

# CACTUS CORNER NEWS

*Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society*

*fresnocss.com*

*Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America*

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**IN-PERSON MEETING:** THURSDAY, AUGUST 5<sup>TH</sup>, 7:00 p.m. (Doors open 6:30 p.m.)  
REDEEMER LUTHER CHURCH, 1084 WEST BULLARD, FRESNO  
(near the Northwest corner of Palm and Bullard)

## How To Grow Ariocarpus

Presented by: **Elton Roberts**



I was about 5-years old when I got my first succulent. I guess you could say that got me started. My granddad used to take us out to the Anza Borrego Desert every year for quite a few years. After I was married, I started on the collection that I still have some of the plants. I remember buying Ariocarpus and none were any larger than about 2-inches in diameter. With discoveries I made, I was able to grow some of the plants, so they needed 12-inch diameter pots.

As I have aged (pushing 80), I have wondered what would happen to the plants. Thank goodness someone came along that would take all of them and not just cherry pick. I still have a lot of plants and hope to till I can not care for any plants anymore.

## From the Prez...



Hi Members,

*In person meetings are coming back!*

Starting in August we will be meeting in person again. It's been a long time since we've all gathered together, and I'm sure you've been looking forward to it. That being said, we can't start meeting again without safety precautions. The Board has come together and complied new rules that we will follow to meet safely. To start, masks will be required for everyone no matter your

vaccination status. Only masks that completely cover the nose and mouth will be allowed. No loose, unfitting masks, including scarfs or bandanas. Face shields are also not allowed unless a mask is worn under. *There will be no exceptions to this rule and anyone who doesn't wear a mask won't be allowed into the meeting.* People will also be asked to leave if wearing a mask incorrectly. We are allowing the Guest Speaker to remove their mask during the presentation so that everyone can hear properly. With everyone else wearing a mask, we feel everyone will still be protected.

Meetings will still be held at Redeemer Lutheran Church at Bullard and Palm. While the room is a good size, we still can't pack it full. A capacity limit of 30 members is being implemented. We want lots of space between members. To accommodate this, we will be using a Reservation System. Starting a week before the meeting, an email will go out notifying the members that the Reservation System is open. You will need to email or call-in to get on the list to attend the meeting. Reservations are filled in the order they are received and will be closed once the limit is reached. Reservations are open to active members first. We are still missing some 2021 membership forms from certain individuals. If we need yours, you will be asked to fill a form out when making a reservation. If you're not 100% sure that you will be there, please do not take a spot. If you reserved a spot but can no longer make it, please let us know so that we can take a name from the wait list. There are also no pre-reservations for future meetings, you will have to make a reservation before each meeting. This is the only way for us to know how many people are coming to each meeting. A list with the names of those with reservations will be at the door to check into the meeting. Board members and speakers are not part of that 30 cap, so there is plenty of room for reservations. To make a reservation please email: [Fresnocss\\_sec@yahoo.com](mailto:Fresnocss_sec@yahoo.com) or call Karen (559) 304-9219.

For the time being we are also stopping all snacks at the meetings. Only bottled water will be provided. Masks can be lowered to sip and then promptly returned to covering the nose and mouth.

*(Continued on next page.)*

**We know that these rules may be difficult to deal with, but we have to do everything we can to keep everyone safe while at in-person meetings. These rules are subject to change via Board decision as the situation with COVID changes. It is the Board's sincerest hope that we can continue in-person meetings from this point forward. As for the Workshops, those will continue to be on Zoom for the time being.**

**In other news, we are excited to announce that our Member Sale is also returning this year. It will happen during our October meeting, which is October 7<sup>th</sup> this year. The sale will start at 6pm and any member who has plants to sell may do so. Each member will get one table, which may be an 8' round or long, and the cost to participate is \$20 per vendor. Contact me to sign up.**

**It will be great to see all of you in-person again. If you have any questions about our safety plan for the meetings, please contact me.**

**See you soon (in-person!), *Robert***



**The Cactus and Succulent Society of America** has donated a drone to Captain Karel Du Toit who is in charge of succulent poaching law enforcement in Namaqualand, South Africa. Last month Capt. Du Toit presented a webinar for CSSA about succulent plant theft that has reached overwhelming proportions in that country. He displayed mountains of confiscated plants, most many years—even centuries—old, pried out of the ground in a second by thieves who don't even know what they are. Formerly botanical gardens, such as Kirstenbosch, had been able to accept these plants and care for them, but they are overwhelmed now, too. Capt. Du Toit had just come in from arresting 3 young men who were stealing plants, apparently destined for Asia. He mentioned that a drone would be very useful in surveying areas likely to be poached.

Every time I think these guys should get the maximum punishment, I recall that in many cases they are working for someone else. They go into the field armed with pictures of the plants and the GPS coordinates for them, already scouted by someone. It's really frustrating, when you think about the scope of the problem.

The CSSA Conservation Committee is studying the issue of illegal collecting, how to combat it and how to promote responsible propagation.

*Sue*

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The next CSSA webinar will be Saturday, August 7<sup>th</sup>, when they expect to broadcast live from the Southern California Inter-City Cactus and Succulent Show. To register check the CSSA website:

[www.cactusandsucculentsociety.org](http://www.cactusandsucculentsociety.org)

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**WHAT'S YOUR STORY?** How did you get interested in succulent plants? Which ones are your favorites? Where do you grow them: greenhouse? Patio? In the ground? Or on a windowsill? Consider writing something for the newsletter. It would not have to be lengthy. Or posing a question or sending us a picture. (You could also post them to our Facebook page.)

## AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Rudy Rulloda (2<sup>nd</sup>)  
 Howard McLachlin (10<sup>th</sup>)  
 Sherrie Evans (13<sup>th</sup>)  
 Rebecca Diaz (23<sup>rd</sup>)  
 Nicki Bradford (25<sup>th</sup>)  
 Lisa Brew (28<sup>th</sup>)



Congratulations to Carole Grosch and her family: her mother just celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday! Carole and her mom still go to the gym 3-4 times a week.

## REMINDERS

Big event this month: **The Southern California InterCity Cactus & Succulent Show & Sale, Aug. 6-8**  
 (see information elsewhere in the newsletter)

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**Fresno Fair:** if you are thinking of entering plants in the Fair this year, remember that entry forms need to be received by September 10<sup>th</sup> (mail) or September 13 (online) [www.fresnofair.com](http://www.fresnofair.com)

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**Central Coast Cactus & Succulent Society Show & Sale** is Sept. 25-26 (more information next month)

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I recall reading many years ago that a grower kept a few weeds in some of the pots in his greenhouse. They were indicator plants. That is, they let him know when he needed to water. When they looked droopy he knew he needed to check the other pots. I have a few indicator plants on my patio, baking away this summer with a lot of other plants. Mine are the leafy euphorbias, *Euphorbia (Synadenium) grantii*. When I see their leaves drooping and curling, I know it's time to get the hose.

Speaking of baking, this has got to be the roughest summer for plants in my memory.

**Sue**

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**Well, here's another type of baking.** Robert, our President, baked his first succulent cake. His comments are: "My first time making one so it's a little rough in places. Was fun and stressful to make".

The outcome:

Beautiful!



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## PLANTING TIPS



Ouch! A stab from a sharp cactus spine hurts, but the pain usually is temporary. Botanically, cactus spines are modified leaves, adapted to shade the plant from the desert sun. Look closely at a barrel cactus to see how its tightly laced spines create a nice lattice of shade for the tissue below. (They also insulate the plant's epidermis and collect condensed water vapor so that droplets run down the plant to the soil at the base.) The more "naked" the plant is—that is, that its spines are few and far between—the more protection you need to give it from the direct sun.

Cactus glochids can produce longer-lasting discomfort; these fine, barbed bristles grow in tufts and often surround prickly pear or cholla spines. Some glochids aren't noticeable. Others provide attractive polka dots of color, such as the reddish-brown glochids covering the deceptively named "Cinnamon Bear" or chenille prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia aciculata*). All it takes is a gentle brush against the plant for a clump of glochids to stick to skin or clothing. They break off easily, leaving minute fragments in the skin that cause irritation and pain. The common "Bunny Ears" (*O. microdasys*) is also a prime offender, as it looks so soft but leaves a lethal deposit of golden or red glochids as a calling card. The duration of a victim's discomfort depends on the number of glochids and skin sensitivity.

How do you remove glochids?

- Use tweezers (and a magnifying glass). Glochids are easier to grasp if you can see the affected area horizontally (i.e., hold your hand up to your eye and look across) rather than straight down.
- Spread household glue over the area, let it dry and peel off.
- Spread glue, press gauze on top, wait for it to dry, and remove.
- Press a piece of tape on the area and pull it off.
- If all else fails, shave the spines off. Yes, you'll leave the remnants under the skin but at least you won't have the spines sticking up and irritating you.

Avoid wearing regular gardening gloves when working with cacti, as they will not shield hands from spines or glochids, both of which poke through fabric or stick into leather. Once the gloves have picked up opuntia spines you'll just have to throw them away. Instead, choose heavy-duty rubber gloves that provide a reasonable barrier against glochids. Garden gloves made with puncture-resistant hardened resin are another option. Originally designed to safeguard health care workers against needle sticks, or industrial workers against chemical spills, these turn out to good protection against other pointy things. They are probably too stiff for general gardening purposes, but they can be a good investment if you do a lot of work around cacti. You can find them in hardware stores. (Look for Nitrile™ coated gloves.)

Cacti are deceptively heavy. If you need to transport an unpotted barrel or columnar cactus, place it on a sturdy tarp or piece of fabric and enlist an extra set of hands to help, carrying the plant in a sling. If you have to do it yourself, though, you can usually drag the plant from one place to another. Some growers have constructed ingenious means to help support and carry cacti.

Back when Mark Muradian used to bring his big "gut-buster" cacti to our shows, he welded a two-man carrying device that was very efficient in getting those big plants in and out of the show venue. (Now he probably has to use it to transport his big "gut-buster" sale pots all over the state!)

(Continued on following page.)

Columnar cacti cuttings: if you've taken cuttings of columnar cacti, don't leave them lying around for very long. If you do, you might find the growing end of the cutting is turning upwards, pretty much ruining the cutting. It would make more sense to stand the cuttings upright in a location out of the direct sun.

Although some cacti can grow to massive proportions, even a little old lady with a pruning saw can bring one down. The plants may look tough, but they're generally pretty soft.

Opuntias, maybe to make up for the annoying glochids, are quite easy to propagate. (Too easy, some may say.) Any pad or cholla joint will root; even the fruits will root. The pads don't even have to be propped upright. Just lying on the ground, the pad can put out roots from any areole.

In fact, opuntias in habitat are so efficient at vegetative propagation—dropping pads and joints everywhere, latching onto passing animals for transport—that many appear to have given up sexual reproduction altogether. Why go through all the bother of producing seeds when you can just detach a few pieces of yourself and get the same result. Jon Rebman, in his studies of opuntias in the Southwest, has uncovered the many shenanigans these plants are resorting to: changing genders—male flowers one year, female the next; producing neuter flowers, sometimes showing all three types on the same plant at the same time! It may be that the neuter blossoms are easier, less effortful for the plant to produce, as they possess no reproductive parts. (But, then, why bother blooming at all... ? Questions, questions ... )

We may study our plants, claim that we know why they do what they do, and we can usually be right. But, then, the plant throws us a curve and we realize that we didn't know as much as we thought we did.

*Sue*



### DYCKIA



Dyckia has become an increasingly popular genus of plants of interest to succulent growers. While not actually succulent, these bromeliads are xerophytic and survive long periods of drought by going dormant. They are armed with stiff, thorny leaves arranged in rosettes. When you're repotting or separating the plants be sure to wear stout gloves and have long-handled tweezers or similar tools on hand. The toothed leaves are sharp as razor wire.

The generic name honors the Prussian botanist, botanical artist and horticulturist The Prince and Earl of Reifferscheid-Dyck (1773-1861). The 120+ species of Dyckia are native to Brazil, with some species found in Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Bolivia. Plants grow in sunny areas ranging in altitude from sea level to 2100 meters. They are among the most cold hardy of the bromeliads, and belong to the subfamily Pitcairnioideae which includes some of the most primitive genera (such as Abromeitiella, Deuterocohonia, Hechtia and Puya.)

Flowers of red, yellow or orange appear in the spring on stalks emerging from the sides of the plant and frequently produce copious seeds. The variable leaves come in a range of colors, shapes, textures and spines. Hybridizers have done extensive work with Dyckia and you can find names cultivars available at nurseries and specialty growers.

Culture of dyckias is uncomplicated. They are not fussy about potting media or cold temperatures. They can probably take full sun in our area (though you should keep an eye out for any sign of sunburn, especially if the plant is in a small pot that is exposed to the direct sun.). They should also do well planted in the ground.

*Sue*

## NIGHT BLOOMING

Night time is important to cacti and other desert plants. They perform a crucial element of their food production at night when their stomata open to take in oxygen for later photosynthesis. But why do some cacti also bloom at night? What advantages does night-blooming provide?



From Wikipedia

One advantage is in energy-saving. Flower and fruit production are an enormous drain on the energy resources of the plant. Flowers are structured differently from a plant's skin and they lose water much faster. In a dry, hot climate this means that water lost through a flower either cannot be replenished or is replenished to the detriment of other parts of the plant. One solution is to bloom at night when the temperature is cooler.

Another reason to bloom at night is to attract pollinators that are active then, such as moths and bats. It also explains why many night-blooming cactus flowers are very fragrant. Moths in particular are attracted to sweet floral scents; bats like musky, acrid fragrances. These flowers also announce their presence by being quite large, white or otherwise light colored, easily visible in low-light situations. Almost all night-blooming cactus flowers last just one night. They open in the evening and start to fade as soon as the sun comes up the next day.

"Night-Blooming Cereus" is a common name applied to various ones of these plants, usually *Hylocereus*, *Selenicereus*, *Harrisia* or *Peniocereus*. The "Arizona Queen of the Night, *Peniocereus greggii*, is a famous denizen of the desert. In a back issue of the *Cactus and succulent journal* I found this lovely little story about her, as related by Larry Mitich:

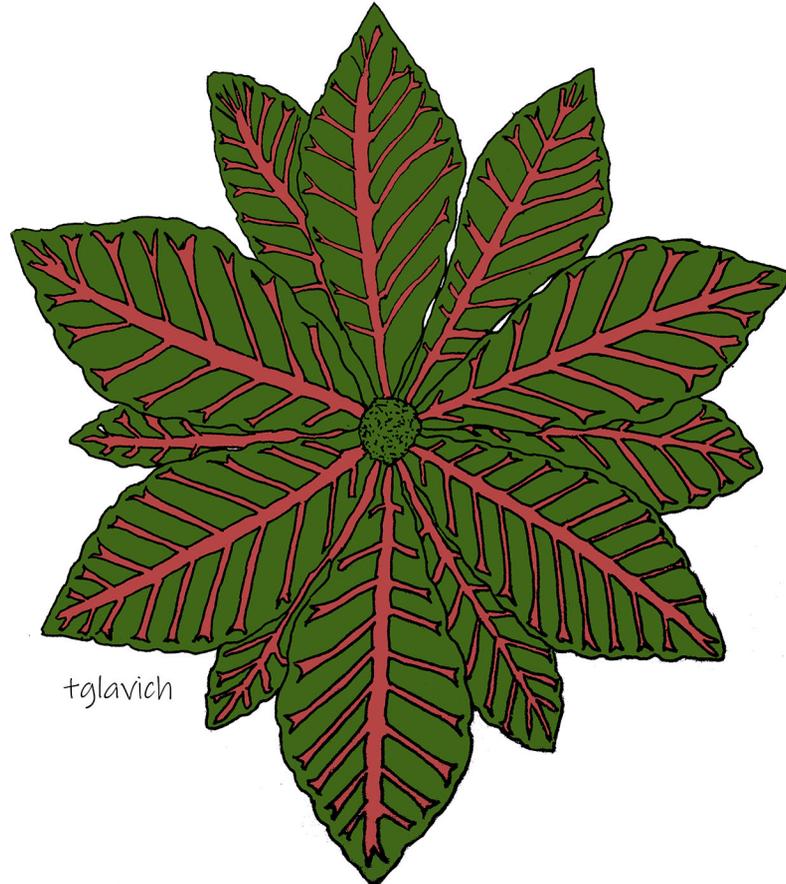
Long ago, says a Tohono O'Odham legend, there lived a wrinkled and bent kindly old grandmother who all her life had yearned to be beautiful. When it came time to set her burden basket down, Great Spirit heard her, and, granting her life-long wish, he touched her shriveled arms, which were dried sticks. Wherever he touched them, flower buds appeared. Once a year thereafter, the little brown grandmother is permitted to reign for one night over all other desert blooms as the beautiful Flower Queen.

On warm June evenings as that haunting perfume of the night-blooming cereus, which they call the "Ghost Smell," drifts across the desert sand, the Tohono O'Odham will tell you that Great Spirit's promise has again reached fulfillment, and she who carried beauty in her heart those many years reigns again.

Thus, the desert people explain simply and beautifully what has baffled botanists for many years, the presence of the lovely Desert Queen on our Southwest deserts fragrantly blooming and carrying on her traditions during one of the hottest, driest seasons of the year.

*Sue*

# 35th Annual Inter-City Cactus and Succulent Show and Sale



*Euphorbia francoisii* var *crassicaulis*

**Tickets: Advanced Purchase Required Online**

**Limited Tickets Available**

**Buy Now at [Arboretum.org](http://Arboretum.org)**

**Arboretum Members are Free**

**Hours 11 AM - 5 PM**

**Sale August 6 - 8**

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**Los Angeles County Arboretum**

**301 N Baldwin, Arcadia**

**[www.intercityshow.com](http://www.intercityshow.com)**