

CACTUS CORNER NEWS

Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society

fresnocss.com

Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America

Vol. 40, No. 11

November 2021

ZOOM MEETING ID: 869 9216 2985 --- Passcode: 805095
PROGRAM INFORMATION WILL BE EMAILED FROM THE PRESIDENT
(PLEASE READ PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE)

FRESNO FAIR REPORT

2021 was a transition year for the Big Fresno Fair – transitioning from the non-fair of 2020 to what we hope will be a "normal" event in 2022. All the departments had to deal with reduced hours and budgets. Floriculture also had to work around the absence of a number of the usual exhibitors who, for various reasons, declined to show plants this year.

Despite all this, the cactus and succulent display was excellent, as can be seen in the photos below. Club members who entered plants were Dennis Anderson, Roz Tampone, Dwight Horiuchi, Lynne Rayner and Val McCullough. Dennis won Sweepstakes (most ribbons) in cacti and his *Ariocarpus retusus* was judged Best Cactus. Roz's *Euphorbia decaryi* won Best Succulent and she was awarded Sweepstakes in succulents. Val won Sweepstakes in both begonias and ferns. ***Congratulations to all!***

If any members not mentioned had fair entries in any departments, please let me know.



Photos by: Roz Tampone
& Dennis Anderson



*Dennis,
Congratulations
with your
numerous ribbons
well-deserved!!!*



FROM THE PREZ ...

Hi Members,

I've had to rewrite this article 3 times now, as things have been quickly changing the last week.

First off, wasn't it nice to get a real rainstorm! Seems like it's been forever since we got a good drenching. Now we just need it to continue to rain to fill the reservoirs. Sadly, it's going to take a lot of rain to get what's needed, have to enjoy what we do get. With the lower temps and rain, it's time for the winter growing plants to wake up. Plants like Aeoniums, Dioscorea, Dudleya, Othonna, Tylecodon and others can start getting water as it's now their time to grow in the cooler temps. This doesn't mean that these plants need water all winter, they still don't want to be wet during freezing temperatures. Think of them as cool season growers, fall and spring growers. I'll add a list of cool season growers to the newsletter.

This also means that our warm season growers are ready for bed. We should stop watering them as they don't like being wet during cold weather. Wet and cold will cause rot, killing the plant. It's best to move these plants under a structure so that you can control if they get water. Then there are plants that can't take any cold, like the Adeniums and Melocactus. They don't survive temperatures under 50 degrees and should be brought inside or into a heated greenhouse. All of this gets really confusing, but that's why the club is here. So many people with experience and knowledge to pick their brains. General rule is don't water any plants when it's cold. Even the winter growers don't want to be wet in freezing conditions.

Next on the list is club business, and this is where things have been changing. We had planned for Tom Glavich to speak at the November meeting. He has sadly had to cancel his trip here. He will be returning in 2022, to speak to the club and sell plants. **We are moving the meeting to just a digital Zoom event, not meeting in person.** We have access to some wonderful, informative videos and will be picking one to show for the next meeting. Once a subject is picked, I will send out an email with the information and Zoom link. Not what we had planned but we adapt. December is right around the corner, and for the second year in a row we won't be having a Winter Potluck. We don't have any type of meeting planned for December, so will start up meetings again in January. A workshop is planned for November 17th for anyone having questions before the new year. We are in the works of planning a Winter Silent Auction, and more information will be sent out once everything is finalized.

Since we won't be meeting in person, membership renewals can be mailed in or emailed. Right now, if you were to email your renewal you would still need to mail in payment. I'm working on creating online payments to make it easier for members. Once this is ready, I'll be sending out an email with instructions. Look membership form for the address to mail it too, or you can email Craig at robertshowse@gmail.com or myself at rob_scott85@yahoo.com. Please send in your renewal as soon as you can, deadline is end of the year.

Congratulations to everyone who entered plants at the Fresno Fair! Everyone who participated won ribbons and I was told the plants looked amazing.

Take care,
Robert

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS: Bonnie Lind (4th)

Karen Willoughby (7th)
Carrie Wise (10th)
Nancy Jobin (11th)
Sue Haffner (14th)
Dale Gale (17th)

Cindy Duwe (20th); Rachel Ortiz (21st);
Joe Nishimoto(24th); Gabriel Pena(24th)



ROSE ROWE: We were saddened to hear of the passing of longtime member Rosalie ("Rose") Rowe. She had been unable to get to a meeting in recent years, but she

always avidly followed club activities. Rose was a Clovis native. Her father, Glenn Reavis, was a mayor of Clovis many years ago. After college she went to New Zealand as an exchange teacher. There she met Ivan Rowe, who was teaching math at a local teacher's college. After marriage they settled in Fresno. Ivan was on the faculty of the Fresno State School of Education for many years. Rose was a peace and environmental activist, and their yard was landscaped with drought tolerant and native plants. The club has sent our sympathies to the Rowe family.

CROWN OF THORNS CUTTINGS

Cuttings of *Euphorbia millii*, the "Crown of Thorns," can sometimes be difficult to root. A member of a southern California club had a method to try if nothing else works:

1. Allow cuttings to dry for at least two days;
2. Seal the cut and ½ inch of stem with diluted water-soluble tree-seal;
3. Allow cutting to dry another day;
4. Submerge stem in about 4 inches of water;
5. Change water regularly.

Wait (patiently) for roots to appear.

Fugacious: (botany) having short-lived leaves or flowers that wither and fall away in hours or days.

Don Hunt Plant & Pot Auction & Sale

Sunday, Nov. 7, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Ramona CA
 Woody Minnich has information:
 cactusdata@msn.com

Don Hunt was a famous potter and plant grower and a mainstay of the San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society. He passed away recently, and the family requested Woody to help auction his pots and plants. There will be a non-auction sale, as well.

Succulent Workshops

Succulent Gardens, Castroville
 Nov. 13-14: Fall Grapevine Wreath Workshop
 Nov. 20-21: Thanksgiving Centerpiece Workshop
 For more info: www.sgplants.com

Fresno Bonsai Sale

Trees, pots, bonsai items
 Silent Auction
 Vendors welcome
 Saturday, November 20, 2021
 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
 Fresno Bonsai Society
www.fresnobonsaisociety.com

at

Clovis Botanical Garden
 945 North Clovis Avenue
 Clovis, CA
 (north of Alluvial at Dry Creek Park)

20 years ago: November 2001, the club met at the Discovery Center; guest speaker Kelly Griffin presented "Maui and the Silversword." Officer candidates for 2002 were proposed: President, Madeleine Mitchell; Vice Prez, Jack Fleming; Secretary, Lupe Cruz; Treasurer, Charlene Stebles; Board members: Veone Gale, Don La Mont, Marlene Myatt, Mark Muradian; Affiliate Rep, Sue Haffner.

IT'S IN THE LEAVES

The Colorado Desert has some of the highest temperatures and lowest rainfall figures of any place in North America. A typical summer features four to five months of temperatures over 100 degrees with little to no rain. These conditions are extremely harsh for perennial plants, and most of them have evolved special adaptations in order to survive.

Most desert plants are not succulent and cannot store large quantities of water. Their adaptations focus on keeping cool and on slowing down the loss of precious water through evaporation. Since plants absorb heat and lose water primarily through their leaves, the modification of those leaves is one of the most important things a perennial plant can do to improve its chances of survival.

The bigger the leaf the more heat it absorbs and the more water it loses by evaporation. As a result, the vast majority of desert perennials have small to tiny leaves. Take a look at the leaves of the creosote bush or a Palo Verde tree. The one thing they have in common is very small leaves. However, the color of those leaves may vary widely.

When you look across a long stretch of desert, the general impression is of a gray/tan color, not the rich greens of wetter places. Thus, is because a great many perennial plants have light-colored leaves, and for a very good reason. A dark green leaf absorbs lots of heat—something desert plants cannot afford to do. Light colored leaves reflect heat and light and stay cooler on hot summer days. The light color is complicated, however. Look at the leaves of burroweed or brittlebush with a magnifier and what you will find is a green leaf, covered by white hairs. The combination produces a color that looks gray. The green layer below the hairs contains chlorophyll, which is necessary for photosynthesis.

The hairs on a plant's leaf not only make it lighter in color. They also provide insulation; break up drying winds passing across the leaf's surface; produce shade; and make the leaf less palatable to animals. In a few cases the hairs might even be stiff or sharp pointed, making them even less edible.

Creosote bush is an enigma among desert plants. With its dark leaves it seems to belong in a different environment. However, when you look closely, you can see that its leaves are heavily coated with an aromatic resin. Much like plastic wrap, this coating seals the leaf against the loss of water through evaporation. With much more chlorophyll exposed to the sun, creosote bush has a more efficient metabolism and is often among the tallest plants in a location.

Jojoba has approached leaf modification in an unusual way. While its leaves are relatively small and somewhat gray-green, what is truly unique is their orientation. They grow in a vertical position rather than horizontal. This means that the heat and light of the sun hits the edge of the leaf, rather than its flat surface, and so it stays cooler. Another approach to leaf modification is to simply get rid of them. Ocotillo does this on a seasonal basis. When the moisture in the soil drops to a certain level, ocotillo throws off its leaves and waits for more favorable conditions before leafing out again.

Sometimes when you look out over the desert it might seem that nothing much is going on but be aware that the plants are employing all kinds of strategies in order to survive. **Sue**

(Based on an article in an issue of *The Sandpaper*, newsletter of the Anza-Borrego Desert Natural History Association, www.abdnha.org)

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU REPOT?

By Michael Louie

You bring home those “perfect” little plants you bought at the big sale or club meeting--immaculately grown, colorful, hard, plump, and adorable. You think to yourself, “There is so much potential yet—this will be a show plant one day.” The plant adjusts to your conditions and starts to grow. The new growth is different in response to the change in environment. Over the next year, the plant thrives and grows. It blooms the second year under your care. The third year comes around and the plant slows in growth rate and even seems to go through a very long dormancy period. You curtail the light intensity; the plant shrivels a little and does not look vigorous anymore; the signs of stress increase, and the plant loses its roots. You’re lucky if you realize this before you’ve lost the plant. You remove all the roots and leave the plant out to dry and sigh in frustration scratching your head wondering what went wrong. You know you didn’t overwater, but you suspect something had changed.

You pour out the pot of soil and you see many distinct root balls and lots of dried-up dead roots. Little gnats and crawly larvae scamper away from the dislodged root masses. There is a sour smell indicative of fermented plant structures. The old soil mix is irregular “cemented” together by the root masses and parts of the soil are wetter than others. These are classic signs of a plant distressed from soil that has been used too long.

When a plant is grown in a small container, there is a slow buildup of toxins and other waste products originating from the plant’s normal metabolism. Hard waters, fertilizers and insoluble minerals have built up and deposited on the sides of the pot or lower plant leaves. The soil’s structure has changed from fine roots that weave soil particles together. Porous aggregates—like perlite or pumice--break down from pressure and water making them less efficient as aerators and water-logging is apparent. The plant has lost its roots a few times but managed to re-root into the potting mix. The absence of oxygen in the waterlogged regions of the soil mix encouraged the growth of bacteria and/or fungi giving rise to sour-smelling toxic acids. Weakened roots allowed sciarid flies to nest and start potentially deadly colonies.

Most of these symptoms could have been avoided by re-potting the plant every one to two years. Succulents need soil with good porosity, aeration and drainage. Re-potting a plant with “fresh” soil ensures that the roots will have an appropriate medium to grow in. Changing the soil and using a clean pot removes any buildup of toxins. Loosening the root ball and removing dead roots will also minimize a plant’s exposure to its own waste products. Many accomplished growers have discovered that re-potting once every two or three years will keep a plant healthy. However, I have experienced the seedling plants grown in a mix made by Jim Boehmke, Elton Roberts or Paul Heiple can go 4-5 years without repotting. These three gentlemen have developed cacti soil mix with a large proportion of non-organic, porous components. These mixes drain well but hold enough water to allow for uniform growth. Many of the Crassulaceae, Euphorbiaceae and mesembs grow fast and toxins can build up quickly. These plants should be re-potted frequently (once every 1-2 years). Cacti can go longer but it is best to repot every two or three years. Soil mixes with large amounts of organic matter—compost, peat or leaf mould—should be replaced every two years. Haworthia and other Asphodelaceae should be repotted every one or two years since the vigorous roots tend to expend the soil rapidly.

Experience will prove to be the key to success but following a schedule of repotting every two years will greatly improve horticultural success.

(From the August 2000 issue of the Newsletter of the San Francisco Succulent and Cactus Society)

ALCOHOL FOR MEALY BUGS

We all know that a handy non-toxic treatment for mealy bugs is rubbing alcohol, dabbed on, or sprayed. But make sure your ministrations don't hurt the plant. Jon Dixon, of the San Francisco S&C Society, shared these comments on an online list a few years ago:

"I once used isopropanol to clean off the mealies from an uebelmannia. It also took off the dark nearly black coloring of the plant, leaving it a dull gray. The dark coating on these plants is perhaps a wax, which this alcohol dissolved. With any plant, I would always wash off the alcohol after treatment. When I do use it (and never again on the aforementioned species) I use a sponge brush to apply it. Then I take the plant to the sink and wash off the alcohol and mealies with the spray attachment."

"A friend who had a nursery in San Diego once was showing the agriculture inspector all of his non-toxic methods for insect control—Safer's Soap, etc, and his pint spray bottle of alcohol. The inspector was horrified. He told him it wasn't registered for that use. It was absolutely illegal for employees to use it, etc. So, he went back to his toxic registered pesticides."

On the same discussion list, the late Myron Kimnach wrote: "I have damaged several kalanchoes and echeverias with alcohol, the tender growing tips becoming burned, but most plants in that genera are not harmed. There is another danger in using alcohol--it's inflammable! I'm careful in winter not to spray close to my gas heater in the glasshouse, as even the pilot light could set off an explosion if a saturation point is reached. And of course, one should not inhale the mist--if rubbing alcohol is poisonous to drink, it must be poisonous to inhale." **Sue**

Winter Growers

Adromischus, Aeonium, Aloe- (Only a few pure species are winter growers), Anacamperos, Avonia, Bowiea, Bulbs- (Ones that have green leaves during winter), Ceraria, Conophytum, Dioscorea, Dudleya Haemanthus, Haworthia, Othonna, Pelargonium, Tylecodon

Robert



Additional Photos from the Fresno Fair

