominating Committee was discussed. No one volunteered to chair this committee at this time. One Board Member and two regular members of the club must make up the Nominating Committee. This was postponed until the next Board Meeting.

Robert Scott purchased the book, *Succulents of Australia*, written by Attila Kapistany for the club library.

Sue Haffner has a new e-mail address: sueh@mail.fresnostate.edu.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Duwe, Secretary



HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Don LaMont, Janet Moos (4th); Jack Fleming (11th); Susan Cook (12th); Polly Dunklin, Joyce Quinn (20th); Jo Ann Caufield (21st); Linda Olivas (24th); Rebekah Carlson (23rd); Roz Tampone (28th); Polly Hargreaves (29th); Sean Glitch (30th).

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**SAY HELLO TO THESE NEW MEMBERS:**

- Lisa L. Fialho, Fresno
- Marilyn Green, Clovis
- Marilyn Murray, Fresno
- Karen A Puente, Kingsburg

Welcome! And we hope to see you at our meetings!

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Your President/Editor has a new email:

sueh@mail.fresnostate.edu



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**EVENTS THIS MONTH**

**Succulent Extravaganza, Succulent Gardens, 2133 Elkhorn Rd, Castroville; Fri. & Sat., Sept. 26-27; "Succulents: the landscape is changing" is the theme; Free; for more information: (831) 632-0482,**

**Show & Sale, Cactus & Succulent Society of San Jose, Sat. & Sun., Sept 27-28, Peterson Middle School, 1380 Rosalia Way, Sunnyvale; Sat. 9-5; Sun. 9-4.**

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AUGUST BRAG TABLE: Bruce Hargreaves brought *Euphorbia abyssinica* and *Opuntia treleasei* (the "Bakersfield Cactus"). Fred Gaumer displayed *Obregonia denegrii* and *Sesamothamnus lugardi*. Val McCullough brought an opuntia crest. Dan Gale showed a *Cyphostemma* collection. We won't have a Brag Table this month, but we encourage you to bring your 'brag-worthy' plants in October.



CLUB WORKSHOP: We had the usual bunch of interesting plants to pass around and talk about at the August workshop. The topic was "Plants with Stories", and Dennis Anderson seemed to be the only one who brought an appropriate one—a small plant of *Harrisia simpsonii*, an unusual tropical cactus endemic to southern Florida and the British West Indies. (The "New Cactus Lexicon" puts it under *Harrisia gracilis*.) It is a cutting of the first cactus he ever had. Jack Fleming brought three spectacular euphorbias; Bill Gale showed a bunch of *Pachypodium brevicaule* seedlings grafted on *P. geayi* stock. He also brought some adenium seedlings that had come up variegated. They were from seed produced by his double-flowered hybrids. Dan Gale brought a branching *Pachypodium namaquanum*. Variegated seedlings: people who grow a lot of plants from seed are surprised every once in awhile when a bunch of seedlings will come up variegated. This happens once in awhile with *Astrophytum*. Generally, the mortality rate for these is pretty high; or they revert to all-green.

The September workshop will be Wednesday, Sept. 17th, 6:00 p.m., at 3733 N. Sierra Vista. The subject is "winter growers."

The Big Fresno Fair

There is still time for club members wishing to take part in the Fresno Fair. There will be Entry Forms at the September club meeting. The deadline for these forms is September 6 and the online (www.fresnofair.com) September 8.

Participants should bring their plants to the Greenhouse on Saturday, September 27 and Sunday, September 28. The gate on Butler Avenue should be used to bring your plants. Judging will be on Monday, September 29 at 10 am.

The Fair begins on the 1st through 13th of October. We will need volunteers to watch over the plants and answer questions from the public. The watch is for 2 hours. Volunteers will have free parking and admission passes. Volunteers with more than 4 hours will have photo ID badges. There will be a sign up sheet for the plant watch and volunteer application at the September club meeting.

We are hoping for club members share their talent to the public. We hope to have cactus/succulent demonstrations throughout the entire Fair dates. A sign up sheet will also be at the September club meeting.

Rudy Rulloda, Chair

(Need help with Fair entries? If you have a question about which class your plant belongs in, don't hesitate to email one of your officers. We'll see that you get the right answer.) *Sue*



UC Berkeley Botanical Garden Bus Trip: Saturday, September 20th. As of this writing, there are still some seats available. The cost is \$35.00, which includes admission to the Garden. Below is the schedule. Be sure to bring a lunch. Bring a box for your purchases at our second stop: Annie's Annuals.

For more information contact Cindy Duwe, cindyduwe@yahoo.com; 285-4622 or 433-3304.

Tentative Schedule for Bus Trip on September 20, 2014:

- 6:00 a.m. - Board bus in parking lot of Wal-Mart located at 3680 W. Shaw Avenue (cross street, Brawley).
- 7:30 a.m. - Rest stop at McDonalds in Los Banos.
- 8:00 a.m. - Board bus and continue to Berkeley.
- 11:00 a.m. - Tour University of California, Berkeley, Botanical Garden. We are signed up to take "Plants of the World " tour.
- 12:00 p.m. - Visit the garden store, eat lunch (bring your own), rest, etc.
- 1:00 p.m. - Board bus and travel to Richmond to visit Annie's Annuals & Perennials.
- 2:30 p.m. - Board bus. Travel to Los Banos for dinner at Espana's Restaurant.

Tentative 9 p.m. return to Fresno

Ruschia pulvinaris

Want to add intrigue to a rock garden? Need color pop in a ground cover? You might want to consider this cold hardy, drought tolerant succulent with shimmering fuchsia pink flowers.

Also known as a congested or creeping shrubby ice plant, this evergreen succulent from South Africa, is easy to grow, loves full sun and attracts bees and butterflies with its eye-catching flowers. Just make sure the soil is lean and well-draining. No heavy clay soil or standing water, please!

The blue-green foliage forms a tight cushion that grows to 3" tall and 12" wide. Flowers start to bloom in late spring and can continue to into late summer. The plant is deer resistant and spreads slowly; its lifespan is approximately five years. Propagation is by division and because the root system needs long periods of warm temperatures, it is best to plant during early spring or summer.

One of the most colorful of groundcovers and originally of the Mesembryanthemum genus, there are now many subfamilies of the genus. *Carol Grosch*



Would you like to write for the newsletter? Articles or ideas for articles from the membership are most welcome. Is there a subject you would like to see included? A recent question about pots made me dig up the article about pots that appears in this issue. I wrote that some years ago. Get in touch with Sue, Mary Ann or Carole if you have any questions. *Sue*



POTS—WHY DO YOU USE THE ONES YOU USE?

Have you ever thought about why you use the pots you do for your plants? Here are some factors to consider:

Standard pot—this type is as tall as the diameter of the pot (4 inches across and 4 inches tall);

Azalea or $\frac{3}{4}$ pot—this is three quarters height of the diameter (4 inches across and 3 inches high, for instance);

Bulb pan—this is one half the height of the diameter (4 inches across and only 2 inches high).

Many succulent growers prefer the azalea pot size, chiefly for aesthetic reasons—many specimen plants display better in such pots. The standard pot, especially for smaller plants, may taper too much and prove to be unstable. You run the risk of knocking over and damaging a prized plant. Watering is also affected by the type of pot used. When you pour water onto the surface of your pot, the taller the column of water and gravity will act longer and pull more water out of the pot. This is needed for aeration and for pulling excess salts and fertilizer out of the pot, rather than collecting on the soil surface.



(Continued on next page)



To restate the watering situation: if you have two pots that hold the same volume of soil and one is tall and skinny and the other is short and wide, more water will remain in the soil of the shorter pot. You won't have to water as often, as the short pots don't dry out as fast.

The pot should be large enough to provide a comfortable finger width between the edge of the pot and the plant (spines included), for globular plants. Tall, columnar plants should have a pot whose diameter is about one half their heights. A cluster or clump of plants generally has a shallower root system than a single plant of the same diameter. It is also growing more laterally than vertically, so you should allow more space between the pot and plant.

Clay, plastic, or other materials? Well, clay pots, of course, allow water to evaporate out from all sides. Clay will also allow water in from all sides (such as by overhead spraying or from capillary matting). This exchange works to keep the roots cool, as well. Plastic keeps the soil wetter longer by allowing evaporation to occur only from the soil surface. Also, plastic pots stay free of salt build-up and algae growth longer than clay pots do.

Pots made of Styrofoam, glass, or glazed ceramics tend to act much like the plastic pots.

Pot colors? Dark colors absorb most of the light that hits them, while white or light colors reflect a lot of light. Algae may grow on the insides of white pots if they sit where they are hit by direct sunlight. If your plastic pots are subject to the vagaries of temperature throughout the year, they will deteriorate—grow brittle and crumble at your touch. Green pots seem to last longer than white pots.

Round or square? We have more aesthetic considerations here. If your plant is more-or-less round, put it in a round pot. Still, many succulents defy classification as to shape, which no doubt has led to the many free-form "artist's" pots you see used for specimen plants.

How about the drainage? We all know that it is *possible* to grow succulents in containers without drainage holes—because we've seen this in the collection of one of our members! Still, most of us use pots with holes. Most commercial plastic pots have large drainage holes, so large, in fact that your soil mix escapes through them. Some of us use pieces of paper towel, used clothes dryer sheets, squares of hosiery material, squares of window screening, etc., in the bottom of the pot to hold in the soil. The paper will eventually deteriorate, but, by then, the plant's root ball may have grown enough to hold the soil.

Top dressing: most succulent growers use gravel of various sizes and colors to top dress the soil in the pots. This can also keep a "tippy" plant supported; can keep the base of the plant drier, thus reducing the possibility of rot. Also, the gravel is decorative. Bear in mind that the top dressing also can make it difficult to judge whether the plant needs watering. Figure out a means whereby you can check the soil under the gravel.

Should you water newly repotted plants? The standard advice you read in all the books and articles is that you need to let your plant sit for several days to a week while any root damage that may have occurred will heal. Generally, the authors of these books are writing from climates unlike ours, where plants may be subject to extended periods of dark, cold, damp weather when they are in danger of attack by fungi. Some growers in our area water-in their newly repotted plants—just a bit, to settle the soil—and have never noticed any ill effects. You can decide for yourself which is the better course to take. Also, don't put a newly repotted plant directly out in the sun. Let it rest for awhile in bright shade.

Remember that there is no perfect system that works for everyone. Experiment a bit and develop your own best technique. Good luck! **Sue**

MAMMILLARIA

Mammillaria is probably the largest genus in the family Cactaceae, with upwards of 170+ species. These plants, commonly called “Fishhook Cactus”, “Pincushion Cactus”, etc., are mostly easy to obtain and grow and are deservedly popular among cactus enthusiasts.

They are native primarily to Mexico and the southwestern United States, with some found in the West Indies, Honduras, Guatemala, Colombia and Venezuela. In Mexico they occur mostly in three main areas: the arid sections of the central plateau region, the northwestern part of mainland Mexico, and the entire peninsula of Baja California and its adjacent islands. Three species are found in California: *dioica*, *grahamii* and *tetrancistra*. In their native habitats they range from sea level to an altitude of 8,000 feet where they survive winter snow. They can be found growing in exposed conditions on high mesas or sheltering under desert shrubs, or clinging to sheer canyon walls or in rocky washes.



The first species was described in 1753 by Carolus Linnaeus, who called it *Cactus mammillaris*. The name is from the Latin *mammilla*, meaning “nipple”, which refers to the pronounced tubercles, the distinctive feature of the genus. The tubercles emerge from the apex in precise left or right spiral patterns, following a mathematical formula known as the Fibonacci sequence. In 1812 Adrian Haworth set up the genus *Mammillaria*, with *M. simplex* as the type species. It was later re-named *M. mammillaris*. Britton and Rose, in their foundational 1920 work “The Cactaceae” provide a description of the genus which is still considered accurate. All species have flowers that are produced in a ring below the apex that are more or less campanulate (bell-shaped). The species are differentiated by numbers and colors of central and radial spines, shapes of the tubercles, presence of watery or milky sap, and other factors.

Mammillarias range in size from tiny, clustering species such as *M. gracilis*, *M. glassii*, and *M. glochidiata* to large cylindrical forms a foot or more high, such as *M. pachycylindrica*. A plant may remain solitary throughout its life or form huge clustering mounds, such as *M. compressa*. A good place to check out the true possibilities of mammillarias is the Desert Garden at the Huntington Botanical Garden. The so-called “Mammillaria Wall” is almost covered with clump-forming species.

Among the many attractive species in this genus, those with white hairy or woolly spines are among the most popular with hobbyists. Unfortunately, these are often not the easiest species to grow. They range from the tiny, fragile *M. gracilis* to the more difficult, slow-growing *albilanata*, *agregia*, *lasiacantha*, *herrerae*, *humboldtii*, *plumosa* and *lenta*. A bit easier to grow are *geminispina*, *bombycina* and *nejapensis*. These species require considerable care with regard to watering, especially in winter. A very open, porous, fast-draining soil mix should be used. Exposure to strong light seems to intensify the density and whiteness of the wool and hair. A long ago member of the club, Milt Critchlow, built up a collection of several hundred *Mammillaria* species, subspecies and forms. He was a superb grower. He stopped watering in October and did not begin again until March. All his plants were in green plastic pots and grown in a shaded glass greenhouse. He had it down to a science. (Of course, like all of us, he had a lot of trial and error along the way.)

If you are new to the hobby, a collection of mammillarias is a good place to start **Sue**