

CACTUS CORNER NEWS

Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society

www.fresnocss.org

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Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

July 2015

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

PROGRAM:

Cacti of the Southern Andean Cordillera; Argentina and Chile

PRESENTED BY:

Rob Skillin

This month's program will feature the cacti from the region of the Southern Andes Mountains of Argentina and Chile (south of Peru and Bolivia), and stretching from the Pacific Ocean eastward through one of the driest areas on earth, the Atacama Desert, into the western Andean foothills of Chile, to the eastern Andean foothills of Argentina.

Our presenter will be Rob Skillin, who has made several trips through South America, from which he has put together this program of habitat shots of cacti ranging from the smallest of the small (*Blossfeldia liliputana* and *Copiapoa laui*) to the truly large (*Trichocereus* and *Eulychnia*) – with a few succulents thrown in for good measure.

I have been growing cacti and succulents for approximately 37 years, and have been involved in various local societies for most of that time, starting with the San Diego C&SS in the 1970's, then to the Santa Barbara and Bakersfield clubs. I currently belong to the Central Coast C&SS of which I was a founding member, first President and first Show and Sale Chairman. I have also been involved with the CSSA as a member of it's Board of Directors, and am a CSSA certified Judge.



Rob's large greenhouse

Along with my interest in cacti and succulents, I enjoy photography and travel. These interests have come together in a wonderful way during my botanical explorations of the western US and Mexico, and portions of South America, Africa, Madagascar and the Middle East. I have several programs based on these trips, and I speak regularly to clubs in northern and southern California. Many of my photographs have been published as illustrations for articles and covers of the *Journal* and *Haseltonia*, as well as the *Timber Press Book of Succulents of the World*. ***Let's give Rob a warm welcome back!***

Plants: Rob will be bringing a nice selection of plants for purchase.

NO DINNER THIS MONTH.

FROM THE PREZ ...

Hi, all,

Well, our annual Show and Sale is now history. (Funny, but it seems like ages ago instead of a few weeks.) I want to thank all of those who worked so hard to bring it off: Cindy Duwe, Chairperson; Polly Dunklin, who organized the cashier cadre and stood at the registers all three days; all the members and friends who helped with set up and clean up; those who helped with food for the vendors and workers. We so appreciate the efforts of all of you.

While I don't yet know what the sale proceeds were, I figure we must have done well. The mob waiting to storm in when the gate went up was the largest I recall seeing, and a hour or two later the line to pay for purchases stretched almost all the way around the room. As usual, we saw a lot of repeat customers—folks we see every year. I worked at the Members' Sale Table and had fun selling donated plants, books and pots. Thanks so much to everyone who offered donations; we appreciate each and every one. Thanks, also, to Fred Gaumer and Alice Rodriguez, who helped at the table.

We had thought we might get an article in the *Clovis Independent* that would be published before the event, but that didn't happen. I was surprised, then, when a reporter and photographer for the paper showed up on Sunday. They talked to people and seemed to be taking a lot of photos. The article didn't appear until June 17th, in the "Out and About" section. There are photos of Mary Drumheller; Billy Gale assisting a customer, Tyson Fisk; then a photo of the Fisk family with their purchases. I'll bring it to the meeting, as I believe the *Independent* is only delivered to Clovis subscribers to the *Fresno Bee*.

And to all of you who talked up the event to your friends and family—thanks; and to Ann Bierbower, also, who updated Craig's List every day. (It would be interesting to know how many people this brought in.) As this is our major fundraiser for the year, it's important that we all do what we can.

We also sold the last of our club tee shirts, so we will finally have to get off the dime and have some more made. This is one thing the board will discuss at the meeting on July 6th. If you have some thoughts about this, or know the ins and outs of getting shirts made—it's been so long since we've done this—let us hear from you.

Remember that we have a regular meeting this month, instead of our picnic. Rob Skillin will be with us—an excellent speaker and photographer and one who always brings outstanding plants to sell. As a favor, could we ask that all of you wait until he has brought in all the plants and is ready to begin selling before you start grabbing plants? Sometimes Rob has someone to help him, but sometimes he doesn't. Let's not make things difficult for him. Thanks in advance.

Last month, during Ernesto Sandoval's program, he mentioned the website of the U.C. Davis Botanical Conservatory and the information to be found there. Here is the link: www.greenhouse.ucdavis.edu/conservatory/ Click on "resources" for information on how they grow their plants. He also recommended this textbook: "Plant propagation: principles and practices" by Kester, Hartman, et al. The current 8th edition is very expensive, but Ernesto said the 7th or 6th editions are just as useful. If you go to Amazon.com you can find these earlier editions for very reasonable prices, especially for used copies.

Sometimes it seems like, by this time of the year, our big events are behind us. Certainly the spring events are. But we still have our bus trip to the U.C. Davis Botanical Conservatory coming up in September (the 19th, I believe), so be thinking about that. We had a great time on our last visit there.

So we have summer now pounding down on our heads. It's a harsh time for most of our plants, too. Be aware that some of your succulents go into a sort of semi-dormancy during this heat, especially if it doesn't cool off at night. Be careful in watering; if in doubt, don't.

See you at the meeting,

Sue

CONVENTION RAMBLINGS:

Paul and Madeleine Mitchell, Sue Haffner and Fred Gaumer attended all 5 days of the 36th Biennial Convention of the Cactus & Succulent Society of America, held June 14-19 in Claremont CA, on the campus of Pitzer College. Rosanna Rojas, Vickie Veen and Bruce and Polly Hargreaves attended part of the Convention. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday were packed with activities—5 to 7 presentations by world-class succulent plant experts each day. Wednesday was field trip day. Evenings were taken up by smaller group meetings as well as the rare plant auction (the proceeds of which support the CSSA Research Fund. Several of the speakers had been recipients of these funds.) The host clubs were the San Gabriel Cactus & Succulent Society and the Gates Cactus & Succulent Society. A hundred volunteers from the clubs worked all day every day to keep things moving forward, and deserve all the possible thanks. Most of them never got to see a program.



Where to begin? The general venue was an inspired choice. Pitzer is one of the 5 Claremont undergraduate colleges, all elite, selective liberal arts colleges that are among the best in the country. Years ago, Pitzer hired Joe Clements, newly retired from the Huntington Botanical Gardens where he had been in charge of the Desert Garden, to design and install succulent landscaping all over the campus. The magnificent results are everywhere you look. Flower beds, foundation plantings and pathway borders feature mature succulents and cacti, many in bloom during the Convention. Now Joe is retiring from Pitzer, but he leaves behind a wonderful legacy.

This was one of the best-attended conventions in years. The CSSA tried to moderate the cost by arranging for conventioners to stay in the dormitories at Pitzer, if they wished. Some of us were a bit surprised at the dorms, they were only a year or two old but so Spartan that my old 1960-era college dorm seemed luxurious by comparison. (Well, at least we didn't have to walk down the hall to the bathroom, though each room had to share a bath with the couple in the adjoining room.) Originally, the attendees were to get breakfast and lunch in the college cafeteria, which was included in the registration fee. But in February, the College notified CSSA that the dining hall was going to be refurbished during the summer and that they had arranged for a caterer to provide these meals in the Student Health and Wellness Center. This disrupted various plans, though I have to say that the caterer's staff performed heroically, feeding 200+ people in an hour or less each day.

The plant and book sale area was in the building where the cafeteria is located, and the original idea was that all the attendees would be walking by the sales four times a day as they went to and from the cafeteria. Well, this didn't happen, of course. Still, the plant sale area appeared well patronized.

Benson Auditorium, where the programs were presented, is a first-class venue, with theater-type seats and excellent audio-visual facilities. Generally, even the most techno-phobic of the speakers dealt successfully with the equipment. (As a veteran of these conventions, I can state that usually at least one program gets messed up somehow; it did happen this time but, ironically, to Kelly Griffin, who was in charge of the speakers.) All the presentations were interesting and entertaining, and I would have a hard time naming which was the best.



Ernest van Jaarsveld

Photographs by Madeleine Mitchell

I went on the field trip to Lotusland, even though I had been there several times before. Due to a mix-up with the bus company, we were late getting on the road, but Lotusland gave us an extra half hour to complete our tour. I had forgotten just how much of a “maximalist” Mme Ganna Walska had been—if one was good, a hundred was better. The cactus gardens are huge, and I was especially interested to see how the new cacti, installed a dozen years, or so ago, were doing. They’ve grown so much that they really need thinning out. I had forgotten, too, how gorgeous the bromeliad gardens are. We didn’t get to tour the entire garden; that will be for another time. (For a great video, look at “Flying through Lotusland” – <https://vimeo.com/91347158> . Be sure to have the sound on.) As a special treat, we visited and ate our lunches at Jeff Chemnick’s Garden in Santa Barbara. It’s an amazing place, with every inch planted in succulents, cycads, rarities everywhere you look.

The next Convention, in 2017, will be hosted by the Central Arizona C&S Society. It will be in the Phoenix area but the venue and date have yet to be worked out.

What’s the value in attending the conventions? Well, the programs provide invaluable information, of course. The field trips are opportunities to see gardens and habitats that you might not otherwise have the opportunity to visit. But I have to say that seeing and talking to people I only see every two years is special, too. *Sue*



Joe Clements gardens/Pitzer college



Dove nest in a Pachypodium lamerii/CSSA

The following three photos are of our Show & Sale.

1st. photo: Eulychnia
 2nd photo: Steve Freeze
 3rd. photo: Adenium

All photographs by Madeleine Mitchell





HAPPY BIRTHDAY: *Nell Lemke (6th); Laverne Cottet (12th); Linda Lopez (15th); Linda Lopez (15th); Beth Teviotdale (17th); Burma Gunther (18th); Rosanna Rojas (19th); Herb Thorne (28th).*

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**VISITORS IN JUNE:** Jennifer Little, Alicia Cobian, Gerry Colon, Bob Miles and Carole Wolak.

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SAY HELLO TO THESE NEW MEMBERS:

Susie Markarian, Fresno

Stephen Vasquez, Fresno

Jennifer Little, Madera

Alicia Cobian, Chowchilla

Beth Teviotdale (welcome back), Selma

Michelle Roberts, Madera

WELCOME

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**SUNSHINE:** A sympathy card was sent to Mary Ann Villegas on the death of her brother. Get well wishes went to Jo Ann Caufield, who is recovering from a fall.

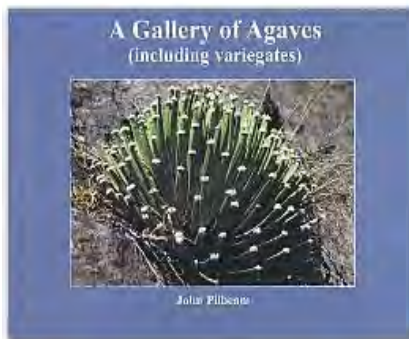
If you know of a member who needs some "sunshine", get in touch with Carole Grosch (323-8602 or 349-9375).

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED IN AUGUST: Paul and Madeleine Mitchell will be off cruising in the Baltic in August, so we'll need volunteers to help run the Plant Opportunity Sale and the club library. Step forward if you would like to help.

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**NEW IN THE CLUB LIBRARY:** "A Gallery of Agaves" by John Pilbeam is a beautiful picture book; "Beginner's guide to gasteria, haworthia, agave and other succulent monocots" is a compendium of articles Tom Glavich has written for *To The Point*, the CSSA newsletter.

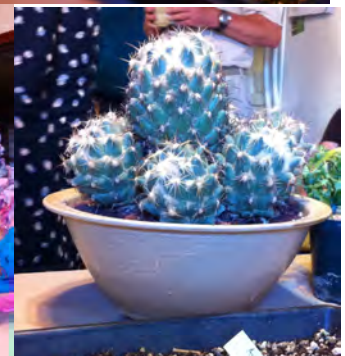
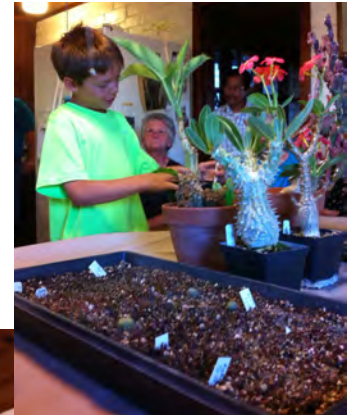


**BOARD MEETING:** The July board meeting will be Monday, the 6<sup>th</sup>, 6 p.m., at 3733 N. Sierra Vista. All members are welcome to attend; board members should attend. If any are unable to attend, please let Sue know.

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WORKSHOP: The July workshop will be Wednesday, the 15th, 6 p.m., at 3733 N. Sierra Vista; subjects: genera beginning with E-F and repotting.

The June workshop was huge, with 27 attending. Among the discussion topics were fertilizers and insecticides. Bill and Dan Gale, Larry Homan, Jack Fleming, Tom Meyer, Karl Church, Ann Bierbower, Mary Drumheller and Sean Glitch all brought plants for show. Members are encouraged to attend the workshops to get some of their basic plant questions answered.



Photographs by Polly Dunklin

2015 FRESNO FAIR - Rudy Rulloda, Chair

The 2015 Big Fresno Fair is just around the corner. It's never too late for all club members to consider showing your cacti, succulents or both for the public to see. To get you started, you'll need to request your Exhibits Handbook, which has the plant divisions and entry forms, from The Big Fresno Fair, 1121 Chance Avenue, Fresno, CA 93702 or call (559) 650-3213 to be on the mailing list.

If you don't know the name of your plants, bring them to the club meetings and many of the members will properly identify your plants or you can stop at the club library and check out some of the books describing your plants.

We will also need additional volunteers to keep an eye on the plant displays and answer questions from the public. Those volunteers for over four hours will need a photo ID which will get you into the fairgrounds. All volunteers will have free fair admission and parking. The setup for photo ID should be in August. Sign up sheets and volunteer applications for volunteers will be available in August.

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### WATER

Sometimes, proverbially, you might hear someone say, "I only water my cactus when it rains in Phoenix, Arizona." That's very bad advice! Deserts do not provide ideal growing conditions; our plants survive, but often just barely. They do not thrive. The second lesson from this misconception is that rain is not the only moisture available to plants.

Rain is the least common form of moisture in the deserts. Dew, fog and mist are the life-givers of the deserts. Dews and fogs form when cold air "squeezes" the traces of water out of warmer air. Mists will blow many miles inland from the sea if not stopped by high mountain ranges.

Spines are designed to catch moisture. Spray your cactus and watch the drops form and dribble down to the base of the plant. The surface is grooved to encourage moisture to trickle down to the base. Many spines are corky in texture or have a corky coating that actually absorbs water or even "attracts" it. Ever have chips or pretzels go soggy? Some natural materials suck moisture out of the air. You don't need fog in the house to have chips go soggy. Organic detritus usually accumulates at the base of the plant or in the tussocks where they congregate. Decaying organic matter absorbs and attracts water.

In summary, these are the important factors in watering:

1) type of plant; 2) type of soil; 3) type of container; 4) atmospheric conditions (temperature and humidity, indoors or out); 5) drainage conditions (what's under the pot); 6) type of water (temperature, hardness additives, pH).

Some growers use warm water whenever possible; it wets the soil better, causes less shock; you can even feel the warmth travel down the pot; granular fertilizer dissolves easier. The number one rule is—never water a succulent if the soil is wet. Perhaps your most useful efforts—it's a lifelong job!—should be spent studying and understanding the total micro-environment from your plant's point of view.

Photograph from our Show & Sale by Ann Bierbower



## COLLECTING SEEDS FROM YOUR MESEMBS

Your mesemb ( *Lithops*, *Conophytums*, *Faucarias*, etc) are probably blooming right now—or have bloomed earlier this year. Sometimes they set seed and you find a hard, round seed capsule as a result.

The seed capsules have evolved to open only when rained upon, and you may try a drop of water to make this happen. Wait a minute or two and the valves that keep the capsule intact will open, making the seed accessible. The valves will close again when the seed capsule is dry, and reopen when wet. (It's a pretty good design for making sure the seeds are not released until there is moisture around for germination! In fact, if your potted plants get rained on, the seeds may wash away before you realize that they're gone. )

Now that you have the capsule open and want to collect seed to plant, how do you remove the seed?

Wet method: soak the capsule for about 15 minutes (one species at a time) in a mixing bowl with a lot of water. Then stir the water; the seeds, being heavier than the water and pieces of seed pod, will sink to the bottom. Carefully pour off the water and trash. Mesemb seed is very small, so using a white bowl will make them easier to see. Keep adding water and pouring it off to get rid of all the trash. Transfer the seed to a paper towel and allow to dry.

Dry method: you can pry open the seed pod with a needle, one valve at a time. Use the needle to loosen the seed inside and pour it out onto a piece of paper—or sow directly onto the growing medium.

Mesemb seed germinates very rapidly. It also stays viable for years, even at room temperature.

Store seed of cacti and succulents in paper envelopes (not plastic) and sealed in a glass jar. While it is usually recommended that the jars of seeds be kept in a refrigerator, this isn't necessary, as current opinion is that keeping seeds dry at room temperature is an equally effective means of preservation.



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YAVIA CRYPTOCARPA



Yavia is a genus of South American cacti with only a single species. It is known only from a small area on the Argentina-Bolivia boarder, where it grows exposed in semi-desert grasslands, being only visible during the rainy season (usually December through March.) Adapted to climatic extremes, it grows in the crevices of rocky soil, just at the soil surface. During the dry season, the plant shrinks below the soil surface.

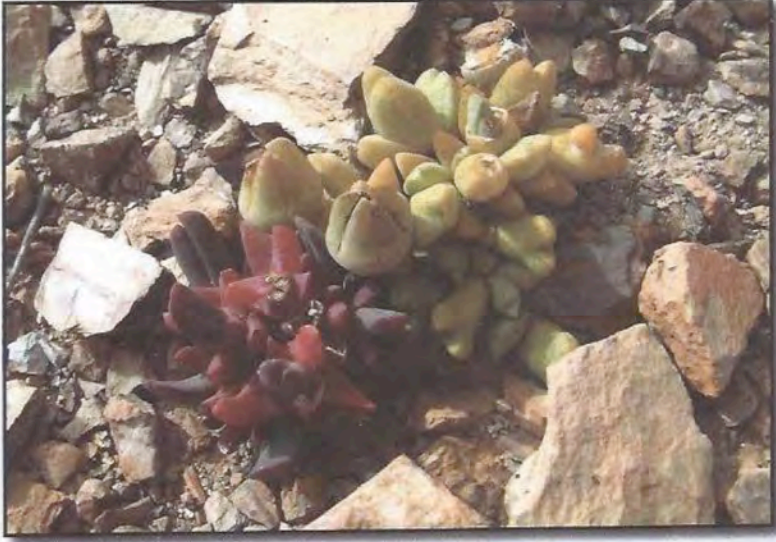
It is named for the Argentine Department of Yavi, and the specific name, *cryptocarpa*, means the fruits are formed inside the plant's body, being only visible when the plant shrinks in drought.

Usually a single stem, it's a tiny plant, stems only a bit over an inch in diameter. It has a flat top with a woolly depression in the center. The spines are so tiny as to be invisible. Pink flowers appear in late spring. It is likely related to *Cintia*, *Blossfeldia*, *Weingartia*, and *Neowerdermannia*.

It needs a deep pot in cultivation to accommodate a large napiform stem and root; loose, well-drained mineral soil. *Yavia* is hardy to -10 C. Propagation is by seeds.

(Photo from the June 2015 issue of *Cactus World*, the journal of the British Cactus & Succulent Society.)

GROWING CHEIRIDOPSIS



HABITAT: the genus *Cheiridopsis* is native to South Africa and Namibia, in winter rainfall areas, from 200 up to 1200 meters, on light slopes or stony plains and flats consisting of sand, quartz gravel or sandstone, shale, etc.

PROPAGATION: mostly by seeds, also by cutting of woody stems. Sowing is very easy, growing from cuttings is rather easy, growth rate is average. Viability of seeds is around five years.

POTTING MIX: a well-draining mineral mix is the best.

LIGHT AND WATERING: in a sunny place, but always with a good aeration. Light watering during the growing period (in winter), that is to let dry out between watering. In summer water very moderately; plants can also be sprayed with a fine mist from time to time. Beware of excess watering, as this can rot plants or it may burst them. It is better to grow old clumps in dish gardens or in a frost-free rockery.

FLOWERING: usually from the autumn until spring. Flowers are diurnal, sometimes perfumed, self-sterile, yellow, orange or purple, and pollinated by bees.

TEMPERATURE: in winter keep dry at a minimum of +5 C. Protect plants from frost.

THE GENUS: around 25 species are now recognized, down from 100 at one time. *Cheiridopsis* is such a variable genus that no obvious feature is common to all species. A graceful curving flower stalk is found in many species, but this is not unique to the genus. The fruit capsules have awn-like points at the tips of the expanding keels. The leaves that make up a pair are often closely pressed together, resembling the beak of a bird. Leaf sheaths are found in only a third of the species but they are not always apparent in cultivated plants.

The name is derived from Greek *cheiris* meaning 'sheath', and *opsis* meaning resembling, in reference to the papery sheaths that are formed during the resting period. These sheaths cover the next pair of leaves.

Cheiridopsis species are known for their diverse flower colors. Within one, *C. speciosa*, flower color may range from butter yellow to magenta with a carmine center, to the orange and lilac colors of sunset.

(Photo: *C. cigaretifera* and *c. delphinoides*, Northern Cape, South Africa; from *International cactus adventures*, no. 103)

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