

# CACTUS CORNER NEWS

## Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society

<http://www.fresnocss.org>

Vol. 32, No. 4

Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

April 2015

**NEXT MEETING: Thursday, April 2, 7:00 P.M. (Doors open 6:30 P.M.)  
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Service Center (DHHSC), 5340 North Fresno Street, Fresno**

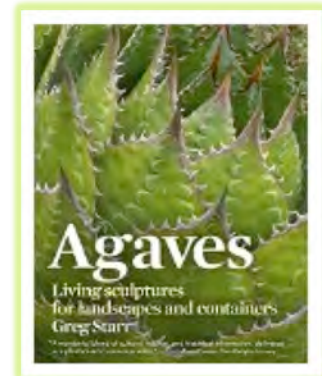
## PROGRAM: LIVING SCULPTURES

**BY: GREG STARR**



Greg Starr has had a long-standing fascination with the genus agave and has dabbled in growing them since the mid-1980's. Greg first heard Dr. Howard Scott Gentry speak about agaves in 1983 shortly after his *Agaves of Continental North America* monograph was published. It was Dr. Gentry's presentation that inspired Greg to want to learn more about these amazing plants.

He has spent the past ten years traveling throughout the southwestern United States and Mexico photographing many of his favorite species, some which were new to science and not even included in Dr. Gentry's book. The seed for Greg's book - *Agaves: Living Sculptures for Landscapes and Containers* was sown when he came to the realization that there was a need to publicize these recently described species and to update horticultural first presented in Mary Irish's book on Agaves, Yuccas, and Related Plants.



Greg was born and raised in Tucson, Arizona, has grown to love the desert and its flora and fauna. He graduated from the University of Arizona in 1979 with a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture, and after working in the landscape industry he went back to the University to study Botany and further his education in horticulture. Greg worked for Warren Jones (co-author of *Plants for Dry Climates and Landscape Plants for Dry Regions*) and Dr. Charles Mason at the University of Arizona herbarium. Greg made his first foray into the world of collecting in 1979 when he traveled with Warren and Bill Kinneson to Texas where he saw firsthand, in habitat, the many plants he had only experienced in the nursery or landscapes. He emerged from the University in 1985 with a Master of Science in Horticulture with a special emphasis on botany.

He opened Starr Nursery in the summer of 1985, and has specialized in low water use plants for landscaping in southern Arizona. Greg has traveled extensively in Mexico and the southwestern United States to study the plants for their potential landscape use in desert regions of the world. He has also traveled to South Africa and recently to Madagascar in search of juicy succulents.

*Come out and join in the festivities as Greg shows pictures of and talks about some of the most appealing agaves that make sculptural statements in the landscape. Greg will show you pictures of plants in habitat some even with their incredible flower stalks! Greg will bring plants for you to purchase.*

**BJ's Restaurant & Brewhouse**  
715 East Shaw, Fresno  
(559) 570.1900  
Menu: [www.bjsrestaurants.com/menu](http://www.bjsrestaurants.com/menu)

~ DINNER ~  
Begins at 5:00pm. Reservation  
under Fresno Cactus Club.  
Members are invited to attend.

Contact Rosanna Rojas by  
Wednesday, April 1, to make  
reservations. Phone: (559) 999-0017  
Email: [rfrojas96@gmail.com](mailto:rfrojas96@gmail.com)

**FROM THE PREZ ...**

Hi, all,

One down, one to go, as they say. The Home and Garden Show is now history, and I want to thank all of you who helped with the event. Robert Scott and Polly Dunklin, in particular, kept things organized and moving, and I think our vendors all did well. This show is a big deal and it requires a big effort. But it's worth it for the exposure it provides the club. Our next event is our Annual Show & Sale, June 6-7 at Sierra Vista Mall. You will be hearing more about this as the time approaches.

The Show will have a theme this year, as it's our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year! Yes, our club was founded in 1965, in February of that year. And we didn't even notice until Polly was putting the club roster together! We can't let a good anniversary go to waste, so we will be doing something special for it. And Polly will have the club rosters at this meeting.

This month is our Spring Garden Tour, April 25<sup>th</sup>. We're sorry to have to schedule it on the same day as the Master Gardener's home tour, but what with other events, there just aren't enough Saturdays to go around in April. On our itinerary are Fred Gaumer's yard and greenhouse up in Coarsegold and Tom Meyer's yard and greenhouse in Fresno. There is the possibility of one other stop, as well. There is further information elsewhere in the newsletter.

In May our regular meeting is preempted by our summer picnic. Because of high temperatures in July, we've pushed it forward to an earlier month. We're also going to do something different: "Mexican Cantina"—Mexican food from Vallarta, along with a cantina with Mexican beer, etc. For potluck, members can bring appetizers, salads or desserts. This should be a lot of fun, so keep May 7<sup>th</sup> free on your calendars.

I was going to use this paragraph to gripe about the weather—but, why? Just to say that I've already had to put up the summer shade cloth, something I don't ordinarily have to do until later in the spring. Also, my neighbor took out a tree that had for years shaded a corner of my backyard where I stash a lot of plants so it's back to the drawing board as to how to arrange the pots. It's always something with our plants, isn't it? But it keeps us on our toes.

This program by agave expert Greg Starr should be very informative and I hope to see you all there.

Good growing, **Sue**

**A group of friends** gathered on March 21<sup>st</sup> for the planting of a Memorial Tree in Woodward Park in memory of Don La Mont. It was a nice service. Thanks to Frank and Marian Orvis for presenting the tree.

**Note from Pat La Mont:** Thank you for the beautiful flowers and for the contribution to the Clovis Botanical Garden. I also want to thank all of you that called and sent cards to Don during his illness. I can't begin to tell you how much they meant to him. FCSS had a very special place in his heart.

**Look for Robert Scott** selling succulents at the River Park Farmer's Market, starting April 7<sup>th</sup>. The Market is on Tuesday evenings, 5-9 p.m.

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**SALE BOXES:** bring boxes to the meetings for the next few months. Cindy will collect them for the June Show and Sale.

**FRESNO CACTUS & SUCCULENT CLUB BOARD MEETING  
MARCH 10, 2015**

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

**Attendance:** Robert Scott, Treasurer; Cindy Duwe, Secretary; Rosanna Rojas, Vice President; Tom Meyer, Board Member; Polly Dunklin, Board Member, Mary Drumheller, Board Member; Carole Grosch, Board Member; Rudy Rulloda, Board Member; Fred Gaumer, CSSA Affiliate Representative. **Absent:** Larry Homan, Board Member. **Visitors:** Doris Hooton, Susan Cook.

**Officer Reports:** Rosanna Rojas reported that Greg Starr will be the guest speaker for the April meeting. He will speak about Agaves.

**Old Business:** Robert Scott reported that the club netted \$8,569.50 at the Home and Garden Show last weekend. The club profit is \$2,142.38. He reported that the club needs more help setting up and taking down for the next year's sale. Robert also suggested that the club purchase some colorful posters to hang on the walls of our area to attract the attention of the public. Robert also mentioned the need for a second cart for the club to transport plants to and from the booth. Fred Gaumer moved to purchase the above posters and cart. Tom Meyer seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Cindy Duwe reported that she paid the \$300.00 fee for the rental of the room in Sierra Vista Mall for the upcoming Show and Sale to be held the first weekend in June.

Sue Haffner suggested that a committee be formed of members of the club to handle the May picnic. It will be held on May 7, 2015 at the home of Tom Meyer and Doris Hooton.

**New Business:** Sue mentioned that the latest newsletter from the St. Louis Club had articles on members' greenhouses. She wondered about Carole Grosch interviewing members about their greenhouses for articles in our Newsletter.

Sue received a request for the club to buy an ad to support the CSAA Convention book. Rosanna moved to place an ad in the 2015 Convention book. Carole seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. Robert Scott will design the ad.

**Work Shop:** The Work Shop will be held on March 18, 2015 at the home of Tom Meyer and Doris Hooton at 6:00 p.m. It is located at 3733 N, Sierra Vista, Fresno. The topic for the meeting will be "Hints and Tips for Growing."

Respectfully submitted,  
Cindy Duwe, Secretary

**WEBMASTER NEEDED: Do you know how to manage a webpage? If so, the club needs you!  
Raise your hand and let us know.**



**BOARD MEETING: Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 6 p.m., 3733 N. Sierra Vista, Fresno.  
Any member may attend; board members should attend.**



**Club access:** President, Sue Haffner, 292-5624, [sueh@mail.fresnostate.edu](mailto:sueh@mail.fresnostate.edu); Programs, Rosanna Rojas, 999-0017, [rfrojas96@gmail.com](mailto:rfrojas96@gmail.com); Treasurer, Robert Scott, 960-3665, [Rob\\_scott85@yahoo.com](mailto:Rob_scott85@yahoo.com); Editor, Sue Haffner, 292-5624, [sueh@mail.fresnostate.edu](mailto:sueh@mail.fresnostate.edu); Refreshments, Marian Orvis, 226-0145, [mforvet@comcast.net](mailto:mforvet@comcast.net); Librarian, Madeleine Mitchell, 638-2784, [madeleine43@comcast.net](mailto:madeleine43@comcast.net); Webmaster, vacant; Sunshine, Carole Grosch, 323-8602, [cgg266@comcast.net](mailto:cgg266@comcast.net).





**HAPPY BIRTHDAY:** *Robert Scott (11<sup>th</sup>); Viv Shinkawa, Ann Bierbower (13<sup>th</sup>); Bruce Hargreaves, Barbara Brown (18<sup>th</sup>); Anthony Thomas (24<sup>th</sup>); Linda Newton (29<sup>th</sup>).*

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**SAY HELLO TO THESE NEW MEMBERS:**

Matthew Johnson, Megan Pease, Ardell Andersen, Gail Blank  
All from Fresno.



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**Larry Carlberg** has missed several meetings lately, due to health reasons. Both he and his wife have been under the weather. Our thoughts go out to them.

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**COMING EVENTS**

**April 11, Spring Spectacular at GROW Nursery,**  
2024 Main St, Cambria, CA; hours, 10-5.

**April 18-19, Monterey Bay C&S Society Spring Show & Sale,** San Juan Bautista Community Hall,  
10 San Jose St, San Juan Bautista;  
Sat. 9-5; Sun. 9-4.

**April 18-19, Spring Blossom Festival and the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Bonsai Exhibit,** Shinzen Garden & Fresno Bonsai Society, Woodward Park,  
10 a.m.- 4 p.m.

**April 25, FCSS Spring Garden Tour**

May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Water-Wise Plant Exchange,  
FSU nursery greenhouse park,  
Barstow & Chestnut; hours, 8-noon.

**May 2-3, Sacramento C&S Society Show & Sale,**  
Shepard Garden & Arts Center,  
3330 McKinley Blvd, Sacramento;  
Sat., 9-5; Sun., 9-4.

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**Hands on Hydroponics,** 3320 N. Cedar Ave, north of Shields, sells a lot of growing supplies. Tell them you're a member of the club and they may offer you a discount.

**BRAG TABLE:** Linda Lopez brought a big community pot of mesembs and a pot of Massonias (bulbs) with interesting foliage and seed pods. Bruce Hargreaves displayed *Obetia ficifolia* (nettle tree). Charlene Stebles showed a nice *Aloe variegata* and *Tephrocactus geometricus*. Our speaker, Russell Wagner, also displayed and discussed several of his plants.

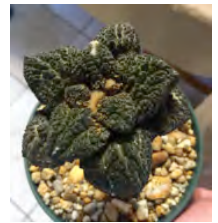


Above photos by Polly Dunklin

**APRIL WORKSHOP:** Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 6 p.m., 3733 N. Sierra Vista. Subject: Tips and Websites. What are your favorite websites for succulent information or commerce? Email your choices to Ann Bierbower ([abierbower@comcast.net](mailto:abierbower@comcast.net)).

We had a lively meeting in March, with a lot of interesting plants to admire. New member Gail Blank did what new members should do— she brought her plant questions to the workshop to get expert advice. Robert Scott brought some mind-boggling ariocarpus plants, including 'Godzilla' (Google it and you'll see what I mean.) Ann Bierbower brought a very large and gorgeous *Mammillaria melanocentra*.

We always have a good deal of plant information exchange at the workshops. Join us!



Photos by Mary Ann Villegas

Getting to know you ...

### **Karen Willoughby**

We have our president, Sue Haffner, to thank for piquing Karen Willoughby's interest in joining FC&SS. They were both in the Central California African Violet Society and both were president of that organization at different times. At first, work and her location in Kingsburg interfered with attending regular meetings, but she made it a point to attend the sales events and go on the bus trips. More plants!

Born and raised in Fresno, Karen graduated from Hoover High School, attended City College, then worked in the medical field as a secretary, assistant and transcriber, for over 25 years. Presently she works for the state agency that adjudicates the medical disability claims for the Social Security Administration.



"I have lived in the Central Valley (Kingsburg and Selma for 30 years) most of my life and now live in my childhood home (in Fresno) which I bought from my mother when she decided to go into an assisted living home," she says. "Interestingly, I have some of the same neighbors living next door and across the street that I did growing up. Pretty wonderful and amazing too. I lived briefly in Kentucky many years ago and that is where my oldest son was born. "I am the proud mother of two sons, Matt and Josh, and super proud grandmother of David and Adam. They are all my pride and joy.

"My love of growing plants seems boundless. The first plant I really fell for was an African Violet. I am one of the hoards who first were exposed to them by my grandmother and I really think any growing talents I may have come from her. I seem to love everything save the cholla, a plant I wish I had never met and swear needs to be grown in a birdcage to protect the innocent.

"Benign neglect works with many cactus and succulents," she relates. "This is one I remember hearing from another grower....buy two plants because you will kill one! Heavens, no! I strive to keep them all alive. My brother helped me move my plants from Kingsburg to Fresno several years ago and said, 'This is not a hobby, this is an obsession.'

'And exactly what is the problem with that?' was my response to him. I also recall a family friend telling me long ago that the only good hobby worth pursuing is one that is totally out of control. I do know that you must have a passion for whatever you love doing.

"The plants I have growing are mostly in containers are cactus/succulents, bromeliads, ivy, begonias, geraniums and various bulbs and herbs. Amongst the cactus/succulent family, I especially love lithops (still trying to figure out a way to grow them successfully), aloes and agaves. I have no lawn in my backyard. All available space is taken up with portable greenhouses and my growing family of plants. Porch is packed too!

"I am a real foodie and love anything about food.....reading, cooking, baking, experimenting. My current food passion is fermenting which I have really embraced this past year. I have made sauerkraut, kimchi, mixed veggies, milk kefir, water kefir, sourdough, yogurt, and kombucha. The power of fermenting foods was brought home when a bottle of kombucha exploded in my kitchen one Sunday morning not long ago. The rest of the day was spent cleaning up the glass and sticky mess. Sure glad I was not in there when it decided to blow. Really, just a fun way to play with my food and create something very good tasting and good for me too. I also collect cookbooks and you really don't want to know how many I have!"

**Carole Grosch**

## SOME THOUGHTS ON ROOTS

By Elton Roberts

I have just read the [March] newsletter and want to add my half cents worth to the article on root pruning. Many years ago when I would order plants from different mail order places they would trim the roots. If the plant was only the size of a golf ball or smaller, the roots would be trimmed off to about a half-inch long even if the plant had a tap root. If the plant was tennis ball size or larger the roots were usually trimmed off to about an inch long. At a cactus nursery I worked at many years ago they would also trim the roots of plants and let them sit in a beer flat or a plastic flat and allow the trimmed roots to dry a few days before wrapping them and shipping. I asked why and was told that it makes the plants weigh less for purposes of shipping.

So I told them my story: when getting plants from people who trimmed the roots, it took 2 to 3 months for most of the plants to make a root system and get back to growing. But some of the plants never would grow. When I got plants from a mail order place that did not trim roots, the plants, once potted, commenced to growing in only a week or two. It always irritated me that plants that I got had trimmed roots because it took so long for them to even show signs of growing.

One time about 25 years ago I grew *Homalocephala texensis* (now *Echinocactus texensis*) from seed. I got a lot of seedlings—and I do mean a lot. I do not remember now how many it was, but had so many that I did not have room to pot them up and put them on the bench. So I put them in a beer flat under the bench bare root and there they stayed for well over a year. When I got them out and inspected them, all were still alive but, even better all the roots were still alive except for maybe the hair-like feeder roots. I potted them and they started growing in a week's time. These plants were golf ball size. If I had trimmed the roots before I put them under the bench I daresay that many of the plants would have dried up.

Plants in habitat have roots that radiate like spokes in a bicycle wheel lying flat on the floor. Even plants with tap roots have roots that radiate out so they can take advantage of the meager amount of rain they get. In cultivation the roots are confined to a pot and the radiating roots hit the pot and start going in circles because they have nowhere else to go except for now and then—out the drain holes. Most of the time the roots that grow out the drain holes are the tips of tap roots. Trimming the roots would be like going out in the desert and with a shovel digging down a few inches from the base of the plants and cutting off the roots. Just think of how unhappy that would make the plants.

There is one thing that people do not think of in growing plants in pots and that is that the pots can get very hot and that dries up the roots that are against the pot. I have found roots a quarter inch in diameter that were totally dried up from the heat. I have de-potted some plants where the root ball was almost too hot to handle. If the sun hits the side of a pot the roots on that side take a lot of punishment and usually die (dry up). These roots I will remove but when I find a pot with a mass of roots I know it is past time for a larger pot. Yes, you can trim many of the roots but that will greatly slow the plant for reestablishing itself. I have many times seen plants that would not grow after a root trimming and they sit and dry up even when potted. I do not say to pop a plant out of its pot and into a larger one. The roots need to be fluffed up so they will grow into the new soil.

The place I worked told me that I was much slower in repotting plants than the girl they had before me. I saw why; many times when a plant died or would not grow, I de-potted it and there was the root ball as it came out of the former pot. Not a root had grown into the new soil even though it was the exact same soil.

(Continued on following page.)



When one place that I ordered plants from stopped cutting roots I had no problems from then on with their plants growing. When I ordered plants one time I told them that I did not want the roots trimmed. From that time on they did not trim the roots. Trimming of the roots or saying that roots should be pruned is what is called 'an old wives' tale'. That is like: "do not give the plants nitrogen for it will make the plants grow all soft and lush and then they are a magnet for mealy bugs and spider mites"; "you have to add lime to the soil to mimic habitat soil that is alkaline"; "add limestone to your soil"; "put rocks in the bottom of deep pots for it makes the soil drain better"; "add charcoal to the soil for it will keep the soil sweet." There are several other things that have fallen by the wayside over the years that still pop up every so often. Someone told me not long ago that I needed to add limestone to my soil so my ariocarpus would grow right.

As you know, ariocarpus have the reputation of being very slow growing and seldom growing more than a half-inch in 10 years. That is because they have tap roots and are not given a pot deep enough to accommodate the roots. Also, the mentality of 'do not give nitrogen' comes into play. People do not realize that the plants in habitat are drenched with acidic nitrogen loaded rain water every time it rains. I have had to up-pot my plants several times since going to acid water and feeding more than .5% nitrogen fertilizer. Some years ago I potted my plants and figured I would never have to repot them again. I was wrong, for as soon as the plants started getting acidic water they commenced growing. I have never had more healthy ariocarpus. I still have several plant catalogs that say to add limestone to the soil for many cactus plants, especially ariocarpus, because they grow on limestone in habitat. I would have thought that that mentality would have gone out with the mentality of having to trim the roots every time you repot a plant.

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**PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE HOME AND GARDEN SHOW**



Photos by  
Dennis Anderson  
and  
Polly Dunklin





**SPRING GARDEN TOUR**

Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, is the date of our annual spring tour of members' yards and greenhouses. This year we are invited to visit the homes of Fred Gaumer and Doris Hooton/Tom Meyer. Below is the itinerary. Times are approximate.

**10:00 a.m. to noon: Gaumer residence,** 42893 Woodmar Drive, Coarsegold. Directions: take Hwy 41 north; turn left at Yosemite Lakes Parkway. Follow the Parkway all the way to the end at Road 400; turn right and proceed to Road 415. Turn left on 415; it is about a half mile to Woodmar Drive. Turn right onto Woodmar; Fred's home is on the left at the end of the road. Fred would like to remind you that the speed limit on Hwy 41 is 55 mph. The posted speed limit on Yosemite Lakes Parkway is 35 mph and drivers need to keep an eye out for deer. Fred's greenhouse is the most orderly and well-organized you're ever likely to see. It is stuffed with plants on 3 levels (including the floor). He grows a lot of plants from seed, including mesembs, haworthias and South American cacti.



**!:00 – 3:00 p.m.: Hooton/Meyer residence,** 3733 N. Sierra Vista, Fresno. Turn south onto Sierra Vista from E. Dakota Ave (between Maple and Chestnut). You can see the big cactus garden in the front by the street. Tom has created several outdoor gardens—and they seem to be expanding all the time. He also has built a large greenhouse which is full of a range of cacti and succulents. Doris has a nice sansevieria collection she grows in the house, and roses outside.

