

CACTUS CORNER NEWS

Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society

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Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

February 2016

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, February 4, 7:00 pm. (Doors open 6:30 pm.)
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Service Center (DHHSC), 5340 North Fresno Street, Fresno

PROGRAM

Mexico, The Hidden Treasures of Coahuila

By Wendell S. Woody Minnich 2015

Mexico is thought by many to be the richest region in the world for cacti. For all those individuals who travel in search of rare and unusual cacti, their first choice is often Mexico. The Sierra Madre Oriental is considered the center of diversity for Mexican genera, ranging from *Ariocarpus* to *Aztekiums*, *Echinocereus*, *Ferocactus*, *Geohintonia*, *Gymnocactus*, *Mammillaria*, *Obregonia*, *Pelecephora*, *Thelocactus*, *Turbincarpus* and many, many more. Because of the plethora of plants found in the states of Tamalipas, Nuevo Leon, San Luis Potosi and Hidalgo, most field workers have just decided to ignore the little explored Coahuila.



For most of us, Coahuila and its neighboring state of Chihuahua were often only used as drive-throughs on our way to the succulent rich south. In recent years, many of the serious plant explorers have started finding new back country roads in these two states. These new roads have graciously opened up some of the rarely explored areas to extremely remote regions, and some of these back country roads (trails) are not even found on the maps! Coahuila, as close as it is to the USA, actually has some of the least explored and most remote regions in all of Mexico.

On our trip through Coahuila, we drove for many hours without ever seeing other vehicles or back country people. There were no urban or agricultural developments as these wild places are still virtually untouched! The valleys and mountains of these expanses will surely offer many new species for the field worker willing to do some serious exploring. Near the roads, if you wish to call them roads, I saw only a few dried-up old ghost towns where apparently some tough old Mexicans, probably from the Poncho Villa era, once resided.

From the unknown territories of Coahuila, there have been numerous new cacti and other succulents discovered and rediscovered. The crown jewel of these new plants is the fantastic *Mammillaria luethyi*. It was lost for over 60 years since its original siting, growing in a rusted tin can on a dusty ranchito porch. All of us exploring Mexico had searched for this very special *Mammillaria*, until only a few years ago, Luethy found it in northern Coahuila. The Sierra del Carmen, which abuts the Rio Grand and the Big Bend National Park, has also been the origin of other new species. Close to this area, we discovered a new, very beautiful *Echinomastus*, or possibly *Gymnocactus*? Also from this region we found a very handsome red *Sedum*, as well as *Echinocereus longisetus*, and the northern most of the *Echeverias*, *Echeveria strictaflora*. In a remote dry lake bed, Laguna la Leche, we admired the amazingly cryptic *Escobaria abdita*. Wow, just some of the treasures of Coahuila!

(Continued on following page)

This trip was also to be an adventure in seeing some of the brand new *Agaves*, *Echeverias*, *Astrophytums*, *Echinocereus* and *Mammillarias*. We scored on almost everything we went to see, and never, in the 45 years that I have traveled Mexico, have I seen it so green. This talk will also feature many cacti and other succulents that have never been seen in books or presentations. Come explore Mexico with me!

Woody, as he is commonly called, has been in the cactus hobby for some 45 years and has become well known for his participation in many of the cactus and succulent clubs. He is an honorary life member of nine clubs as well as a life member and Friend of the 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 field work studying primarily the cactus family. He has traveled throughout Africa, Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Madagascar, Mexico, Namibia, New Zealand, Peru, Socotra, the United States and Yemen. From these trips and his nursery experience, he has developed an extensive knowledge of the cactus family as well as many of the other succulent genera.



Woody is also known for his many presentations. His photography is considered to be special and his commentary very entertaining and educational. He is a recognized international speaker and has spoken for plant conventions - organizations all over the USA, as well as in England, Germany, Australia, New Zealand and Mexico. Woody has also authored a number of articles for various newsletters, the CSSA journal and his photographs are well published. Woody is the creator-originator of the first color version of the CSSA journal "Cacti and Succulents for the Amateur" that also featured show plants, shows and the growers of the pictured plants.

He is also known for his cactus and succulent nursery, Cactus Data Plants. CDP was started in 1975 and is still in operation today. Cactus Data Plants specializes in show specimens and rare cacti and other succulents with particular emphasis in *Ariocarpus*, *Astrophytum*, *Mammillaria*, *Gymnocalycium*, *Turbincarpus*, *Melocactus*, *Copiapoa*, *Fouquieria*, *Pachypodium*, *Euphorbia*, *Cyphostemma*, *Adenium* and *Adenia*.

Woody and his wife Kathy live in the beautiful mountains south of Santa Fe New Mexico, in a region called Cedar Grove. He has a small 1,200 sq., ft. greenhouse and a few cold frames where he grows his unique plants. He is always on the move and travels frequently to do presentations and shows throughout the western United States. Woody is the proud parent of three children, Leah, Denver and Sarah, all of whom are now grown and out in the big world. Woody is also the proud grandparent of three grandsons, Indiana, Ashton and Logan. He is a retired high school teacher of 32 years where he taught Graphic Arts, Architecture, Art and Health.

Let's give our friend Woody a warm welcome back!

Plants: Woody will be bringing plants for purchase.

Sal's Mexican Restaurant

7476 North Fresno Street

Fresno, (559) 438-3030. Menu:

[http://salmexicanrestaurants.com/
general-menu/](http://salmexicanrestaurants.com/general-menu/)

~ Dinner ~

Begins promptly at 5:00pm.

Reservations under Fresno Cactus Club.

Members are invited to attend.

Contact Rosanna by Wednesday

February 3rd to make reservations.

Phone: (559) 999-0017

Email: rfrojas96@gmail.com

FROM THE PREZ ...

Hi, all,

We had a good turnout last month for our first program of the year. Wasn't it interesting to see the development of Petra's fabulous nursery and all the amazing plants thriving in it? This month our old friend, Woody Minnich, will be here with a new program featuring his great photography and his special insights into the areas presented. We have a full year ahead of speakers on all sorts of subjects, wonderful plants for sale, trading our plant extras, not to mention our special events.

Our annual Show and Sale will be June 4-5; we are already on the calendar at Sierra Vista Mall. What we need this year is a new Show Chair, as Cindy Duwe, who has done the job for the past several years, is stepping down. Talk to Cindy about what is involved.

Before that, and practically here, is the Fresno Home & Garden Show, March 4-6, at the Fairgrounds. Rob Scott is in charge, as he was last year. We always need people to help out in various capacities.

At the board meeting we discussed the idea of combining our spring garden tour and summer picnic. Mark Muradian and Patty Miller would like us to come out to look at Mark's refurbished garden. Most of our newer members haven't seen Mark's place and I know you would be fascinated by it. We were thinking of Saturday, May 14th for this. Let us know what you think. In place of our usual July picnic we will have a regular meeting, with Steve Frieze as speaker.

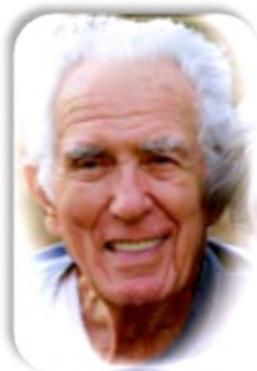
Bus trip: we'd been thinking it was time to go south again, to the Inter-City Show, Aug. 13-14. As of now, we don't have a volunteer to pull the details together, but we will get there.

Ann Bierbower is working to get a new club tee shirt designed. Thanks so much for your efforts, Ann. We should have new shirts by the time of the June show, if not before. We are completely sold out of our old shirts.

So, you see that we have busy times ahead. Most of you have renewed your membership, but not all of you. Your dues are due now. We don't want to lose you! By the way, some of you newer members still have name badges you haven't picked up. They are always on the front table at each meeting.

I'd like to thank those of you who bring snacks and goodies to the meetings, also. We need to keep our strength up during the programs and plant sales! Remember to check the table before you leave and take home any leftovers.

See you at the meeting, *Sue*



A notable passing in the cactus and succulent world: **Gerald Barad**, who had been an officer and leading light of the Cactus & Succulent Society of America for at least 50 years, passed away January 16th. He was 93 or 94, I believe. He maintained an extensive plant collection in multiple greenhouses in Flemington, NJ. His daughter tells CSSA that the Huntington will get first pick of his plants; large in-ground plants will be offered to the New York Botanical Garden and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. The rest will be auctioned in late spring sometime. He had one-of-a-kind items, plants he had collected on numerous expeditions circa 1960s through 1980s. To work with him, as I did when on the CSSA board, is to know what a dynamic person he was. *Sue*

**FRESNO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY BOARD MEETING
JANUARY 11, 2016**

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

Attendance: Robert Scott, Treasurer; Rosanna Rojas, Vice President; Cindy Duwe, Secretary; Karen Willoughby, Board Member; Polly Dunklin, Board Member; Tom Meyer, Board Member; Mary Drumheller, Board Member; Carole Grosch, Board Member; Ann Bierbower, Board Member. **Visitor:** Doris Hooton

Officer Reports:

The 2016 Master Gardener's Smart Gardening Conference will be held February 27, 2016. FCSS is contributing 300 seed packets and 300 club membership/sale flyers for the attendee gift bags. Sue has prepared the seed packets; Polly will see to the flyers.

Sue discussed several books that the club will be purchasing for the library.

Rosanna reviewed the speakers for the upcoming months: February, Woody Minnich; March, Jeff Moore; April, Keith Taylor.

Robert reported the club has \$8,176.72.

New Business:

The Spring Home & Garden Show will take place March 4-6 at the Fresno Fair Grounds. Robert Scott will be in charge.

Chairmanships:

Annual Show & Sale (June 4-5): Open
Facebook: Karen Willoughby
Fair Display Coordinator: Rudy Rulloda
Hospitality table: Tom Meyer
Librarian: Madeleine Mitchell
Membership: Polly Dunklin
Photographer: Mary Ann Villegas
Publications: Sue Haffner
Publicity: Carole Grosch, Sue Haffner
Refreshments: Marian Orvis
Rules & Parliamentarian: Sue Haffner
Webmaster: Vickie Veen
Workshop: Mary Drumheller

Spring Garden Tour: There was discussion about combining the Garden Tour and the July Picnic. More research will be done and discussed at the next Board Meeting.

Bus Trip: Open

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Duwe, Secretary

Club access: President, Sue Haffner, 292-5624, sueh@mail.fresnostate.edu; Programs, Rosanna Rojas, 999-0017, rfrojas96@gmail.com; Treasurer, Robert Scott, 960-3665, Rob_scott85@yahoo.com; Editor, Sue Haffner, 292-5624, sueh@mail.fresnostate.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

HAPPY BIRTHDAY:

**Marilyn Green (4th); Mary Drumheller (8th);
Lola Sutherland (10th); Rose Rowe (17th);
Danielle Jeschien (19th);
Jean Richter (22nd); Alice Rodriguez (25th);
Jim Brummel (28th).**

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**SAY HELLO TO THESE NEW MEMBERS:**

Tori D'Ambrosi, Fresno  
Janet Gaynor, Fresno  
Denelle Canadian, Fresno  
Jeff & Marilyn Carter, Clovis (welcome back!)

WELCOME

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Cindy Dewe ran into **Rudy and Paulette Rapisura** a few weeks ago. Rudy has had a few health setbacks lately, but he looked good and asked about club members. They don't drive at night anymore, so aren't able to get to meetings. We send our best to them.

2016 MASTER GARDENERS SMART GARDENING CONFERENCE

"The 3 D's of Gardening in a changing climate" is the topic of this year's conference to be held Saturday, Feb. 27th, at the Piccadilly Inn Airport, 5115 E. McKinley Ave.

Among the speakers are:

Ernesto Sandoval, Elinor Teague, and club members Roz Tampone, Valerie Kissler and Carolyn Unruh. For more information:

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/mgfresno>

BOARD MEETING: Monday, February 8, 6:00 p.m.

3733 N. Sierra Vista, Fresno.

Any member may attend; board members should attend.

NEW IN THE CLUB LIBRARY

"Tree aloes of Africa," by Ernst van Jaarsveld and Eric Judd (2015) Penrock Publications; 74p., illus, index, bibliography. The tree aloes include *A. dichotoma*; *barberae* (= *bainesii*); *ramosissima*; *eminens*; and the recently described *A. tongoensis*. Also included in this designation is the fan aloe, *A. plicatilis*. The book provides a history of each species, description, and cultural information.

Recent DNA analysis has resulted in a fracturing of the genus *Aloe*, with the tree aloes being transferred to *Aloidendron* and *A. plicatilis* being shunted off all by itself into *Kumara disticha*. That revision is explained in the book.

Last year was kind of a dud as far as new cactus and succulent books was concerned, but the list of books due this year is much more promising. Chuck Everson lists these upcoming:

Aloes & agaves for the Landscape, by Jeff Moore
Succulents of Southern Africa, by Robin Frandsen
Gasterias of South Africa (rev. ed), by Ernst van Jaarsveld
Propagation, by Gordon Rowley
The Genus *Matucana* in Peru, by Graham Charles
Agaves of Baja, California, by Greg Starr
Agaves, yuccas and their kin, by Jon Hawker

Already announced for 2017 are Cliff face succulents of Southern Africa, by van Jaarsveld and Cacti of Peru, by Graham Charles.

For cactus and succulent books, check these websites: www.cactusbookstore.com and www.exoticplantbooks.com.

JANUARY BRAG TABLE: Fred Gaumer displayed *Graptopetalum bella* and an amazing seed pan with seedlings of *Haworthia truncata v. maughanii*; Bruce Hargreaves brought *Euphorbia clavaroides*; Patty Miller showed *Echinocereus rubrispinus* and a fantastic multi-headed *Senecio scaposus*; Charlene Stebles displayed *Mammillaria spinosissima* and a gasteria and a haworthia; Edward Etheridge brought an *Adenium* 'Thai Socotranum' and a Golden Barrel; Bill Gale showed *Euphorbia venenifera*. Thanks to all of them.



Photos by Mary Villegas

JANUARY WORKSHOP: We looked at genera that come at the end of the alphabet, quite a challenge. You could bring a *Wigginsia* or a *Weingartia* or a *Wilcoxia*—except that they're no longer valid names. (Even so, I brought an *Echinocereus schmollii*; the label had "Wilcoxia" many years ago when I got it.) Jack Fleming brought a *Xerosicyos*; Tom Meyer went out to the greenhouse and came back with a *Welwitschia*. I also showed *Uebelmannia crebispina*, except—names, again—I've discovered belatedly that my plant is probably just a form of *U. pectinifera*, as "crebispina" isn't listed anywhere. I've had this plant for many years and never bothered to look it up. Bill Gale brought another *U. pectinifera* for comparison. Eddie Etheridge hauled in a huge *Dioscorea elephantipes*. It had a very lush vine, even though it hadn't started growing until September. We all agreed that plants don't follow the rules. Dan Gale distributed 3-4 year old seedlings of *D. elephantipes* to all the attendees. Thanks, Dan!



Photos by Polly Dunklin

Tools: Jean Richter showed a Thai gardening tool that she's been using for several years. It's like a long-handled trowel, but made of heavy metal that will withstand hard use. She got it as a gift, I believe, so I don't know where to find one. Dennis Anderson showed several long-handled needle nose pliers that he found at Harbor Freight. They're handy for weeding around cacti and other spiny plants. The February workshop will be Wednesday, the 17th; 6 p.m., at 3733 N. Sierra Vista. All members are welcome. The subjects are: genera starting with A and B; seeds.

ALOE HERCULES

Aloe 'Hercules' is a hybrid tree aloe, a cross between *A. barberae* and *A. dichotoma*. You can read about it on the website for San Marcos Growers. 'Hercules' shows hybrid vigor, growing faster than its parents, with a heavier trunk and branches and the characteristic peeling bark. In favorable conditions it could grow to 30 or 40 feet. It is already popular in the Phoenix area for its ease of culture and hardiness; it has survived temperatures down to the mid-20s F. It blooms in spring and fall; flowers are salmon with green tips, attractive to butterflies and birds.

(Photo from *Phoenix home & garden*, Feb. 2016)



PLANT LABELS ... AND HOW TO KEEP THEM LEGIBLE

Plant labels—we all use them. We all lose them. Plastic ones break, get lost, fade. How many times have you repotted one of your veteran plants (something you should have repotted long before), pulled the label, only to find that it appeared blank or barely legible. (Well, if you are one of the virtuous growers who tend all your plants regularly, even those at the back of the shelf, you probably don't have this problem.) Now, perhaps you know the plant's identity, so you can just make out a new label. But what do you do when you are not sure which *Mammillaria* or which *Rebutia* this is?

Here are some suggestions from the Internet. If the plant name had been written with an ink marker (Sharpie, etc.), tilt the label in the full sun and see if an image appears. A member of the Henry Shaw C&S Society (St. Louis) said that this technique works: put your 'blank' labels in a photocopy machine on the darkest setting and highest magnification. Start making copies and the names frequently reappear. Some people put the labels under ultraviolet light ("black" light) and find that they can read the labels. Another person suggested lightly rubbing a pencil lead over the label to bring up the old writing.

All the so-called permanent ink pens will fade eventually. While all gardeners, if polled, will name some favorite brand of pen, most people agree that plain, old #2 pencil lead will withstand the elements best. Here is a good idea: double-label your plants. Make out a second label, or a half-label, and push it down just below the rim of the pot, burying it. The penciled name will last longer when protected from the light. Another tip is to use the rougher side of the label, or rough it up with fine sandpaper. Or, you can use one label, but write the plant name at both ends. You can add other information, too, such as repotting date, or where you got the plant, etc.

A unique suggestion was contributed by an Oregon gardener. Her neighbor wrote plant names on smooth river stones with a laundry marker, then placed them name-side down at the base of the plants. (This was mainly in her outdoor garden, but it's an idea that could be adapted to any situation.)

Most of us use plastic labels. There are many different grades of plastic, of course. Some of us reuse them, after soaking them in bleach water and maybe using steel wool to clean them. Others don't bother with this, but find cheap replacements. People have suggested buying inexpensive vinyl blinds and cutting them up to make labels. Well, there are as many options as there are gardeners with imaginations. Running out of labels? If you are a cheapskate, like me, you cut old labels in half (or even thirds, which I do to make small labels for seed trays.) If you are desperate, you can cut up a cottage cheese carton, or something similar, and use those.

Once I stuck a bunch of cleaned plastic labels in an old plastic peanut butter jar and put it away for the winter. (The jar was open, without the plastic lid.) When I pulled it out in spring, the labels had reacted to something in the plastic of the jar and had turned orange and were starting to crumble. Weird. Perhaps the plastic of the jar was out-gassing some chemical or other. (Makes you stop and think about long-term storage of our food in plastic, doesn't it.) We are living in a chemical environment. We trust that these compounds are safe, but how they interact with others is a whole "other planet." When I was still working at the CSUF Library we had to empty a display case when people detected an odd smell coming from inside. Chemical fumes can have a deleterious effect on the paper items that were displayed inside. Even though we had had that case for years, it had generally stood empty. Something about it, the wood or the lining, must have reacted to something in the old books, pictures and CSUF yearbooks that were on display.

We all know that plastic is recyclable (check the triangular symbol on the bottom of plastic items.) We all probably have really old pots, trays, etc. that don't bear these symbols. I tend to pitch those in the garbage, as I'm not sure if these can be recycled.

Well, I seem to have wandered far from the issue of labels. It's funny how this issue inspires the most passionate discussions on the Internet gardening forums. *Sue*