

# CACTUS CORNER NEWS

## *Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society*

<http://www.fresnocss.com>

*Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America*

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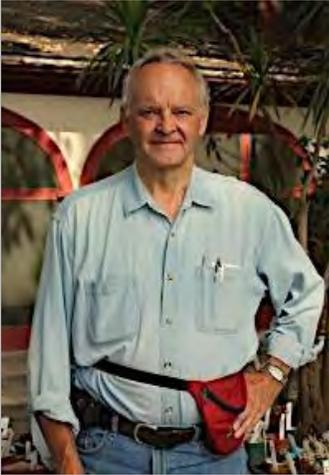
**HAPPY NEW YEAR**

**Next meeting: Thursday, January 4, 2018; 7:00 p.m. (Doors open 6:30 p.m.)  
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Service Center (DHHSC), 5340 North Fresno Street, Fresno**

## PROGRAM

### **“Dudleyas and Tylecodons: Mediterranean Climate Plants”**

**by Gary Duke**



Gary describes their culture, a few historical facts and describes the differences between Dudleyas and Echevarias as well as between Tylecodons and Cotyledons. He shows a dozen or more each of Dudleyas and Tylecodons that he is able to grow in southern California.

Gary Duke has been collecting cacti and succulents since he was 10 years old. He is a retired Air Force officer with a doctoral degree in physics. During his military career, he moved his original and ever-expanding collection of less than about 30 plants from Illinois, where he grew up, to Omaha, NE, Dayton, OH (where he started their first C&S Society, which is now defunct), San Pedro, CA, Montgomery, AL and Albuquerque, NM where he had been show chairman. He has also been President of the South Coast Cactus and Succulent Society and the Long Beach Club in the southern California area. He was recently elected to the Board of Directors to the Cactus and Succulent Society of America. Following his military career, he worked as a program manager for Boeing for 16 years. He's an avid collector of cacti and also collects Tylecodons and Dudleyas. He has over 1000 different species in his private collection and enjoys propagating them. He frequently gives slide presentations throughout southern California.

*Plants: Gary will be bringing a variety of plants for sale.*

~~ DINNER ~~

**Toledo's Mexican Food**  
367 East Shaw Avenue  
Fresno, (559) 224-0975  
<http://toledosmexicanfood.com/>

**Begins promptly at 5:00 p.m.**  
Reservations under Fresno  
Cactus Club. Members are  
invited to attend.

**Contact Rosanna by**  
**Wednesday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>,**  
**to make reservations:**  
Phone: (559) 999-0017

**FROM THE PREZ ...**

Hi, all,

Here we are at the beginning of another year. We have a lot of activities and events ahead of us, and I hope that you all will join us and make the year a success. If you are one of our many newer members, the best way to become acquainted is to jump in and help whenever it's needed. Your first opportunity may be at the Fresno Home and Garden Show, March 2-4. Our club will be selling plants and meeting the public.

This past year was a bit tumultuous, as we assayed our first judged show in an expanded venue. We learned a lot from the experience. We are tentatively scheduled to hold our 2018 show and sale on June 2-3 at the Clovis Veterans Memorial District building and I hope we'll have the same support from the membership as we had in 2017.

We had a wonderful turnout at our Christmas party last month. I don't believe anyone counted, but there were many more people there than attended the previous year. Some people had to sit out in the lobby with their plates. Thanks to Rosanna Rojas for organizing the food, Jan Brummel for the table decorations, and all those who helped with set up and cleaning up. The silent auction brought in \$314; thanks to all the donors and bidders.

Winter is upon us. Be sure to keep watch on the weather report and protect your plants when temperatures go down close to freezing. If any of your plants appear to have been whacked by frost, don't be in a big hurry to toss them. I've had aloes frozen flat to the ground grow back from the roots. But we haven't had any rain to speak of. Is it too early to speak the D word (drought)? Let's hope that the next few months come through with some precipitation.

Hope to see you all at the meeting. Why not bring your tylecodons and dudleyas for the Brag Table, as they're the subjects of Gary Duke's program. If you haven't renewed your membership yet, you can do so at the meeting.

Good growing! *Sue*

**LARRY CARLBERG**

**Longtime member Larry Carlberg** passed away Nov. 27<sup>th</sup> at the age of 75. He was always ready to help with club activities, even in later years when he began to suffer from various maladies. He also helped out every year at the water-wise gardening plant exchange sponsored by the City of Fresno.

We hadn't seen much of Larry in the past year, or so, as he was often too ill to get to meetings. He was reticent about his personal life, but according to the notice in the *Bee* he had been a greens keeper at a golf course. He is survived by his wife, Ina, and sister-in-law Peggy Hall. *Sue*

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY:**

**Elton Roberts (5<sup>th</sup>);  
Val McCullough (9<sup>th</sup>);  
Sherlock Holmes (12<sup>th</sup>);  
Dennis Shamlian (13<sup>th</sup>);  
Theresa Flemming (15<sup>th</sup>); Christeen Abbot-Heam  
(16<sup>th</sup>); Mark Muradian, Ed Myhro (20<sup>th</sup>)  
Tony Sharp (25<sup>th</sup>); Carol Grosch (31<sup>st</sup>).**



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**Sympathies go out to Robert Scott,** whose grandmother, Vivian Adkinson, passed away Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>.



**BOARD MEETING: The board meeting will be Monday, Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>, 6 p.m., at 3733 N. Sierra Vista. It's time to get organized for the upcoming year. All club members are invited to attend; board members should attend.**

**RENEWALS: Memberships are payable now; please renew if you haven't done so already. We don't want to lose you!**

If you are a member of the **Cactus & Succulent Society of America**, note that those memberships are also payable now. A renewal form was included with your latest journal. You can also renew online: [www.cssainc.org](http://www.cssainc.org).

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**The horrible Thomas Fire** devastated a wide area in the Santa Barbara vicinity and beyond. I suspect that people we know may have lost their homes and/or businesses. The flames came very close to the famous garden Lotusland but fortunately were stopped before they reached the property. Back in 2015 one of the CSSA Convention tours was to Lotusland, then over the hill to the home of Jeff Chemnick. An amazing place, every square inch of yard was planted in succulents and cycads. Jeff told us that he'd been burned out 5 years previously, but you would never know it when you looked at how lush his garden was. I thought of him when the fire was nearing Lotusland and wondering if Jeff and his family had been burned out again.

**CLUB WORKSHOP:** At the end of the year we ran up against the end of the alphabet: X, Y and Z. (Yavia? Yungaso-cereus? Xerosicyos?) So the plants brought for discussion were a motley collection of those that either were looking good or that people had questions about. Tom Meyer brought the only alphabetically correct plant, an unidentified small yucca with soft, grassy variegated leaves. Susan Cook brought a couple of burseras for Tom to prune. Dan Gale brought an *Ariocarpus lloydii* which had most of its growing point eaten away by a rodent. The plant isn't dead; it will eventually grow enough to hide the damage. He also showed a spectacular agave cultivar 'White Rhino.' Roz Tampone brought two succulent Christmas trees and a wreath she had made. They were very nicely done. Others who brought plants for show were Cindy Duwe, Sue Haffner, Dennis Anderson and Bill Gale. In the absence of our leader Mary D. (felled by a bad cold), Karl Church called the group to order. Several people brought goodies appropriate for the holiday. Dan brought fruit to give away as well as small plants of a Kelly Griffin hybrid aloe. We had two visitors, Carolee Clayton and her sister.

Beginning this month, the workshop will be on the third Tuesday at the Betty Rodriguez Library, Jan. 16<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 p.m.



**Photos: Cindy Duwe**

## TYLECODON



Usually during winter there isn't much going on in our plant collections, but if you have some of the winter-growing summer-dormant plants from the Southern Hemisphere you will see signs of leaf development and growth.

Tylecodons are readily accessible winter growers putting on a show right about now. The 46 species are all from southern Africa, restricted to the northern, western and eastern Cape Provinces of South Africa and southern Namibia.

Originally included in the genus *Cotyledon*, they were placed in this new genus in 1978 (*Tylecodon* is an anagram of *Cotyledon*.) The main distinctions between the two genera are that the generally soft leaves of *Tylecodon* are arranged spirally on the stems and are deciduous; those of *Cotyledon* are stiffer, growing opposite one another on the plant stem, and persistent. The flowers of the two groups of plants are also generally

distinct. In *Tylecodon* they are held erect or are spreading, while in *Cotyledon* they are pendulous. Flowers are generally produced just before the plants begin their active growth.

Plant forms among the tylecodons show considerable diversity. They range from robust, erect shrub-like forms down to miniature caudex-forming species with a few sparse stems above ground. Some species have heavily tuberculate stems with persistent leaf bases (*phyllopodia*), while others bear distinctive decorative leaf scars. It is thought that the phyllopodia may help protect the plants from predators, although their toxic sap may be a more effective deterrent. Many species display peeling bark. The shape and size of the leaves can vary, even among the same species. Mature specimens can lend themselves to bonsai treatment.

Culture is generally easy, at least with the species that are most commonly available. They should be kept dry—or mostly dry—in summer. Plants with exposed stems should be protected from prolonged exposure to strong sunlight, as they are liable to sunburn. Growth usually commences in mid-autumn with the appearance of leaf buds. Begin watering then. Tylecodons don't seem to be fussy about soil mix; it just should be fast-draining. Also, they don't seem to be troubled very much by diseases or pests. Propagation is by cuttings or seeds. Seeds are very fine and seem to have a limited viability.

In a class by itself is *Tylecodon paniculatus* (pictured above), the largest of the genus. Plants in habitat can reach 6 feet in height, with trunks up to 2 feet thick. It is widely distributed throughout the range, growing in situations as different as shady canyons to direct exposure. It puts up a stalk of red flowers.

Other interesting species include:

*Tylecodon buchholziana* is one of the miniatures, with low-growing branched stems, grayish-green becoming darker with age and marked by tiny brown leaf scales. It produces a few cylindrical leaves in the growing season, though there are forms that seem to be persistently leafless. The variety *fascularis* develops prostrate stems.

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*Tylecodon schaeferiana* is a rather variable species; plants generally grown under this name tend to be very small-growing with a tuberous rootstock, few stems, and egg-shaped green leaves with red, vein-like markings. A widespread plant in cultivation, often labeled as *T. sinus-alexandri*, is a form of *schaeferiana*. The erect, slender stems bear smaller, dull-green leaves; the showy, short-stemmed pink flowers are freely produced and are one of the main attractions of this miniature plant.

*Tylecodon pearsonii*, sometimes labeled *T. luteosquamata*, is an attractive species with a natural bonsai-like appearance. The thickened or swollen base develops with age a brown peeling bark and the slender, branched cylindrical stems are attractively marked with scars left by fallen leaves from previous years' growth.

*Tylecodon wallichii* has a bizarre appearance due to its stems which are densely covered with phyllopodia, hardened, protruding tubercule-like leaf bases, each with a blunt tip where the leaf was attached. This is a freely branching species and will grow into a small shrub in time. A nice specimen has a prized place in any collection. **Sue**

(Illus. from "Cotyledon and Tylecodon" (2004), by Ernst van Jaarsvelt and Daryl Koutnik)



### KILLER GRIT?

In a recent issue of *CactusWorld*, the journal of the British Cactus & Succulent Society, noted grower Derek Tribble has some second thoughts about top dressing: "Most of us top-dress our pots with various grits, but is it really such a good idea? People add a layer of grit to make their plants look better. In the USA, show plants are nearly always presented with various top dressings and nursery plants are often sold this way. It is a simple method to improve artistic impact, since a considerate choice of grit can complement or contrast with the colour of the plant. ... But has anyone thought about what our plants want? Consider the routine watering process. Added water can only follow four routes:

- Initial drainage by gravity out of the bottom of the pot via the holes
- After root-absorption, evaporation from the surface of the plant.
- For porous (clay) pots, evaporation through the pot wall itself;
- Evaporation from the top surface of the potting compost.

Normally, capillary action draws water upwards (against gravity) through the potting compost as it evaporates from the open top surface. However, a grit covering prevents most evaporation, since capillary action cannot work across the boundary from finer to coarser layers (only the opposite way.) So for a plant in a plastic pot that gets watered when it does not want to take up that water, the sealed potting compost stays wet for a long time. This might be acceptable for leafy houseplants, but our desert plants are unlikely to survive long 'with their feet wet.'

Another good reason to avoid the practice is that most potting composts darken when wetted and lighten again as they dry out. This useful indication is hidden when a grit top-dressing is used ... There are exceptions, as is often the case. Some plants need support above their roots. A collar of grit can be useful between the plant body and potting compost, but do not spread the grit out over the whole top surface.

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Other tiny succulents (e.g. some conophytums or tuberous bulbines) are grit-pan dwellers and these can even be partially buried in grit. In summer, it will help prevent scorch.”

The next issue of the journal contained a response: “I was most interested to read the short article on ‘Killer grit’ in the last journal. I am fairly new to growing succulents and I agree that it is hard to tell when the compost is dry although I admit that I do like the appearance of some of the top dressings. I do not grow succulents primarily for the show bench but mainly as decorative plants that can be brought indoors or enhance a garden area in the summer months, and watering is just as important in order to grow the best plants I can.”

“I am a potter, and make my own pots from clay, some from terracotta that is porous and others from stoneware which is not. I am trying to link these two hobbies and hope to match the clay with the width and depth of the pot to be suitable for the plant it is made for. Quite a challenge!”

“Terracotta pots feel cold to the touch when they are still damp. This is how potters know whether the pot is dry enough to put in the kiln. That could be an extra guide for people checking their pots for watering. Stoneware pots and glazed pots are non-porous so have the same problem as plastic pots. I use them mainly for decorative succulent ‘gardens’ so keep them shallow, therefore less water to dry out.”

It’s true that not every grower uses or appreciates top dressing. Some routinely dump it out of plants they buy or win in the club raffle. Recently a longtime member asked me when the practice began of commercial growers using top dressing on their sale plants. This wasn’t true years ago (1970s-1990s, or so) as she recalled. You can argue that the use of top dressings adds to the expense and time required to prepare sale plants, not to mention the extra weight.

Years ago, the club used to buy sale plants from the late nurseryman Tom Loehman, who would truck them up here and unload them in former treasurer Burma Gunther’s yard. We would have potting and pricing parties to prepare the plants for sale. We never used top dressing then. Years later we sent teams down to Vista to visit the nurseries and buy plants for club resale. I don’t recall that we ever bothered with top dressing then, either.

I kicked the question up to Fred Gaumer, as he has been in the hobby for a long time. He said he thought that Woody Minnich may have started it. Woody was greatly influenced by the late Larry Grammer, plant stager extraordinaire, who was an apostle of top dressings and the use of complementary rocks as plant companions. If you were present last July for Peter Walkowiak’s program on staging, you saw these principles in action.

Years ago Larry Grammer, himself, did a program for us. It was fascinating to watch him examine a plant from every angle and select the pot, grits and rocks to achieve the effect he wanted. A true artist, he really couldn’t tell you *why* he put materials together a certain way; he just *did* it. It was quite a performance.

Anyway, there’s no law that says you must use top dressing. I use it. I think it gives newly repotted plants some support. And if you’re aggressive with the hose, a top dressing can keep the soil mix from being washed out of the pot. But you can make your own determination as to whether it fits in with your growing practices.

*Sue*

# The Ruth Bancroft Garden



On behalf of The Ruth Bancroft Garden and the Bancroft family, we are saddened to announce the passing of our beloved founder, Ruth Bancroft. Ruth, who was 109 years of age, died at home surrounded by family, and by the extensive, amazing private and public gardens she created and tended over 76 years of her lifetime.

Mrs. Bancroft gained international recognition for her pioneering work in horticulture, demonstrating that a dry garden in the heart of a busy urban, inland corridor could be lush, diverse, and striking in design. Her garden was the inspiration for the founding of The Garden Conservancy in 1989, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving private gardens for public use. The Ruth Bancroft Garden was its first preservation project in 1992

An all-day celebration of Ruth's life will be held in the Garden on: Saturday, Feb. 17th, 2018. Open to the public

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations in honor of Mrs. Bancroft be directed to benefit the mission of The Ruth Bancroft Garden, Inc. at [1552 Bancroft Road, Walnut Creek, 94598](https://www.ruthbancroftgarden.com).



# THE HUNTINGTON

LIBRARY, ART COLLECTIONS, AND BOTANICAL GARDENS

1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, California 91108 (626) 405-2100

BOTANICAL GARDENS

## DESERT FORUM *Saturday, 13 January 2018*

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- 9:00 – 9:45      **Registration**  
Please bring your CSSA or affiliated club badge or membership card for admission. In order to receive free admission, you must arrive by 9:45. Late arrivers will need to pay for Huntington admission.
- 9:00 – 10:00      Coffee and doughnuts will be available in the lower part of the Desert Garden
- 9:00 – 11:00      **Desert Garden**
- Knowledgeable staff and docents will be stationed throughout the Desert Garden and Desert Conservatory
  - Aloes will be flowering
- 11:00 – 1:00      **Plant Sales – (exclusively for CSSA and club members)**  
Gate opens by the Teaching Greenhouse at 11:00 for plant sales - *please, no early bird shopping, and no shopping after 1:00.*  
Cash, checks, and credit cards accepted
- 1:00 – 5:00      **Free Time**  
Participants are welcome to tour the gardens and galleries from 10:00 to 5:00.

#### **Lunch:**

- The café in the visitor center features a variety of sandwiches, salads, and grilled items
- The tea room at Liu Fang Yuan is an option for Asian food
- The coffee shop by the Store offers a small selection of pre-made options