



# Prickly News

South Coast Cactus & Succulent Society Newsletter - November 2013

## GENERAL MEETING

Sunday - November 10, 1:30 pm

We will meet in the Hall

"Echinopsis: Queens of the Day"

Presentation by John Trager,

Curator of the  
Desert Collections  
at the Huntington  
Botanical Gardens



## Costa Verde District to Host Holiday Party

In lieu of a December meeting, the Costa Verde District of the California Garden Clubs (CGCI) is hosting a holiday Victorian Tea on December 4th at South Coast Botanical Gardens. All CSS members are invited to attend this social event being held from 9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.. The State President, Rita Desilets, will be one of the special guests. The theme of the event is "Gift Wrapping Magic". Guests are asked to bring their own special tea cup and saucer. Reservations are requested with \$5 admission at the door. Please contact CSS President Dale La Forest if you plan to attend. Judy Unrine of CSS has invited any CSS members to join her table.

There will be a present decorating contest during the event. If you would like to participate, bring an empty decorated box about the size of a shoe box. A prize will be awarded to the best in each of three categories: fresh plant material, dried plant material, and silk flowers. As an idea for our members, succulent cuttings and moss could be used to decorate a box.

Dressing up in Victorian style is encouraged. Please contact Lynda Johnson for more information. She may be reached at 310-324-3304.

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## President's Message

Guillermo Rivera's program on Patagonia was entertaining and professional. He clearly knows his subject. I think a couple of our members have already been on one or more of his South American tours and can attest to them. I expect we will invite Guillermo to return in a couple of years.

We announced a couple of changes in store for next year. I will set aside some time at the November meeting for you to ask questions about the coming changes in the Mini-show and Display Tables that are set up during our annual Show & Sale. Briefly . . .

Maria Capaldo explained about the addition of a third class, "Intermediate" to the current Mini-show classes of Novice and Advanced. At the December potluck, we will ask members who have accumulated 64 points or six 1st place awards in the novice class to start 2013 in the Intermediate class. The rest of the rules haven't changed much, but you will notice the changes posted in the Newsletter in the January issue and also more a thorough and formal version in the Operational Procedures located on our website. Members who don't have access to computers can request a copy of any document from me at any time.

In Jim Gardner's absence, I explained another big change that won't be noticed until next April at our annual Show & Sale. The Board has decided to provide more opportunities for members and vendors to win cash prizes by competing in two different types of displays. There will be "Educational" displays that will be as in the past except, now they will require some signage that instructs the viewer in some way about the plants on display. We are adding another category we are calling "Artistic" that will allow exhibitors to express their love of succulents in other media (metal, ceramics, textiles, photos, etc.). Artistic displays do not need to include live plants, but must include a succulent plant representation. More thorough guidance and details will be provided by Jim Gardner, the Show & Sale Committee Chair when a member asks for an entry application in February or March. However, all entries must fit on a 5 foot round table. Although members may set up two or more tables in any category, voting will be on single table displays. Two or more members may enter as a team.

Maria Capaldo will be coordinating the December holiday potluck, and most of the planning will be done at the November meeting. Because our club has grown, if you won't be at the November meeting, but are planning on attending the Potluck, I'd appreciate a call or email as soon as it's convenient, so we can get a better estimate on what to purchase and how many chairs to set up. As is usual for this event, we will be in the classroom, so space will be tight.

Happy Thanksgiving everyone. I am thankful for your support and encouragement.

Dale La Forest  
President





**October  
Mini Show  
FIRST PLACE  
WINNERS**

**CACTUS**

**Open Class**  
Gary Duke

*cephalocereus senilis*

**Novice Class**  
Jade Neely

*cephalocereus senilis*

**SUCCULENT**

**Open Class**  
Jim Gardner  
*sedum fruticosum*

**Novice Class**  
Jade Neely  
*sedum multiceps*



**South Coast Cactus and Succulent Society  
MINI SHOW FINAL RESULTS - (as of October 13, 2013)**

Novice Class	Cactus	Succulents	Open Class	Cactus	Succulents
Bjerke		3	Capaldo	37	19
Caplan	17	20	Causey	8	12
DeCrescenzo	36	23	Duke	67	42
Dunn		1	Gardner	6	53
Hines	4	7	Hanna		31
Jengo		1	Kohlschreiber	3	
Jenkins	2	1	La Forest	6	11
Jackie Johnson	25	29	Williams	3	
Bernard Johnson		7	Warzybok		10
Kelly	16	4	Woodley	18	18
Carol Knight		15			
Neely	58	40			
Ross		2			
Shearer		7			
Tanner	12	14			
Unrine	4	10			
Veits	4	4			
Wilk		10			
Wood	4	2			

**2013-2014 PLANTS OF THE MONTH (POM)**

	Cactus	Succulents
November	<b>Discocactus / Melocactus</b>	<b>Lithops</b>
December	HOLIDAY PARTY	
January	Mammillaria straight spines	Adenia, Cistus and Cyphostemma
February	Rebutia	Sansevieria
March	Gymnocalycium	Crassula
April	PLANT SHOW AND SALE	
May	Stenocactus	Gasteria
June	Crests / Montrose	Echeveria
July	Ferocactus	Agave / Yucca
August	Coryphantha	Mesembs
September	Ariocarpus	Haworthia
October	Cactus dish gardens	Succulent dish gardens

**PLANT OF THE MONTH RULES** – (revised January 2010)

Up to 3 plants may be entered in each of the two categories: **Cactus** and **Succulent**

**Entries may be in either the Novice or Open Class**

Novice entries must have been held by the owner for at least 3 months.

Only plant condition will be judged, not the pot or other enhancements.

Open entries must have been held for at least 1 year. All aspects of the entry will be judged, including plant condition, and pot.

**JUDGING**

Entrants will receive 6 points for First Place, 4 points for Second Place, 2 points for Third Place and 1 point for showing a plant that is not disqualified. The judge may award one First Place and up to (2) Second and (2) Third Places in each category. No award will be given if plants are not deemed to be of sufficient quality. At the discretion of the judge and/or Mini-Show Chair, a plant may be disqualified or removed due to disease or infestation or because it is not the correct genera.

## CACTUS OF THE MONTH – DISCOCACTUS / MELOCACTUS

Melocactus and Discocactus are two not-closely related genera of tropical cacti that share two distinguishing features. They are both globular and both form cephalia when they mature, with all flowers come from the cephalia.

Melocactus are among the first cacti found, probably discovered and brought back to Europe by Columbus. Species native to Venezuela were in cultivation in England (and well grown even by our standards) as early as 1569! They are native to the Central America, the Caribbean and coastal South America, the range stretching up to Puerto Rico, and west into tropical Peru.

Melocactus are immediately recognizable by the large cephalium that develops on mature plants. Melocactus grow as normal ap-pearings, but flowerless, globular cacti until they reach maturity. This can take from 6 to 15 years in cultivation, with a greater range in habitat. Once they reach maturity, the body stops grow-ing vigorously (it still grows slowly). Most of the plant energy goes into producing a cylindrical flowering and fruiting structure known as a cephalium. This is usually white, with short hairs of yellow, orange or red. As the years go by, the cephalium becomes more cylindrical, with the base becoming more colorful. The flowers are usually a red-purple, and the fruits are almost always a bright red, to attract birds. With age, the cephalium can grow to 18 inches or more in height, occasionally bifurcating or trifurcating.

Discocactus are heavily ribbed Brazilian cacti. The genus is quite old, first described in 1835. Discocacti can be found inland in the state of Minas Gerais, and further South in the states of Sao Paulo, Parana, Mato Grosso, and crossing into Paraguay, and even into the Southeastern most state of Bolivia, Santa Cruz.

The distinguishing characteristics of Discocacti are their globular to flattened globular shape, a cephalium, and fragrant night blooming flowers. Unlike Melocacti, the cephalia stay relatively small, are almost always white, and have long soft wool.

An important difference between the two genera is that the onset of a cephalium in Melocactus terminates vegetative growth. The body no longer gets larger. Discocacti have ring-meristems (a ring of growth cells) that surround the cephalium, and allow the body to continue to grow after the cephalium forms.

Both genera have similar cultivation requirements. They grow in rocky soil, often protected by nurse shrubs. The soil contains the decaying remains of shrubs, bromeliads, lichen, and other organic matter. The humidity is high, particularly during the growing sea-son. Neither will tolerate cold, and particularly cold and wet. Melocactus in particular tend to get hard brown scars if they get too cold, even while dry.

Discocactus horstii is without a doubt the best of the genus. It flowers when small, as little as 2 inches across. The cephalium is particularly hairy, and the fragrant flowers can be more than 2 inches in diameter, larger than the body of the plant when young. It is unfortunately one of the harder to grow. It rots easily, from the roots up. There are a number of D. horstii hybrids that also flower well, and are easier to keep alive.

Discocactus magnimammus is a larger plant, making a more flat-tened globe. The ribs are subdivided into large rounded tubercles (thus its name). It has short light brown, curved spines, and a cotton-like cephalium.

Melocactus curvispinus f. lobelii is the first pictured Melocactus. The 1570 description is that of a plant the size

of a medium pumpkin or the largest of melons, weighing 9 1/3 pounds with 14 bulging ribs bearing 'fearsome' horny incurved spines like a por-cupine or hedgehog. You might as well have the first.

Melocactus lanssensianus is subglobose (fatter than tall) to about 8 inches in diameter.

Melocactus matanzanus has a white cephalium with orange to red spines getting denser towards the edge. Native to Cuba. Start like spines.

Melocactus oaxacensis is an olive green plant, smaller than most other Melocactus. The cephalium tends to be short, with dense brown spines. Flowers are a dark rose. This species is native to Oaxaca, and rarely seen.

Tom Glavich November 2005



*Melocactus matanzanus*



*Melocactus curvispinus*



*Melocactus oaxacensis*



*Melocactus warsii*



*Discocactus heptacanthus*



*Discocactus bahiensis*



*Discocactus placentiformis*



*Discocactus horstii*

## SUCCULENT OF THE MONTH – LITHOPS

Lithops is a genus of succulent plants in the ice plant family, Aizoaceae. Members of the genus are native to southern Africa. The name is derived from the Ancient Greek words (lithos), meaning “stone,” and (ops), meaning “face,” referring to the stone-like appearance of the plants. They avoid being eaten by blending in with surrounding rocks and are often known as pebble plants or living stones. The formation of the name from the Greek “-ops” means that even a single plant is called a Lithops.

Individual Lithops plants consist of one or more pairs of bulbous, almost fused leaves opposite to each other and hardly any stem. The slit between the leaves contains the meristem and produces flowers and new leaves. The leaves of Lithops are mostly buried below the surface of the soil, with a partially or completely translucent top surface or window allowing light to enter the interior of the leaves for photosynthesis.

During winter a new leaf pair, or occasionally more than one, grows inside the existing fused leaf pair. In spring the old leaf pair parts to reveal the new leaves and the old leaves will then dry up. Lithops leaves may shrink and disappear below ground level during drought. Lithops in habitat almost never have more than one leaf pair per head, the environment is just too arid to support this. Yellow or white flowers emerge from the fissure between the leaves after the new leaf pair has fully matured, one per leaf pair. This is usually in autumn, but can be before the summer solstice in *L. pseudotruncatella* and after the winter solstice in *L. optica*. The flowers are often sweetly scented.

The most startling adaptation of Lithops is the colouring of the leaves. The leaves are not green as in almost all higher plants, but various shades of cream, grey, and brown, patterned with darker windowed areas, dots, and red lines. The markings on the top surface disguise the plant in its surroundings.

Lithops are obligate outcrossers and require pollination from a separate plant. Like most mesembs, Lithops fruit is a dry capsule that opens when it becomes wet; some seeds may be ejected by falling raindrops, and the capsule re-closes when it dries out. Capsules may also sometimes detach and be distributed intact, or may disintegrate after several years. Lithops occur naturally across wide areas of Namibia and South Africa, as well as small bordering areas in Botswana and possibly Angola, from sea level to high mountains. Nearly a thousand individual populations are documented, each covering just a small area of dry grassland, veld, or bare rocky ground. Different Lithops species are preferentially found in particular environments, usually restricted to a particular type of rock. Lithops have not naturalised outside this region. Rainfall in Lithops habitats ranges from approximately 700 mm/year to near zero. Rainfall patterns range from exclusively summer rain to exclusively winter rain, with a few species relying almost entirely on dew formation for moisture. Temperatures are usually hot in summer and cool to cold in winter, but one species is found right at the coast with very moderate temperatures year round.

Lithops are popular novelty house plants and many specialist succulent growers maintain collections. Seeds and plants are widely available in shops and over the Internet. They are relatively easy to grow if given sufficient sun and a suitable well drained-soil.

Normal treatment in mild temperate climates is to keep them completely dry during winter, watering only when the old leaves have dried up and been replaced by a new leaf pair.

Watering continues through autumn when the plants flower and then stopped for winter. The best results are obtained with additional heat such as a greenhouse. In hotter climates Lithops will have a summer dormancy when they should be kept mostly dry, and they may require some water in winter. In tropical climates, Lithops can be grown primarily in winter with a long summer dormancy. In all conditions, Lithops will be most active and need most water during autumn and each species will flower at approximately the same time.

Lithops thrive best in a coarse, well-drained substrate. Any soil that retains too much water will cause the plants to burst their skins as they over-expand. Plants grown in strong light will develop hard strongly coloured skins which are resistant to damage and rot, although persistent overwatering will still be fatal. Excessive heat will kill potted plants as they cannot cool themselves by transpiration and rely on staying buried in cool soil below the surface.

Some species have flowers large enough to obscure the leaves. They open in the afternoon and close in the evening. Propagation of Lithops is by seed or cuttings. Cuttings can only be used to produce new plants after a plant has naturally divided to form multiple heads, so most propagation is by seed. Lithops can readily be pollinated by hand if two separate clones of a species flower at the same time, and seed will be ripe about 9 months later. Seed is easy to germinate, but the seedlings are small and vulnerable for the first year or two, and will not flower until at least two or three years old.



*The Plant-of-the-Month articles and photos provided by Jim Tanner.*

**NOVEMBER'S PRESENTER:  
JOHN TRAGER**

photo: Derek Tribble



John Trager is Curator of the Desert Collections at the Huntington Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California where he has worked since 1983. Prior to that he had the privilege of working with master propagator Frank Horwood at Abbey Garden Nursery when it was located in Carpinteria. Trager's horticultural writings have appeared in the *Cactus and Succulent*

*Journal*, the *Euphorbia Journal*, and various other horticultural publications. He is perhaps better known for his photography -- over 2000 of his images have been published in numerous textbooks and horticultural journals. Book projects include co-authorship and photography for *Dry Climate Gardening with Succulents* produced by the Huntington, principal photographer for the *Conograph* (a revision of the genus *Conophytum*) and a contributor to other works by Stephen Hammer (*Lithops, Treasures of the Veld and Dumpling and His Wife* [a revision of the *Conograph*], and *Mesemb of the World* [Hammer et al.]). He has also contributed photographs to works by Gordon Rowley (*The Succulent Compositae, Avonia and Anacampseros, Crassula, A Grower's Guide*, as well as to the multi-authored six-volume reference *The Illustrated Handbook of Succulents* (2001-2003). John has traveled widely in search of plants (and insects) including China, Costa Rica, Israel, Mexico, Namibia, South Africa, Thailand and Venezuela. He holds a bachelor's degree in Horticulture from Cal Poly Pomona and earlier studied Botany at UCSB and Santa Barbara City College.



*Echinopsis 'Princess Anne'*



*Ring Nebula*



*Antares' fre*



*Minuet top*



*Schick compound*



*Cassandra*



*Chico Mendes sid*

## BASIC CARE OF CACTI & SUCCULENTS



Always keep in mind that the aim in growing cacti & succulent plants successfully is to provide them with the most optimum growing conditions. The fact that these types of plants can endure drought conditions

should in no way be construed as a basis for how you should grow them in your home. Although they can survive extended dry periods the quality and appearance will suffer. It's the difference between "thriving" or "just surviving".

Watering – correct watering procedures are crucial to the successful culturing of cacti and succulents. Cacti and succulents do not necessarily culture in like manners, so it is therefore important to treat each group differently.

Cacti – most cacti actively grow during the long, hot summer months and tend to become dormant during the short days of winter. It is therefore most important that you recognize when your plants are actively growing. This is difficult since cacti tend to grow at such a slow rate, but during the time between early spring and late fall you can be pretty well assured that your plants are in a growth stage. During this time, water the plants whenever the soil becomes dry. Do not extend this dry period for too long or your plants will begin to suffer from lack of moisture. Only during their dormant periods will cacti be able to successfully withstand long periods without water.

When the soil is sufficiently dry, water the plant thoroughly. Be sure that excess water drains from the hole in the bottom of the pot. Be sure that the soil is completely saturated. Never water cacti by giving minimal amounts of water. It is an incorrect notion that one should try and duplicate desert conditions in order to grow cacti. Conversely, methods such as this often lead to failure. Repeat this watering procedure when the soil once again becomes thoroughly dry.

During the winter months when cacti often become dormant, it is advisable to water much less frequently: Two to three times less often than during the summer. Most persons attempting to grow cacti suffer the greatest amount of plant losses during the winter, usually the direct result of incorrect watering techniques.

Succulents – succulents are usually less demanding of careful watering schedules than cacti. Succulents do not necessarily become dormant during the winter. In fact many succulents are more active in their growth during the winter as opposed to summer. Therefore, the most general rule of watering succulents is to water the plants thoroughly when the soil starts to become dry, by careful observation. Be sure that the plant is actively growing when you water in this manner.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS for FY2013-2014

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*Vice President*

*Treasurer*

*Secretary*

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### Standing Committee Chairmen

*Show & Sale Chair*

*Programs Committee Chair*

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*CSSA*

### At Large Members

**Dale La Forest**  
**Maria Capaldo**  
**Bernard Johnson**  
**Philip Johnston Ross**  
**Judy Unrine**

**Jim Gardner**  
**Gary Duke**  
**Jim Hanna**  
**Anita Caplan**  
**Sally Fasteau**

**Lynda Johnson**  
**Laurel Woodley**

**Mike Short**  
**Bob Caplan**

## CACTUS AND SUCCULENT – 2013 CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

December 4 COSTA VERDE DISTRICT OF THE CALIFORNIA GARDEN CLUBS (CGCI)  
 "GIFT WRAPPING MAGIC",  
 A HOLIDAY VICTORIAN TEA  
 9:30am - 2pm  
 South Coast Botanical Gardens  
 For more information, please contact Lynda Johnson at 310-324-3304.

## REFRESHMENTS FOR NOVEMBER

Volunteers for November refreshments are:

Jim Gardner  
 Nancy Mosher  
 Coni Nettles  
 Rita Mason

The October snacks were provided by:

Danny Westall  
 Carol Causey  
 Mary Lopez  
 Bernard Johnson  
 Laurel Woodley  
 Anita Caplan  
 Lou Hagemeyer  
 Linda Johnson



Many thanks to all!

**Kitchen Volunteers** – Please see Carol Causey after the meeting if you would like to help with kitchen cleanup.