

CACTUS CORNER NEWS

Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society

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Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

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March 2019

NEXT MEETING: March 7th, 7:00 p.m. (Doors open 6:30 p.m.)

NEW MEETING LOCATION: REDEEMER LUTHERN CHURCH

1084 West Bullard, Fresno (near the NW corner of Palm and Bullard.)

Forms and Functions of Cacti and Succulents Inside and Out along with other Desert Dwellers!

by: **Ernesto Sandoval**

Ernesto will be sharing his understanding of the way succulents and other desert plants are adapted to surviving drought in desert and other dry environments. He'll cover Biology (how they work overall), Anatomy (how they're organized on the inside), Morphology (how they're organized on the outside, and Ecophysiology (how all the parts above work together) to make the plants adapted to their often challenging lives.



Ernesto Sandoval has been wondering and seeking questions to why plants grow and look the way that they do for a long time. Now he explains and interprets the world of plants to a variety of ages and experiences from K-12 to professionals as well as Master Gardeners. He regularly lectures to a variety of western Garden Clubs throughout the year and particularly to Succulent Clubs throughout California. Desert plants are his particular passion within his general passion for plants. He describes himself as a "Jose of All Plants, Master of None." Ernesto thoroughly enjoys helping others, and gardeners in particular, to understand why and how plants do what they do.



Biography: When he was about 13 he asked his dad why one tree was pruned a particular way and another tree another way. His dad answered bluntly "because that's the way you do it." Since then he's been learning and teaching himself the answers to those and many other questions by getting a degree at UC Davis in Botany and working from student weeder/waterer to Director over the last 25 years at the UC Davis Botanical Conservatory.

He's long left the "mow blow and go" monoculture landscape gardening world and has immersed himself in the world of polyculture and biodiversity by growing several thousand types of plants at the UC Davis Botanical Conservatory, many of them succulents. Several of his favorite garden projects involved converting lawns and or water loving landscapes to drought tolerant and diversity filled

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gardens! He likes to promote plant liberation by encouraging gardeners of all sorts to grow more plants in the ground when possible. He loves the technical language of Botany but prefers to relate information in more understandable methods of communication! By helping people to understand the workings of plants he hopes to help us better understand how to and why our plants do what they do and how we can maximize their growth with less effort.

Let's give Ernesto a warm welcome back to the club!

Plants: As usual Ernesto will bring an assortment of plants, mostly hardy succulents to offer for sale!

Ernesto Sandoval 530-979-7659 planthead667@mac.com

~~ DINNER ~~

High Sierra Grill House
2003 West Bullard Avenue
Fresno, (559) 435-8500
[Menu](#)

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

Contact Rosanna by
Wednesday, March 6th
to make reservations:
Phone: (559) 999-0017



FROM THE PREZ ...

Hi, All,

We've certainly had challenging weather this winter: rain, freeze, rain, freeze—rinse and repeat. I would like to say that we've had the dangerous temperatures behind us by now—but who knows. If you think some of your plants have suffered some frost damage, wait awhile. Once the weather evens out you can start to remove damaged leaves and stems.

Our activities shift into high gear this month with the Fresno Home & Garden Show. I hope many of you will come by our booth in the Junior Exhibit Building and either lend a hand for a while or buy some plants. Then we have the "Spring into your Garden" event at the Clovis Botanical Garden on March 16th. We need several members to staff a table, hand out club information and publicize our June Show and Sale.

The latest version of the club's Standing Rules has gone out to members by email (those who receive the hard copy newsletter will have it mailed to them.) Please read the document; we will vote to accept it at this meeting.

It was great to have the club library once again available at the February meeting. Many thanks to Marilyn Carter and Jim Brummel for finding appropriate storage carts, labeling them and storing the books. Our big library cabinet is still stored at Jim's home.

Tony Sharp has taken over Tom Meyer's job of organizing the sign-in table and welcoming members and visitors. Thanks for years of service, Tom! Please remember to sign in; if you bring a guest please have that person sign in, also. We like to keep track of who is attending our events.

Giveaways: we're lucky that so many members choose to bring plants, cuttings, bulbs, fruit, etc. to give away. But please check before you leave the meeting and if some of your items are still there, please take them with you.

Ernesto Sandoval, one of our favorite speakers, will entertain and inform us this month. His programs are always worth your time and attention. Hope to see you there, **Sue**

Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society Board Meeting Minutes – February 11, 2019

Called to order at 6:02 by Present Sue Haffner. Present were: Michele and Craig Roberts, Rob Scott, Cindy Duwe, Polly Dunklin, Mary Drumheller, Bill Gale, Marilyn Carter, Jim Brummel and myself, Karen Willoughby. Absent were Fred Gaumer and Rosana Rojas.

Officer reports:

President: We discussed a questionnaire Sue had received and decided not to participate.

Vice President: Rosanna was absent but it was reported that Ernesto Sandoval will be the speaker in March.

Treasurer: Michele Roberts had last year's stats and current balances available for the board. Affiliate

Rep: Absent.

Old Business:

Home & Garden Show: Rob Scott discussed the set up and times for the show and had a poster to be distributed. The hours are Thursday February 28, 10:00 for set up, Friday March 1, 10-7, Saturday March 2, 10-7, Sunday, March 3, 10-6.

Vendors: Signed up at the last meeting.

Advertising? Social Media: Karen will post info on Facebook.

Bus trip: Cindy reported that the bus trip will be May 25th to the Central Coast Show and Sale. It was approved by the board to increase the fee to \$45.

Home Garden Tour: Ideas were discussed.

Show & Sale venue: Rob discussed the facilities at the Fair Ground for this year's show. CVMD needs to be notified of our withdrawal and need for our down payment to be refunded. Clovis Botanical: "Spring into your garden" event is March 16th from 9-1.

April 13th picnic: Volunteer needed to be in charge of this event.

Library: Marilyn reported no problems with new library procedure.

Donor acknowledgement form: Craig is working on this.

Standing Rules Revision; These were gone over and discussed with changes made and they were approved by the board and will be presented in the newsletter to the membership.

New Business:

Revised membership forms: Craig is working on this.

Officer Gifts: Tony Sharp will make the pots again this year.

There being no further new business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45. Next board meeting is Monday, March 11th. If you would like further information on any of these subjects, please speak to a board member.

Respectfully submitted, Karen Willoughby, Secretary

Club access: President, Sue Haffner, 292-5624, sueh@mail.fresnostate.edu; Programs, Rosana Rojas, 999-0017, frojas96@gmail.com; Treasurer, Michele Roberts, 645-5257, robertshowse@comcast.net; Editor, Sue Haffner, 292-5624, sueh@mail.fresnostate.edu; Refreshments, Nancy Jobin; Librarian, Marilyn Carter, 977-6611, mkc3253@gmail.com; Webmaster, Vickie Veen, vickieveen@gmail.com; Sunshine, Carole Grosch, 323-8602, cgg266@comcast.net.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY:



Marilyn Carter (2nd);
Michele Roberts (3rd);
Jackie Medlock (5th);
Rebekah Rogers (11th);
Jeff Carter (14th); Karina
Rodriguez (16th); Veone Gale,
Rebekah Carlson 22nd)

Janet Brummel (28th); Cori Aunger (29th).

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**SAY HELLO TO THESE NEW MEMBERS:**

Connie Skelton, Clovis, Josefa and Iris Price, Fresno  
Trish Garcia, Fresno, Ana Siguenza, Clovis  
Heather Franks, Fresno (welcome back!)

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Visitors last month: Teri Reichert, Kathleen Sebetka,
Esmeralda Garcia, Mary Ann MacDonald, Wendy Wilke.

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**CACTI AND SUCCULENTS ARE EVERYWHERE!**

The cover of the latest issue of *Woman's Day* features  
a display of cactus cupcakes (frosted with buttercream  
that has been sculpted into cactus shapes).

**Seen at the Fig Garden post office:** padded  
mailing envelopes with cactus and succulent  
patterns.

**A suggestion on your sharp encounters with succulents:** As soon as you become stuck, spray the spot with alcohol—that goes for agave punctures especially; it takes out the sting. If you have a spine embedded in your skin, a sharp clean needle is your best operating tool, accompanied by a magnifying glass. Dig until you release the nasty thing, then spray with more alcohol.



**FEBRUARY BRAG TABLE:** Fred Gaumer brought *Copiapoa hypogaea*, *Copiapoa dura*, *Neochilenia aff napina*, *Neochilenia ? sp*, *Cheiridopsis namaquensis* and *Ruschia intrusa*. Bill Gale showed a copiapoa and an uebelmannia. Dennis Anderson brought *Copiapoa hypogaea*, *Copiapoa hypogaea* 'Lizard Skin' and *Copiapoa cinerea*. Dan Gale exhibited *Astrophytum caput-medusae*, *Pachypodium namaquanum*, *Cephalopentandra ecirrhosa*, *Abromeitiella brevifolia* and *Eulychnia castanea* crest/monstrose. We thank all of them and encourage members to consider bringing a plant or two for the table. And thanks to Fred for soldiering on even though he had a bad cold.

**COMING EVENTS**

**MARCH BOARD MEETING:**

Monday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 6 p.m., 3733 N. Sierra Vista.  
All members are welcome to attend.

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Fresno Home & Garden Show

Friday-Sunday, March 1-3
Hours: Friday and Saturday, 10-7; Sunday, 10-6.

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**March Club Meeting**

Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

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Clovis Botanical Garden

"Spring into your Garden" event,
Saturday, March 16th, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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**Club Spring Picnic,**

Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, More details later

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Club Bus Trip

Saturday, May 25th,
San Luis Obispo, Central Coast Club Show & Sale
More details later



Photos by:
Karen Willoughby

FEBRUARY WORKSHOP: A good crowd turned out for last month's workshop. Bringing plants for display were: Eddie Etheridge, Sue Haffner, Polly Dunklin, Jack Fleming, Tom Meyer, Dennis Anderson, Larry Homan, Bill Gale, Mary Drumheller, Dan Gale and Cindy Duwe-Tackett. We looked at plants in the following genera: Copiapoa, Cyphostemma, Ceraria, Coryphantha, Cissus and Boophone. We also examined the following: Aloe, Ariocarpus, Tylecodon, Euphorbia, Pachypodium, Strombocactus, Pachycormus and Monsonia. Discussion topics covered how members were dealing with our wet, freezing weather. Dan brought agave plants and citrus fruit to give away.

The March workshop will be Wednesday, the 20th, 6 p.m., at 3733 N. Sierra Vista. We will look at plants in genera starting with D and E. Discussion topic will be repotting. All members are welcome.



Photos by:
Cindy Duwe-Tackett

PELECYPHORA (OR ENCEPHALOCARPUS?) STROBILIFORMIS

Last month we featured the taxonomic controversy over *Stenocactus-Echinofossulocactus*. Well, here's another one: the fascinating little cactus formerly known as *Encephalocarpus strobiliformis*. Some years ago it was shoehorned into the genus *Pelecyphora*, which has one other species, *aselliformis*.



In an email post from 2006, Elton Roberts was having none of it:

"Another name bites the dust!! *Encephalocarpus* is no more except in the minds and on the tags of those of us that have had the plants for many years. *Encephalocarpus strobiliformis* is now *Pelecyphora strobiliformis*. The name *Pelecyphora* derives from the Greek, *pelekys* = hatchet, *phoros* = bearing, so the name refers to the tubercles that are hatchet-shaped. Now this is fine for *Pelecyphora aselliformis* but no way is *strobiliformis* referring to anything hatchet-shaped ... It is the seedpod that has erased a name. The seedpods of *P. aselliformis* and *strobiliformis* are inside the plant body. The seedpod of *aselliformis* is at the very top of the tubercle, sometimes just to one side or the other but right on top. They are easy to get at. To see the seedpod on *strobiliformis* you have to very carefully lift the end of the scale-like tubercle and look underneath. The bottom of the tubercle is keeled and the plant can and does bloom from either side of the keel. So there can be two seedpods under each scale-shaped tubercle. These are difficult to get at. The seedpods on these plants have a semi-flat cone shaped top. It is like the top of the water towers you see around many towns.

"If you have encephalitis you have an inflammation of the brain. So *Encephalocarpus* means: *encephalo* = brain, *carpus* = fruit or seedpod. The seedpod or fruit is inside the head. So why is *Encephalocarpus* put under the name of *Pelecyphora*, the hatchet-shaped tubercle cactus? Is it because it has a seedpod like the hatchet-shaped tubercled plant? I sure do not see these name changers putting the *Mammillaria* plants with seedpods inside the plant body under the name of *Pelecyphora*. If they did we'd have *Pelecyphora saboae*, *P. goldii*, *P. theresae*, *P. haudeana*, *P. duwei* along with some other names. Why are they so inconsistent?"

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There has been a lot of argument over the years as to just how to classify the above two species. It's almost as if the plants themselves are working to confuse the botanists. The latest DNA studies have shown that, indeed, the two species have different origins. That has led some of the current specialists to accept the above classification only provisionally.



Pelecyphora strobiliformis (the specific name means “in the form of a cone”) is a small cactus native to Mexico (Nuevo León and Tamaulipas). It forms small 4-6 cm. heads, gray-brown to greenish, clustering with age. It grows at ground level, almost completely buried, in gravelly limestone hills at altitudes of 1600-2200 meters. The flattened, keel-shaped tubercles, with watery sap, grow in 8 to 13 spirals. The areoles are elongated, falling off with age. The axils are woolly, particularly in the apex. Spines are all radial, pectinate (comb-like). The rose-violet flowers appear in the axils.



Both species are considered threatened in habitat due to over-collecting.

Elton writes: “My plants are to 7 cm in diameter and 10 cm tall. The plant that is splitting its heads is 10 cm across. I have 2 plants that I grew from seed twenty some odd years ago and they are 2.5 cm in diameter and 2 cm tall. Give an open fast draining soil. Keep them dry over the winter. I have had my plants in a cold greenhouse for years and the plants have shown no adverse reaction to temperatures down to 20 degrees F.”

How do you pronounce the name of this genus? Here is how Ted Anderson pronounced it in a talk at a CSSA Convention: 5 syllables: pel-e-si-FOR-a.

Elton gets the last word: “I am keeping the name of *Encephalocarpus* on my plants regardless of what the name changers say!!”



POTTING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

By Jim Daniel

When square pots start looking round from the pressure of roots or you find it difficult to water a plant because it is hanging over all sides of the pot, then you must transplant. I don't recommend you wait this long; the plants will grow better and faster and with fewer growth restrictions if they are moved to larger pots before they become too crowded. A good rule of thumb is to move the plants to a larger size pot when only a half inch of soil shows around the perimeter of the plant. On small pots such as 2 or 3 inch, a fourth of an inch clearance should signal the move to a larger pot. Generally, a tall plant looks better in a tall pot and a short plant in a short pot or bowl.

If you have a modest collection you need the minimum amount of tools. The necessities are a pair of bottle warmer tongs, a few kitchen sponges for holding straight-spined cactus and a few dibble sticks. Dibles are 10-12 inch lengths of wooden dowels in an assortment of sizes, used for firming (not compacting) soil around the base of plants. They also come in handy for applying pressure to the root ball via the drainage hole when removing plants from clay pots. You will also need a soil scoop or two for filling pots with soil.

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What's this, you say? You're a primo collector and have hundreds of potted plants in your collection? Then add the following tools to your potting bench display: heavy duty pocket knife for cutting small plastic pots; a can cutter for larger plastic or metal pots; a rubber hammer for tapping pot rims; sponges ranging from hand sized kitchen sponges to a size large and thick enough to handle your largest plant (sponge rubber chair cushions are handy, couch foam rubber pads are dandy and for really big jobs, foam rubber mattresses 4" thick are worth their weight in candy). A stretcher is just great for a two-person carry of a 6 foot cereus. Auto fan belts are useful for looping around medium sized cacti to be carried by one two persons or two belts with a shovel handle pushed through works fine for a two-person carry. You will need a few soil scoops, perhaps a pint, quart, and half gallon sizes.

A potting bench is handy. It can be a permanent garden structure, a beauty to behold, or a temporary bench made by placing a board over two garbage cans. Soil should be handy and stored in a bin or container out of reach of pesky cats. You will need an assortment of pots; buy the large sizes first and repot the largest plants. As you work your way to the smallest plants you will have a plethora of 2 and 3 inch pots left over. Lay in a goodly supply of screen wire or other materials to place over the drainage holes so the surplus water escapes from the pot. Place all the tools and supplies in your potting area, send the kids to the movies, lock the pets in the garage, unplug the telephone, and then have at it. The potting bench is the best therapist in the world.

The safest method of repotting for plants and humans is to cut the old plastic pots on two sides or break old clay pots with a hammer so the plant can be handled by the root ball. It's penny-wise and dollar-foolish to break the spines on a \$10.00 plant to save a \$1.00 pot.

If you like to live dangerously, place a sponge over the top of a straight-spined plant or use bottle warmer tongs to grasp a hooked-spined plant. Turn the plant upside down and tap the pot rim on the edge of your potting bench, being careful not to strike the top of the plant. The plant and root ball will slide out of the old pot and into your hand. Don't drop it on the ground, you klutz! The new pot should be ready with a cover over the drainage hole and enough soil in it so the plant sets at the same soil level as before. Loosen the root ball with your fingers, being careful not to break the roots. Place the plant in the new pot being sure it is properly centered, then working fresh mix around the root ball, firm with your thumbs or dibble sticks. The operational word here is firm; not compacted. With a wooden pencil, flick out any debris from the plant spines. Top off with a dressing of coarse sand or small gravel. This makes the plant look neat and keeps soil from staining the lower part of the plant body and spines. It's also harder for weed seeds to germinate in the tops of your pots. There now, doesn't the plant look better? And don't you feel better?

(The late Jim Daniel operated Cactus Gem Nursery in Cupertino for a number of years. As you can tell from the above he was quite a character.)



SAVE THE DATE - CSSA 39th Biennial Convention



The Central Coast Cactus & Succulent Society invites you to the CSSA 39th Biennial Convention in beautiful downtown San Luis Obispo, July 17-20, with tours beginning on the 17th. There will be excellent speakers, plant and pottery vendors, live and silent auctions, local sales area, an opening reception and a Santa Maria-style barbecue banquet. Early registration \$285 is due by June 1st. You can also register for individual days.

For more information: www.cssaconvention.com