NOVEMBER — 2013

# Thorny Issues

SACRAMENTO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

Volume 54, #11

## Simply Succulents ♦ Monday—November 25th, 7 pm

This month's program 'Simply Succulents' is presented by Aimee, Succulent Propagation Manager, at High Hand Nursery in Loomis, where she spends most of her time wrist-deep in the dirt: growing, dividing, cultivating Aeoniums, Echeverias, Sedums, Semps, & everything in between! She is bringing us copies of her multi-page quick reference guide to Succulents. Aimee grew up in Oakdale and spent much of her time outdoors, either camping in the mountains or trail riding along the Stanislaus River. Aimee attended the University of California Davis to pursue her affinity for plants and nature by attaining a degree in Landscape Architecture. She has furthered her plant knowledge by working in independent garden centers and the Parks and Recreation department of El Dorado Hills.

December 6th is our Christmas Pot Luck/White Elephant Bingo, which everyone always enjoys. So technically, November is the last meeting of the year and it is also the last meeting of my term as your Vice President and Program Chair which I have really enjoyed for the past two years. My usual message to you for the past two years has not changed: The Sacramento Cactus and Succulent Society (SCSS) is a great Club. It is your Club—Get more involved and make it even better than ever. Remember the Cactus and Succulent Corner and bring in healthy plants to show off, and not-so-healthy plants you have questions about. You get raffle tickets for bringing in your plants. And the last reminder is, bring in extra money for raffle tickets to buy some really nice plants. Remember we will be planting your new pots in early 2014, buy a great plant for your brand new Pot! *— Sandy Waters, Vice President/Program Chair*

### Inside this issue:




*Courtesy, Succulent Perch*

### Sacramento Cactus & Succulent Society

- Meetings are held the 4th Monday of each month at 7pm
- Location: Shepard Garden & Arts Center in Sacramento.
- 3330 McKinley Blvd
- Center's phone number — 916/808-8800
- No official meeting in December
- The public is warmly invited to attend meetings

# MINI SHOW — NOVEMBER 2013

## Cactus — Schlumbergia (Christmas Cacti)

The majority of plants sold as Christmas cacti are hybrids between *Zygocactus truncatus* and *Schlumbergia species*. Growers have been hybridizing these plants since the Victorian era and individual species are not usually available. These plants are sometimes also called "Epiphany cacti", "Easter cacti" or just "Holiday cacti" and consist of a series of flat stem segments with branching at segment joints. If you look hard there are probably fine hairs at the top of each segment which are vestigal spines. The parental species are epiphytes from the South American rainforests and grow on trees in pockets where organic detritus accumulates. Hence their hybrids enjoy a richer potting mixture with more organic material than most cacti and need more water than the average cactus. You can use peat-based mixtures or the bark chipping mixes used by orchid growers, although the latter are so free-draining that watering must be frequent. In the late summer the plants should be allowed to rest with little water and no fertilizer. Avoid direct sunlight, but diffuse bright light is fine. Think of plants growing under a forest canopy. Bud production in Schlumbergia / Zygocactus is affected by day length and temperature, with some interaction between the two parameters. The traditional Christmas cactus has fuchsia-pink flowers. Some of the new yellow or white colored hybrids (e.g. Gold Charm, pictured above) have "temperature sensitive" blooms.


## Succulent — Tylecodon / Sarcocaulon

*Tylecodon* is a genus of succulent plants in the family Crassulaceae. Until the late 1970s all these plants were included in the genus Cotyledon, but in 1978 Dr Helmut Toelken of the South Australian Herbarium split them off into a genus of their own. The new name *Tylecodon*, was apparently chosen as a syllabic anagram of the earlier name Cotyledon. The grounds for splitting Cotyledon to create the new genus included certain features of the flowers, but more conspicuously, the leaves of *Tylecodon* are deciduous in summer and they are borne in a spiral arrangement, rather than the opposite, decussate arrangement of Cotyledon leaves. The species are very varied, ranging from dwarf succulents such as *Tylecodon reticulatus* to *Tylecodon paniculatus*, which may exceed two meters in height.

*Tylecodon reticulatus*

*Sarcocaulon salmoniflorum*

Members of the genus *Sarcocaulon* are spiny, fleshy shrublets with delicate white, yellow, salmon-pink or pink petals ('flowers'), confined to South Africa and Namibia. The name *Sarcocaulon* alludes to the Greek words for fleshy, *sarkos,* and stems, *caulon*. The genus *Sarcocaulon* was established by A.P. de Candolle in 1824 as a section of the genus Monsonia, described by Linnaeus. Although the genus is closely related to Monsonia, it is regarded as a sister genus and not a synonym of Monsonia. *Sarcocaulon* is a genus of succulent, spiny shrublets with short stems, branching just above soil level. The fleshy branches are prostrate, semi-erect or erect, covered with waxy, translucent bark. The Geraniaceae family is widely distributed and consists of mainly annual or perennial herbs and shrublets, comprising about 700 species. Members of Sarcocaulon are mainly found in the western part of South Africa and Namibia. The most widespread species is *Sarcocaulon salmoniflorum*, and *S. vanderietiae* is the species with the most easterly distribution. One species, *S. mossamedense*, also occurs in Angola.

## ➢ LIBRARIAN'S REPORT

As many of you will recall from a recent article in "Thorny Issues" our Club is a member of the Cactus and Succulent Society of America (CSSA). Among other benefits of membership in this national society we receive its bimonthly magazine entitled Cactus and Succulent Journal. This magazine is about cacti and succulents with a worldwide perspective. Our club's library storage facility now contains copies of the Journal dating back to the 1960s.

A portion of our 2013 new book library budget has been used to purchase 5 DVDs that include past issues (1929 to 2003) of the Cactus And Succulent Society of America Journal. These new DVDs will remain in possession of the Club Librarian, but are now available for check out by Club members just as if they were one of our library books.

The advantages to our Club from this special purchase include each publication of the journal is reproduced in its entirety (with many pages in color) and the journals are indexed and cross indexed for easy access to the published information. Further, we can now free up area in our Club's storage unit for future hardback book purchases.

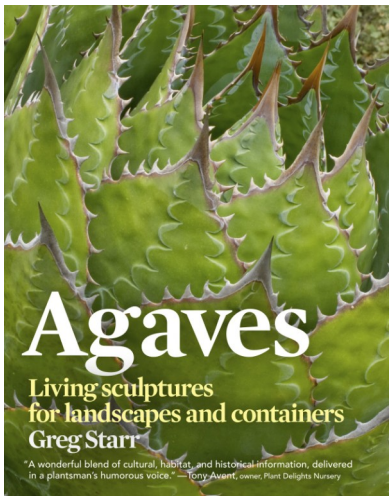
At November's meeting please plan on stopping at the library table where you can:

1. See our new set of 5 DVDs that contain all the past issues of the Cactus And Succulent Society of America Journal from 1929 through 2003.
2. Peruse our collection of journals from the 1970s (and some early 1980s) that will be given away to members at no cost. (At future meetings we will continue to de-access our collection of journals up through the year 2003.)

*– George Krigas, Librarian*

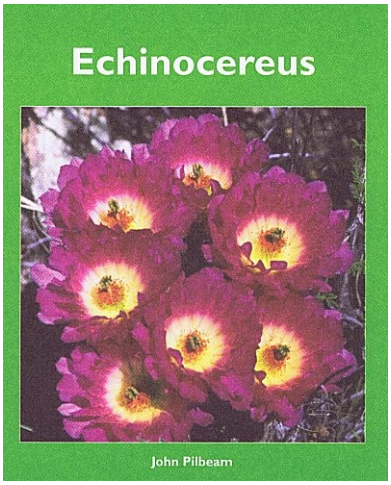
## ➢ LIBRARY ACQUIRES TWO NEW BOOKS

Our Club's library has recently acquired two new books:




Agaves by Greg Starr

The subtitle for this book is "Living sculptures for landscapes and containers." Greg Star's passion for agaves comes through in his writing and photography. This is more than a compendium of the genus Agave, it is a highly entertaining read. Greg's field notes in particular lend insight to the habitat of each species. His humor is delightful and unexpected. This book is also more than a list of plants, it's a must-have for the succulent collector and for anyone intrigued by the agaves of the desert Southwest and Mexico.




Echinocereus by John Pilbeam.

This text offers a detailed account of the entire cactus genus, *Echinocereus*. After the introduction, an account of the geographic distribution of the genus follows. This includes 8 full-page maps of the US and Mexico. The accuracy of the distribution here is at the state level. This information is repeated under each species account along with further detail as to the habitat locations for many species - such as specific counties within a state. One page of very general cultivation advice is given. Our new book is in the same format as previous works that are already in our library's collection and includes a full description of the various species and subspecies. At least one color photo is listed for each species. Many have 2-3 images and a few have more. All species are pictured in flower. At the tail of the book is a helpful index of *Echinocereus* names that includes synonyms and the name they are listed under in this book. This book will be a welcome reference for cactus enthusiasts of all types as it is both easy to follow and packed with information.

Both books will be available for your review and to check out at the November 25th meeting.

*– George Krigas, Librarian*

### ➢ CORING AGAVES FOR PROPAGATION

One of the presentations at the 2013 Succulent Extravaganza was entitled "Coring agaves." What does that mean, you might ask? I must admit I didn't really know either when I arrived at Succulent Gardens. Since the talk was about agaves, my favorite group of plants, my curiosity was piqued, and yet for a brief second I toyed with the idea of skipping it in favor of hanging out with other Succulent Fanatics folks. In hindsight, I'm very glad I didn't because it ended up being my favorite presentation of the entire event.

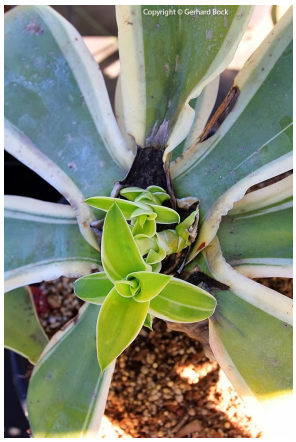
The presentation was given by Tony Krock, succulent buyer for and co-manager of Terra Sol Garden Center in Santa Barbara, CA. Tony is a passionate collector of variegated agaves and has been very successful in creating specimens that show a high degree of variegation. His secret? Coring!

In a nutshell, coring involves removing the growth point in the center of the agave, essentially killing the apical meristem. This causes the agave to produce pups in order to survive. On a variegated specimen, this technique can be used in conjunction with selective leaf removal to produce pups that show better variegation.

Take an agave that shows uneven variegation. The leaves on one side might be mostly green, the leaves on the other side might show much better variegation. You pull (or cut) off the leaves with the most variegation and leave the less variegated leaves to produce energy for the plant. This causes pups to grow on the side that had more variegation; these pups will show a higher degree of variegation than the mother plant.

The next step is to snap off the growth point in the center of the agave—the growth tip that will become the next set of leaves—and then take a sharp tool to dig down until you're almost at ground level. Tony used a "snake tongue" hand weeder like this one. Other people use a drill or even a sharpened and heated piece of metal. This is not an exact science so use whatever you have on hand. The goal is to remove the "core" of the agave to kill the meristem which produces new growth.

Treat the plant like you normally would and over time (1-3 months, depending on the time of year), you will see pups emerge from where the removed leaves had been.



When the pups have reached a decent size (3-4 inches), separate them from the mother plant with a sharp knife. Leave them in a dry, shady place for 5-7 days so the cut surfaces have a chance to callus over, then put them in a pot filled with dry succulent mix. Lightly moisten the soil and then water only after the soil has dried out completely—err on the side of under-watering to prevent rot. In the warm weather, the pups should start to root within a month.

According to Tony, the best time of year for coring is late spring or early summer when the plant begins its active growth phase. In a warm climate—or in a greenhouse—you can core at any time of the year.

Judging from their reaction, it was obvious that most of the people in the audience had never seen or done this before. As Tony was pulling off leaves, snapping off the growth tip and coring out the center—all very cheerfully and nonchalantly—the audience was groaning and/or inhaling sharply. Never having witnessed this kind of treatment, I was no exception. "It's plant torture," one

RIGHT: Regular *Agave* 'Blue Glow'
LEFT: Highly variegated *Agave* 'Blue Glow'

man called out.

Tony reassured us that in spite of looking brutal this technique works very well. He has been able to selectively enhance what started out as uneven variegation and over the course of several generations produce strikingly variegated specimens (see example on previous page).

Coring is also used to propagate agave species that are generally solitary or produce few pups, such as *Agave* 'Blue Glow', *Agave ovatifolia*, *Agave bovicornuta*, etc. As I was walking through the propagation greenhouses during Candy Suter's photo walk, I saw the successful results of coring on *Agave attenuata* 'Ray of Light'.

I left the presentation all pumped up and ready to do some coring of my own but I must admit I haven't found a specimen yet that I'm willing to sacrifice for my initial experiment. But I'm looking!

To get more info on this technique, check out my blog.
Coring agaves for propagation

*– Gerhard Bock*

[redacted]


➢ **SC&SS ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY**

You are cordially invited to the
Sacramento Cactus & Succulent Society
Annual Christmas Party

***DATE*** *– Friday, December 6th*
***TIME*** *– Set up, 6pm & Dinner, 6:30pm*
***WHERE*** *– Shepard Garden & Arts Center, Sacramento*
***DETAILS*** *– Club will provide the main course, please bring your 'fav' side, salad, or dessert to share. Punch will be also provided.*
***GIFT EXCHANGE*** *– Bring a gift (not more than $15) & exchange it for another that catches your eye!*
***JOIN US –*** *For an evening of Food, Friendship, & Fun!!*

May your holidays be the brightest
and your new year full of hope.
Here's wishing you a Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year!
**Your Hosts, The Officers & Board of Directors**

➢ **DESIGN TIP – SUCCULENT PERCH**

When designing your container arrangements repeat colors from the container with your plant choices and use complimentary colors as well … for example as shown here with the light purple Echeveria 'Perle Von Nurnberg' and yellow in the other plants ~ Cindy Davison


## Thought for the Month

***Happy ThanksHanukkah!***

Thanksgiving 2013 ♦ November 28th
Hanukkah 2013 ♦ begins November 27th
*(Courtesy ♦Design for Serenity, Linda Eubanks)*

**From the Editor's Desk –**

**Publication Deadline – 10th of each month.**
Please forward all submissions for consideration to my contact info (per your choice) found on back page.

**E-mail: ldybugg6@comcast.net**
Respectfully your editor, Mara Aditajs


FIRST CLASS

Next Meeting Date ♦ Monday, November 25th

SACRAMENTO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

c/o Mara Aditajs, Editor
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WE'RE ON THE WEB!
Click on the 3 links below to go directly to our website, Facebook, or the CSSA website

www.sacramentocss.org

# December 2013

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 [redacted] | 5 | 6 SC&SS CHRISTMAS PARTY 6–9 PM | 7 |
| 8 [redacted] | 9 | 10 [redacted] | 11 [redacted] | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 [redacted] | 19 | 20 | 21 [redacted] |
| 22 [redacted] | 23 | 24 | 25 Merry Christmas | 26 [redacted] | 27 | 28 RENEW YOUR 2014 MEMBERSHIP |
| 29 | 30 [redacted] | 31 [redacted] | 2014 | | | |