

CACTUS CORNER NEWS

Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society

fresnocss.com

Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

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September 2021

IN-PERSON MEETING: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2nd, 7:00 p.m. (Doors open 6:30 p.m.)
REDEEMER LUTHER CHURCH, 1084 WEST BULLARD, FRESNO

“Propagation: From seeds to stem, and everything in between” **Presented by: Robert Scott**

It always seems that after we get our first plant, we start wanting more and more. We find ourselves checking out local garden centers and plant sales to find more plants to add to our collections. Soon after, we get the crazy idea of trying our hands at propagating. Luckily for us, cactus and succulents can be propagated in many ways. However, this doesn't mean it's always easy to do. In my upcoming presentation I'll be discussing the most effective ways you can propagate your plants. From leaf and stem cuttings, to division, we will cover it all. I'll even get into how you can make your own seeds to create hybrids! There are so many ways to propagate but, like anything, there are rules to follow. Join me as we explore all the ways to propagate the plants we love!



I first joined FCSS 9 years ago and boy has it been an adventure. I became active in the Club very quickly, becoming a member of the Board and then Treasurer. I've also served as the Sale Chair for the last 5 years, where I'm responsible for planning and running all the Club's plant sales. Then 2 years ago I got roped in, I mean "asked to run" for President. I never thought I would be the one to lead the Club, let alone through a pandemic, but here we are. There have been struggles for sure. We had steep learning curves with Zoom and holding online events, but through it all we've managed to keep ourselves going. It's all been crazy and overwhelming, but overall, everything seems to have worked out fairly well. Something that certainly helped me during the pandemic was growing plants. I started growing vegetables at a young age with my grandma, who I credit with bestowing upon me green thumbs and toes. I wanted to grow everything I could, and I certainly tried! Through the years I got into water plants, orchids, house plants, air plants, carnivorous, bulbs, and everything else that could be grown. Some say I may have a bit of a problem. I started growing cactus as a food source for my pet tortoises, but once I learned of all the cool shapes, colors, and sizes of cactus and succulents I was hooked. I earned my bachelor's in Plant Health from Fresno State and have since become an Agriculture Inspector for Fresno County. I really find plants fascinating. How they grow, deal with disease, and adapt, it's all just so interesting! I decided to take my obsession to the next level and started my own cactus and succulent nursery a few years back. It was a long labor of love, but I'm glad I stuck with it. My most recent efforts have seen the website go live for online sales! To say it keeps me busy is an understatement, but I enjoy every moment of it.



From the Prez...

Hello Members,

It's hard to believe that it's almost September! The end of summer is almost here and hopefully cooler weather isn't far behind. This summer has been intense to say the least. The long period of high temperatures really stressed out the plants. It felt like a full-time job keeping them all alive. Luckily, I only lost a few plants and new growth will start in the Fall.

Last month we were finally able to meet in-person for the first time in 17 months! It was so good being able to see and interact with everyone. The safety protocols the Club enacted worked out very well. Everyone in attendance expressed that they felt safe and comfortable being around each other. We also had Zoom going during the presentation. The members who watched the presentation on Zoom said they could hear and see everything. It was awesome seeing everything go off without a hitch! We will continue to provide this hybrid arrangement for our future meetings.

Our September meeting will be an exact repeat of our August meeting. Everyone attending must wear a mask no matter your vaccinated status, with mouth and nose being covered at all times. A reservation system is in place to control capacity with a limit of 30 members, not counting the Board. The reservation system opens a week before the meeting, members will email Karen, our secretary, to book a spot. We will also continue to provide water at the meetings. While we wish we could provide snacks, for now we will have to wait and see what the future holds.

For our October meeting, we will be having our Members Sale, an annual event where members can sell their own plants, pots, or anything plant related. For a \$20 fee, members get one table to sell their items. If you would like to sign up for this event, please contact me by September 22nd. While we hope for the best in having this event, be prepared that it could still be cancelled for lack of vendors and/or health concerns. Masks will still be required for members at this event.

We also received news that the Central Coast Cactus & Succulent Society has cancelled their Show and Sale that was planned for September 25th & 26th due to rise of COVID cases. Planning any event has been difficult during this pandemic, especially with not knowing what is going to happen next. We wish our neighbors, the CCCSS the best and can't wait for their sale to return in May of 2022.

For those of you wishing to attend the in-person meeting, email Karen at fresnocss_sec@yahoo.com or call (559) 304-9219 to make a reservation. The Zoom link will be emailed out before the meeting, and you're welcome to invite others to join. I hope you're able to join the meeting any way you can and will be great to see you!

Thank you,

Robert



Jason Kabeary (4th)
Ed Armbruster (9th)
Jack Fleming (11th)
Susan Cook (12th)
Polly Dunklin (20th)
JoAnn Caufield (21st)

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS



Claudia Carlson (23rd)
Linda Olivas (24th)
Craig Roberts (27th)
Roz Tampone (28th)
Polly Hargreaves (29th)

NEW MEMBERS:

Jennie Avidisian, Fresno
 Laura Clark, Fresno
 Ashley Garcia, Fresno

Welcome

The Clovis Botanical Garden will be closed from August 23 until September 31, due to road work on Clovis Avenue.

The Master Gardeners have scheduled community education classes for the fall:

https://ucanr.edu/sites/mgfresno/Gardening_Classes/

The August 21st CSSA webinar featured Colin Walker, past president of the British Cactus & Succulent Society, speaking about Apocynads. This is a new word to most of us. It refers to the succulents of the family Apocynaceae (stapeliads, *Fockea*, *Pachypodium*, *Adenium*, etc.) Recent DNA studies have scrambled a lot of the relationships we thought we knew about some of these plants; but as we always say: the plants don't read the books. And growers can enjoy the plants without worrying about taxonomy.

The next webinar, September 4th, will have a presentation by Roy Earle, "New Era in Lithops Information."

YouTube videos of the August 7-8 InterCity Cactus & Succulent Show are now available via the CSSA website: www.cactusandsucculentsociety.org

It seems like I write about this in every issue, but the *New York times* had another article about plant poaching in South Africa. This article specifically dealt with Conophytum, which is being looted in great numbers. A nursery has been established to care for these tiny mesembs. One of the poachers who was arrested, a Korean, turned out to be on the lam from U.S. law for stealing dudleyas from the California coast.

www.newyorktimes.com/2021/07/31/world/Africa/South-Africa-poachers-tiny-succulent

ALOE RESOURCES

Brian Kemble's list of hardy aloe plants: www.smgrowers.com/info/brian_aleo.pdf

The Institute for Aloe Studies offers a large number of Aloes for sale: www.aloestudies.org

The South African National Biodiversity Institute has an interesting website which contains over a thousand articles on plants and animals www.pza.sanbi.org

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JUNE WORKSHOP REPORT

We had a small but enthusiastic group for the Zoom workshop on August 18th. Donna Joe even joined us from Columbia, Maryland! Discussion touched on pH, potting mixes, and watering.

Sherry Alexander had questions regarding care of her Christmas cactus. She also mentioned that she was told at Evergreen Nursery that they have had to shade their plants more this summer than they've ever had to before, due to the unrelenting sun.

Should we water in the morning or evening? Rob waters in the evening, as he works during the day. He noted that we have had so many evenings this year when the temps did not cool down as they're supposed to.

Carolee Clayton brought two plants for discussion: *Hoya carnosa* 'Krinkle Kurl' and *Senecio articulatus*, the "Pickle Plant" aka "Candle Plant." The senecio had grown a long stem and she wondered if she could cut it off. Rob said that she should, and you can see it on the top right with the three cut sections in a jar. Carolee also wondered what to do with the hoya. Was there a way she could train it up a trellis, or something?

Sue



Senecio articulatus is native to the Cape Province of South Africa and has been in cultivation since the eighteenth century. It's a compact, deciduous stem succulent, forming a cluster of sausage-shaped joints that readily separate and root. The gray, waxy stems can reach 30 inches tall. The leaves are soft and fleshy, often flushed purple below; flowers are small, yellowish-white, with an acrid odor attractive to flies. Carolee got her plant at one of the speaker sales at a club meeting.

Hoya carnosa 'Krinkle Kurl' is a crimped-leaf form of the species, which is the most common hoya found in most nurseries and garden shops. Carolee bought hers three years ago from Evergreen Nursery as a small plant. Usually called "Hindu Rope Plant", this special form of *H. carnosa* is widely cultivated. You sometimes see it called *Hoya compacta*, but that's an invalid name. Val McCullough used to enter one of these in the Fresno Fair trained on an upside down tomato cage to form a cone. It usually won a blue ribbon. As hoyas can be attractive to mealy bugs, the grower needs to check the "Hindu Rope Plant" often to make sure bugs are not hiding in the angles of the leaves.

Rob showed his *Dioscorea* that was putting up a new vine. (I checked mine, and it's doing the same thing.) He also displayed a variegated Pony Tail Palm (*Beaucarnea recurvata*). He said it seems to be a wimpy grower, compared to the regular one.

The next Zoom workshop will be Wednesday, September 15th.

Sue

EUPHORBIA OBESA

By Fred Gaumer (Reprint from 2007)

Most beginners just starting out in the hobby of growing cacti and succulents will have a *Euphorbia obesa* at one time or another. And maybe they will hang on to them after they become a more experienced cultivator. I have wondered recently if I stayed interested in this group of plants because I passed on plants that became too commonplace for an elitist like myself. Or maybe because of limited space and the desire to have 5 of everything I had to make sacrifices when needed. The drawback to this type of collecting is when you see the collection of someone who has been doing it for many years and you see the grand old plants. It would be nice to have some of the plants I used to have or know who had them now and get visitation rights.



Photo: Club workshop

I do have about ten adult *E. obesa* and maybe thirty seedlings scattered around the greenhouse growing in with other plants. One indicator of when a plant needs to be repotted is when the seedling euphorbia is crowding the intended tenant out. Euphorbias start life out by expelling their seeds from the parent plant and hopefully the seed lands at a location where it will be able to germinate and prosper. And this is often a greater distance than you might think. I have an *obesa* seedling growing out of the side drainage hole in a plastic pot at least four feet away from any possible mother. Accuracy and velocity had to be deciding factors in this little plant's fight for life in the wilds of my greenhouse!

Euphorbia obesa has all the beautiful physical qualities of some of its more exotic relatives (and some plants with no relationship to it at all) without the degree of difficulty of keeping it alive in a pot. They are sometimes sold at home improvement centers and nurseries that have mostly landscaping inventories and the small table where "cactus" are displayed for sale. If these places have them, they are easy to grow. They may not be in the best of condition at these places, but most manage to keep them alive.

They need to have good drainage in their soil mix and frequent watering during their summer growing period. If you like to water often, put some more gritty material in your potting mix to compensate. They do seem to like the generous treatment when actively growing. Don't expect to produce a large plant quickly, as they are geared for a slow and leisurely paced life. After some experience you will become one with the water.

I've found that they look much better with very bright light or morning sun. Afternoon sun in my location will scorch them and it will leave a permanent scar. Find a place for them that will be bright enough to bring out the red and purple striping but not as much as would burn the skin. Your conditions are unique, so some experimentation is required. Scaring at the base of the plants is normal and just a sign of maturity. This scaring can be controlled to a degree by correct positioning with regards to the sun.

Propagation is fairly easy, except that you need a male and female plant to get anything going. So this means you need at least two. You might as well get ten. No sense starting out halfway. It seems that the ratio between male and female plants is greatly in favor of the female. Males are fairly rare. The flowers are not at all spectacular or large but interesting.

(Continued on following page)

If you have ants on site they will do a very good job of transferring pollen from the male to the female. Ants are also known for the other services they perform and it is best to expose them to a chemical deterrent. Get a small brush or something that is not very abrasive and pick the pollen up and wipe it on the female flower. The differences in the sexes are obvious when you see them.

There are many ways that I've seen to contain the seeds that are going to be launched from the mother plant. The easiest thing that works for me well is to set the pot with the mother on a flat surface. Then place over that a screened-in cylinder or box that will keep the seeds from going everywhere. There are some comical looking seed catchers out there but this works well and is easy to construct. Growing the seed is also very easy. There is no need for anything but to place the seeds in a pot on the surface of your mix and keep it moist until the tiny plants develop. Open up your shop called "Euphorbia Obesa R Us" and you are on your way to fame and fortune!

A well-grown *Euphorbia obesa* is a work of natural art. And that is why it is so popular with collectors. Subtle beauty and ease of cultivation—what more could you want?



Ever see a cactus mummy? Have you ever jostled one of your plants only to have it fall over—just an empty shell? If you've been growing succulents for a while you've possibly had this happen. A member sent in these photos:

What happened here? Sometimes a tiny injury can cause rot to invade the plant's innards. The whole inside can be destroyed while the plant can appear normal on the outside. Only when it finally collapses do you find out something went wrong.

Theoretically, this shouldn't happen to a healthy plant. It's important to keep the plant area clean of dead leaves, spider webs, and other debris. Isolate any plant that appears to have bugs or other problems. Check your plants frequently. Good luck!



HAWORTHIAS By Al Koga

Haworthias are succulents that grow exclusively in the southernmost part of Africa. They are part of the Asphodeloideae family and are related to gasterias and aloes. The general area is quite dry with an average rainfall of about ten inches a year, mostly during the winter months. In this somewhat Spartan environment, haworthias are found growing under various situations ranging from full sun to almost complete shade. Whatever the situation, haworthias have developed ingenious ways of surviving with such devices as "windows" to gather sunlight, roots that contract to pull the plant into the ground, and "teeth" to capture moisture from the air. In their natural habitat, most of the haworthias are winter growers; however, being quite adaptable, they will easily adjust to different growing conditions. Their general size ranges from 1-8" in diameter, while their colors may vary from almost black, bluish or reddish to light green. The flowers are quite drab and look almost identical from one species to another; however, the leaves are most unique. In one species leaves may look like white stripes were painted on, while in another they will look like a checkerboard. In form, the leaves can vary from grass-like, to rounded or pointed, to some that look like they were chopped off with a butcher's knife. Truly, haworthias are a fascinating group of plants with an almost endless array of forms and varieties. Their availability, low cost, and easy cultivation make them ideal succulents to add to your collection.

(From an old newsletter of the Cactus and Succulent Society of Hawaii)



CACTI AND SUCCULENT QUESTIONS

QUESTION: How does one select a proper size pot to plant cacti?

ANSWER: Most cacti have a shallow root system, so a $\frac{3}{4}$ pot (sometimes called an azalea pot or squat pot) is a good choice. Overpotting most plants can be a poor cultural move. Many cacti offset, so the wider pot would allow for better growth. There are some cacti, however, such as *Sulcorebutia*, *Turbinicarpus* and some mammillarias such as *M. uberiformis*, *M. coahuilensis* and *M. duwei*, that have large tuberous root systems, therefore need deeper pots.

A general rule for potting up a plant would be to fill the pot about $\frac{1}{3}$ with potting mix, then set in the plant. Allow 2"+ potting mix around the sides of the root system, and continue to fill the container up to the top of the roots. Fill the rest with some top dressing up to the top of the roots. A #2 aquarium gravel is excellent color-wise and size-wise. Using a top dressing will keep the moisture away from the base of the plant eliminating water marks and the possibility of rot. Use of top dressing also keeps the soil in place and not on the sides of the container or the plant.

QUESTION: Should I remove the offsets on a cactus?

ANSWER: This is purely a personal choice; however, when removing offsets, cut them off with a sharp knife that has been sprayed with alcohol. Frequently when twisting or pulling off the pups" from cacti, the meristem or core of the plant may be pulled out of the offset. Of course, without the "growing stem" or the "core", the offsets will not grow.

QUESTION: Some of my cacti are poorly shaped. Why?

ANSWER: A variety of reasons can cause this. Plants that do not receive sufficient light may become narrower at the top (etiolation). Some will show growth rings that are due to irregular feeding routines. Underpotting or overpotting some plants can cause poor growth. When a plant is grown in a nursery in a different part of the country or environment, then moved to another part of the country or environment, and treated in a different manner, changes will occur in the growth pattern.

Some people "pump" up their plants with fertilizer for faster growth. Overfed plants will become weak plants and will not tolerate changes in temperature, watering, and feeding schedules, or an attack by pests, and they will frequently collapse.

When purchasing plants, expect them to go through a "transition wilt" such as leaf drop until they adapt to their new surroundings. When possible, buy young plants, not large specimens, or grow your plants from seed. And ALWAYS check for pests before placing new plants with your collection.

It is also wise to repot when the plant has had time to adapt to its new location. When you use the same soil mix for all your plants, it is easier to know when to repot and to water. Another point, soil mixes usually break down within a year which means the nutrients are gone and the water-holding capability is diminished. If plants are not repotted every year or so, be faithful to feed regularly, and you may find that you have to water more often.

One other point, when your plants are growing well, but you read or hear that a different technique should be used, this does not mean that you should change your technique. The time to change is when your plants are NOT performing well.

(The above is cactus culture conventional wisdom. Some will argue with bits of the above. Your mileage may vary.)

Our neighbor club, Monterey Bay Area Cactus & Succulent Society, will be having a Show and Sale this Fall 2021!

Fall 2021 Cactus & Succulent Show & Sale

presented by
The Monterey Bay Area
Cactus & Succulent Society

Sat Sept 18 9am - 4pm
Sun Sept 19 9am - 4pm

New Watsonville Location:
Portuguese Community Hall
124 Atkinson Lane Watsonville

Free Parking & Free Admission

- Hundreds of Cacti and Succulent Plants
- Vendors on hand to answer your questions
- Bring a box to carry your plants home

