

# CACTUS CORNER NEWS

## *Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society*

*fresnocss.com*

*Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America*

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**NEXT ZOOM MEETING: THURSDAY, JUNE 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6:30 p.m.**

**Meeting ID: 822 9005 9692      Passcode: 116590**

## **South Africa – Namaqualand**

**Presented by Steven Frieze**

When Phyllis (my wife) and I decided we wanted to visit South Africa for a third time we reached out to Rob Skillin, a horticulturist located in the San Luis Obispo area, and he suggested contacting Karel du Toit as a possible guide. Karel as it turns out, is a member of the South African Police force and a former professional rugby player who now is a devoted naturalist who regularly studies the flora of an area in South Africa known as Namaqualand.

After conversing with us for a period of time he built a flexible schedule that enabled Phyllis and I to explore and experience the thriving flora of this geographical area. We were introduced to a variety of different succulents – some very small (mesembs) and others very large (*Aloe pilansii*) - that were captivating in spite of the fact that South Africa has been in drought conditions for several years. We had the extraordinary opportunity to spend almost three weeks traveling north from Cape Town to Springbok seeking out some of the most exotic plants found anywhere on earth sometimes in highly unusual ecosystems. In addition to the plants, we were treated to many different aspects of the South African culture that enabled us to even more appreciate this unique and strange ecosystem. Karel's familiarity and access to locations made the trip extraordinarily fulfilling.



*Pachypodium namaquanum*

*(Continued on following page)*

Steven Frieze has been involved with collection, sales and propagation of cacti and succulents for over thirty years. He is a lifetime member of the Los Angeles Cacti and Succulent Society where he served as the President of this club for a number of years and as its newsletter editor for several more. Steven was one of the founding owners of Desert Creations, an exotic cactus and succulent nursery. Steven has made several plant related expeditions to exotic locals such as Chile, East Africa, South Africa, Oaxaca Mexico, Costa Rica, and Brazil. He and his wife have started Distinctive Flora, a plant business that specializes in exotic plants such as tillandsias, bromeliads, cacti and succulents.



Aloe microstigma

Prior to his retirement in 2006, Steven was an Administrator for the California State University system serving in a variety of capacities in the area of institutional research. Subsequent to his retirement he has joined the Psychology Department at California State University, Dominguez Hills as an adjunct faculty member where he still teaches. He also functions as the Director of the Positive Psychology Lab at the same institution where students get the opportunity to design and execute psychological research studies.



Euphorbia caput-medusea

## From the Prez...



### *Hello Members,*

I'm writing this as I recoup from an exceptionally long weekend working at the Fresno Home & Garden Show. As most of you know, the Club decided to attend this year's event after it was moved to May, infection rates in Fresno County dropped, and more people got vaccinated. We were concerned if the public would show up in great enough numbers to make attending worth it. We noticed that the crowds were lighter than previous years, but that didn't matter. People came out to buy and buy they did! The Club brought in a gross total of \$21,415! This was easily ten thousand more than our last sale in 2020, which is an incredible amount to say the least. People were plant hungry and were ready to shop and ultimately this sale exceeded our expectations and expelled our initial concerns.

In anticipation of smaller crowds, we scaled back our inventory and space. Additionally, we knew we would have fewer volunteers to help run things. It should be noted that everyone that helped and gave time went above and beyond this year, which made our successful event possible. Thank you to Cindy and Monty, who always bring the Club tablecloths and signage, making our area presentable. A huge thank you to Craig and Michele, who worked the checkout area, ringing up customers and packaging plants the entire weekend! Christeen, Pat, Linda and Peter did an excellent job helping with checkout, thank you! None of our sales would have been possible without every one of you!

Another surprise we had was getting fifteen new members during the event. Welcome to the club, we hope to see you at our Zoom meetings and eventually in person! The best part of the whole weekend was seeing everyone in person. After over a year of not having meetings, it was wonderful to do something together.

Now that one event is over, the next one is starting up. Our Online Summer Silent Auction starts June 2<sup>nd</sup> and goes until June 9<sup>th</sup>. On June 2<sup>nd</sup> you will be emailed a link to view all the items that are up for auction. You can bid on any item you like. Each day the bidding will end at 7pm and an updated list will be emailed out with the updated amounts for each item. On the last day, June 9<sup>th</sup> get your high bid in as bidding will end at 7pm. June 11<sup>th</sup> will be item pick up at the Lowe's in Riverpark. This is also when you will pay for your items.

We are still looking for donations to use in the auction. We could use plants, cuttings, books, statues, pottery, and garden items. Any donations will be greatly appreciated! There are two ways to donate. Send me photos of the items by May 31<sup>st</sup> and then bring the items to the June 11<sup>th</sup> pick up or work out a time with me to get the items beforehand. Please contact me if you would like to donate to the auction!

*Thank you,*

**Robert**



**MAY BIRTHDAYS:**  
*Henry Coggan (9<sup>th</sup>);*  
*Shellie Evans (15<sup>th</sup>);*  
*Russal McLachian (17<sup>th</sup>);*  
*Larry Holman (21<sup>st</sup>);*  
*Sue Locks (29<sup>th</sup>)*

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**New member:** Brian and Lori Clark, Clovis *Welcome*

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### MORE PLANT POACHING

The *New York Times* carried an infuriating article on May 20<sup>th</sup> about cactus poaching from Chile. An Italian was arrested and charged with illegally importing over 1,000 rare cacti plants, some even stolen from Pan de Azucar National Park. This occurred over a period of several years. Illustrations showed *Copiapoa* plants, some probably centuries old, that had been dug up, packed and mailed.

What's really sad is that this is no doubt a death sentence for these plants, as they're unlikely to survive pot culture. They've evolved to grow in their specific habitats, not in European gardens or hothouses. I hope they throw the book at this bum.

I've been in the hobby for a long time and remember when importing field collected plants was legal (back in the 1970s and 80s). Gorgeous clumps of copiapos and basketball-sized eriosyces were offered for sale and were displayed in shows. After a few years, you didn't see these plants anymore. Most were dead, I think. Now, of course, this traffic in collected plants is illegal.

The article is posted on the CSSA website:  
[www.cactusandsucculentsociety.org](http://www.cactusandsucculentsociety.org)

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**A very interesting site devoted to African plants** is maintained by the South African Biodiversity Institute: <http://pza.sanbi.org>. "Plant of the Week" features almost 2000 illustrated articles on all sorts of African plants, including succulents. Two new articles are added each week.

Newsletter article submissions are due by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month.

**Gabriel Frank is a young landscaper** and garden designer. Those club members who attended the 2019 CSSA Convention in San Luis Obispo had the opportunity to tour his personal garden in Morro Bay and were amazed at the beauty of the plants and his imaginative use and placement of them.

He has a website, [www.gardensbygabriel.com](http://www.gardensbygabriel.com) and now has a book for sale, "Striking Succulent Gardens." It no doubt features those wonderful coastal gardens that are real "eye candy" for us in this area.

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**CSSA YOUTUBE CHANNEL:** The Cactus & Succulent Society of America is working toward the establishment of its own YouTube channel. Presently, it contains videos of 2015 and 2017 Convention programs. You can find the link on [www.cactusandsucculentsociety.org](http://www.cactusandsucculentsociety.org).

Check it out.

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**To see a zillion photos of identified plants,** go to: <https://www.inaturalist.org/>

The site is a joint project of the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society.

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***Agave Victoria-reginae* has hybridized** freely with *Agave scabra* to form a hybrid group that is sometimes listed as *A. 'ferdinandii-regis'*. The well-known hybrid 'Sharkskin' is a part of this group—dusky gray-green leaves to 30" with smooth, maroon-edged margins and a sturdy solitary spine. 'Sharkskin Shoes' is another one of these, as is a small grower called 'Little Shark.' Plant Delights Nursery sells interesting, variegated forms.



*Agave Ferdinandii regis* specimen in the Buffalo & Erie Country Botanical Gardens, Buffalo, New York, USA.

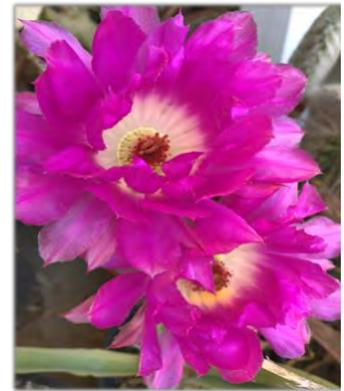
Wikimedia Commons

## MAY WORKSHOP REPORT

It was cactus night at the May 12th workshop. Roz Tampone displayed slides of rebutias, Copiapoa humilis and a mammillaria. Jaan Lepson showed Neochilenia napina (grown from seed by Peter); Echinocereus 'Cheri'; Thelocactus conothele; Denmoza formosa. Dennis Anderson displayed some echinopsis hybrids, including 'Hallucination' and 'Flying Saucer'. Christine Abbot showed pics of the Golden Barrel she rescued from the Milhahn yard, now looking good in her cactus garden. Brian Nagles showed 3 different epiphyllums hanging in a tree. He didn't cover them this past winter, which may have encouraged blooming. He and Susan are moving from Sanger to Clovis.



Norma Forbes gave us a break with her orchids: beautiful phalaenopsis that she has re-bloomed. Peter Beiersdorfer displayed an epiphyllum grown from a cutting of his grandmother's plant in Germany. Rob Scott showed pics of various cacti, including a hanging mammillaria he got from Tom Meyer.



Bring your questions and brag plants to the next workshop, June 16th.

*Sue*



Photos by  
Robert Scott

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## SEMPERVIVUM



If you're looking for "Hen and Chicks", then sempervivums are what you're going to find. These are modest little rosette-forming plants, mostly native to alpine regions of Eastern Europe.

The name means "Live-forever" as they offset freely at the base, making the plants seem immortal. Sempers have been in cultivation for a long time. In Europe they were planted on the roofs of thatched houses and believed able to repel demons and/or lightening away from the home. The plants would colonize to form "green roofs" which have in recent years become fashionable.

Horticulturally speaking, there are two distinct groups of sempers: tender species from northern Africa and the Canary Islands and the hardy species from the European mountains. Many of the fancy hybrids grown today are derived from the European natives.

Botanically speaking, there are four plus types of sempers. (1) tectorums are smooth and slightly hairy; for instance, the cultivar 'Ohio Burgundy' has a large rosette and develops a deep, rich burgundy color. (2) arachnoideums are the "cob-web" types that can tolerate a lot of sunlight. (3) calcareum are velvety and prolific, apple-green. Examples are *S. bicolor* and *S. rubrum*. (4) ciliosum are the tight rosette plants with many fine hairs. There are the occasional mutants, variegated plants or *Sempervivum* 'Oddity', a cultivar with leaves rolled into tubes, which used to show up in nurseries now and then—a plant no succulent geek could resist.

Generally speaking, sempervivums are not difficult to grow. Considering the heritage of most cultivars, you would have to say that they would prefer a climate not as hot and dry as ours, but they can survive if a bit of care is taken. They should be grown in filtered light or semi-shade. Good drainage is a must; otherwise, they are not fussy as to soil mix. I've found that, for me, they do better in large planters with other plants. I think this keeps their roots cooler than they would be packed alone into a small pot.

Propagation is simple because offsets are produced at the base and usually develop roots readily. They can be detached and planted right away.



The flowers are star-shaped, mostly pinkish. The rosette will suddenly elongate into a bloom stalk, which usually signals that the plant will bloom and produce offsets before dying. These offsets should not be detached until they reach an ample size and the mother rosette has nearly dried up. On occasion, a semp will bloom and not send up offsets.

**Sue**



*Photographs from the  
Fresno Home  
And  
Garden Show*



Photos:  
Robert Scott