



# Thorny Issues

SACRAMENTO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

Volume 54, #8

## The Great American Southwest ♦ Monday—August 26th, 7 pm



From the beautiful mountains south of Santa Fe, New Mexico, welcome our friend & August speaker Wendell S. Minnich. ‘Woody’ to his friends, has been in the cactus hobby for 45 years and is an honorary life member of ten clubs including CSSA (Cactus & Succulent Society of America), and our Club as well.

This presentation, “The Great American Southwest,” is an epic story and view of this magic land. Many people from all over the world have been attracted to this special region, and for Woody, he will be sharing over 40 years of his field work in this most incredible part of our country. Woody feels no where in the world is there a more dynamic and picturesque region than that of the American Southwest. This romantic and historical part of the USA is marked with drama from its indigenous peoples and landscapes, to its grandest plants and creatures. For the purpose of this presentation he is including the seven most cactus and succulent rich states; Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and Utah. In

these seven states is a wealth of endemic plants and animals. Along with these plants and animals, one can often encounter some amazing and beautiful scenery. Due to the fact that many of our cacti and succulents are found in these unique environments, their special characteristics are frequently developed for adaptation and survival in these harsh places. The geology in this general region is very often tortured and dramatic, and thus the plants, animals and scenery are frequently nothing short of breath taking!

Each state will be addressed with the cacti and succulents that are primarily found in that state. A fair number of the taxa inhabit more than one state, but many species are often found in a geographically small area located only within a single state. These genera include some of the rarest and most difficult to cultivate cacti and succulents to be found in the trade today. Their environments range from extreme cold regions with blazing sun, to high elevations with meters of snow, and from very arid low deserts with furnace like temperatures to Mediterranean-like coastal niches.

Woody will focus on the most unique and classic representatives of the Cactaceae and many other succulent genera. These genera will include; *Agave*, *Ancistrocactus*, *Ariocarpus*, *Astrophytum*, *Carnegiea*, *Coryphantha*, *Dasyliirion*, *Dudleya*, *Echeveria*, *Echinocereus*, *Echinomastus*, *Epithelantha*, *Escobaria*, *Ferocactus*, *Graptopetalum*, *Lophocereus*, *Lophophora*, *Mammillaria*, *Neobesseya*, *Neolloydia*, *Nolina*, *Opuntia*, *Pediocactus*, *Sclerocactus*, *Stenocereus*, *Thelocactus*, and *Yucca*. We will also take a look at some of the old plant names and their places, and stories in history.

*Con't on page 3*

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*Euphorbia obesa*

### Sacramento Cactus & Succulent Society

- Meetings are held the 4<sup>th</sup> 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

## Cactus — *Astrophytum*/ *Digitostigma*

The *Astrophytum* genus is comprised of 4 species of globose to short cylindrical cacti and one sprawling, octopus-like member. The first four were discovered between the years 1828 & 1845. Two of these are spineless and two have prominent spines. While each species is quite distinct, one from another these four feature a star-shaped appearance when viewed from above. Hence the name *Astrophytum*, which means star plant.



*Astrophytum myriostigma*

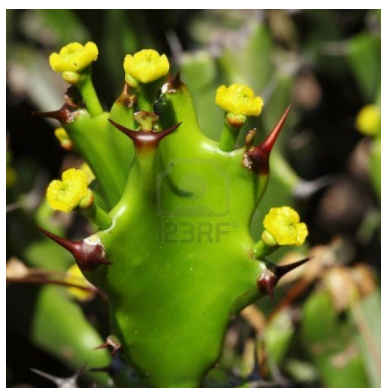
*Astrophytum* species have been frequently compared to marine life, in particular *A. asterias* for its striking similarity to sea urchins. The fifth member of this group was newly discovered in 2001. *A. caput-madusae* is quite distinct from the other members of the genus and actually very distinct from all other cacti genera as well. Hence, many enthusiasts feel it should be part of its own genus and consider it to be the sole species in the genus *Digitostigma*. The name *Digitostigma* describes the long digit-like tubercles that grow something like an octopus. Despite the noticeable differences, all 5 species including *caput-madusae* feature a sort of flocking of white trichomes (or bumps) on the epidermis. Although in cultivation some forms are bred for their lack of flocking. Plants in this genus also all have yellow flowers with fuzzy floral tubes. Some have a red-centered flower, all are radially symmetric and eventually turn into dry, fuzzy seed pods bearing relatively large, black seeds that are among the easiest to germinate. The four original *Astrophytum* members have been extremely popular in cultivation and numerous exotic hybrids have been created that accentuate various features such as amount of flocking, number of ribs, lack of spines, etc. With the uniqueness of *caput-madusae* coupled with its late discovery, it is currently one of the most sought after cactus species by collectors world-wide. And in that sense, it fits in quite well with the other *Astrophytum* species. *Astrophytum* is a Chihuahuan desert native occurring in north/central Mexico and southern Texas.



*Digitostigma (Astrophytum)  
caput-medusae*

## Succulent — *Euphorbia*

*Euphorbia* is a genus of flowering plants belonging to the family Euphorbiaceae. Consisting of 2008 species, *Euphorbia* is the fourth largest genus of flowering plants; it also has one of the largest ranges of chromosome counts, along with *Rumex* and *Senecio*. Members of the family and genus are commonly referred to as spurges. *Euphorbia antiquorum* is the type species for the genus *Euphorbia*; it was described by Carl Linnaeus in 1753 in "Species Plantarum." The family is primarily found in the tropical and subtropical regions of Africa and the Americas, but also in temperate zones worldwide. Succulent species originate mostly from Africa, the



*Euphorbia antiquorum*

Americas and Madagascar. There exists a wide range of insular species: on the Hawaiian Islands, where spurges are collectively known as "akoko", and on the Canary Islands as "tabaibas". The common name "spurge" derives from the Middle English/Old French espurge ("to purge"), due to the use of the plant's

sap as a purgative. The botanical name *Euphorbia* derives from Euphorbus, the Greek physician of king Juba II of Numidia (52-50 BC - 23 AD), who married the daughter of Anthony and Cleopatra. He wrote that one of the cactus-like Euphorbias was a powerful laxative. In 12 B.C., Juba named this plant after his physician Euphorbus in response to Augustus Caesar dedicating a statue to Antonius Musa, his own personal physician. Botanist and taxonomist Carl Linnaeus assigned the name *Euphorbia* to the entire genus in the physician's honor. The plants are annual or perennial herbs, woody shrubs or trees with a caustic, poisonous milky sap (latex). The roots are fine or thick and fleshy or tuberous. Many species are more or less succulent, thorny or unarmed. The main stem and mostly also the side arms of the succulent species are thick and fleshy, 15-91 cm (6-36 inches) tall. The deciduous leaves are opposite, alternate or in whorls. In succulent species the leaves are mostly small and short-lived. The stipules are mostly small, partly transformed into spines or glands, or missing. Like all members of the family Euphorbiaceae, all spurges have unisexual flowers. In *Euphorbia* these are greatly reduced and grouped into pseudanthia called cyathia.

## DATES & DETAILS —

### ➤ THE GREAT AMERICAN SOUTHWEST – (CON'T FROM FRONT PAGE)

Adding to the mystique of the Great American Southwest is a wealth of information, from the places where these plants were found to the people who found them. Names like Coloradoa, Navajoa, Toumeya, and Utahia are just a few of the romantic and descriptive epithets used for some of these prized genera. There are many famous explorers and botanists who spent their entire lives to find these unique plants. These people include such prominent names as; Britton, Rose, Engelmann, Benson, Earle, Gentry and Weniger, just to mention a few. "All cacti are succulents, but not all succulents are cacti," explains Woody Minnich as he delves into his favorite topic. "Succulents are found on every continent of the planet, but cacti are native only to the Americas."

**A PASSION FOR SUCCULENTS**— After more than 40 years of research, Wendell (Woody) S. Minnich has become a leading expert on succulents and cacti, traveling extensively to study the most interesting and exotic plants in existence and presenting his findings at cactus and succulent societies throughout the world. He is also in the process of co-writing a book titled "The Great American Southwest Cacti and Succulents," which includes his beautiful photography combined with information on the plants he loves, their surrounding landscapes, and various Native American cultures. "My passion is being in the field," he says, "documenting and photographing what I discover." Woody; husband, father, & grandfather is always on the move and travels frequently to do presentations and shows throughout the western United States. He is a retired high school teacher of 32 years and taught Graphic Arts, Architecture, Art and Health. Woody maintains a small greenhouse where he grows unique plants and owns a well-known cactus and succulent nursery, Cactus Data Plants [CDP] which he started in 1975 and still operates today. CDP specializes in show specimens, rare cacti as well as succulents with particular emphasis on *Ariocarpus*, *Astrophytum*, *Mammillaria*, *Gymnocalycium*, *Turbiniacarpus*, *Melocactus*, *Copiapoa*, *Fouquieria*, *Pachypodium*, *Euphorbia*, *Cyphostemma*, *Adenium* and *Adenia*. Woody's served in most all Cactus and Succulent club leadership positions and has traveled throughout the world. From his trips he has developed an extensive knowledge of the cactus family as well as many of the other succulent genera. Since Woody is known for his extensive field work studying primarily the cactus family, this is the perfect meeting to bring your ailing cactus or cactus questions. Raffle Plants will be provided by Woody's CDP plants and he will be bringing plants for sale too! Woody's programs are as always a "not to miss" event. — Sandy Waters, Program Chair

### ➤ MAKING POTS AT JULY MEETING

Last year, making our own clay pots, glazing them and finally planting them with that special succulent were among the favorite activities at the monthly SCSS club meetings. All of this was made possible by our very own Club president, Keith Taylor. He is a very accomplished potter and his pots are highly sought after.



At the July 22 meeting, we started another round of pot-making. Like last year, Keith provided the clay – this time in white, sand and black. Each Club member got a one pound ball of clay for free; additional balls were available at a nominal cost.



I felt ambitious so I bought two extra balls. In hindsight, I should have been a little more conservative because I bit off a bit more than I could comfortably chew. While I wasn't

trying to make anything too polished or fancy – I like the rough, hand-made look because I think it pairs well with succulents – I still found myself rushing to finish before 9pm. In the end, I had made three vessels that looked like they had been buried in the desert sand for a thousand years and then gotten banged around by over-zealous grave robbers. In contrast, Candy Suter, who was sharing a table with me, made two refined pots with sides that resembled overlapping flower petals. I can't wait to see how they turn out.



## DATES & DETAILS — (CON'T)



We had a full house that night! At the October meeting we will glaze the pots and at the January meeting we will finish them by adding a favorite succulent. And then, hopefully, the cycle will begin again in August 2014 with making more pots.



Take a look at the [March 2013 issues of \*Thorny Issues\*](#) to see what last year's pots looked like completely finished.

— Gerhard Bock

(Photos courtesy of Keith Kitoi Taylor, Master Potter)

### ➤ COUNTRY STORE—SEPTEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>

It is just one month away (and a couple of weeks). Are you planning ahead? Have you cleaned that closet with all the C & S trinkets for the Silent Auction? Are you canning and making jam for the Produce table? Scanning the latest Martha Stewart magazine for recipes for the Sam's Sweet Shoppe? And potting up those cuttings? Well, let's get busy! This is a fundraiser for the Club and supports activities such as the Christmas party. More info next month.

— Marilynn Vilas, Country Store Chair

### ➤ SUNSHINE

Know any one that needs a bit of sunshine? Contact Marilynn Vilas [SEE ROSTER] and she will send a card from the Club.

— Thanks, Sunshine Chair

### ➤ THE VIRTUALLY INDISPUTABLE SUPERIORITY OF SUCCULENTS

(Courtesy, [Gardening Succs](#) 7/31/13 Blog post)

The other day, a friend asked me why I like succulents so much more than other plants. First, a clarification: I like lots and lots of other plants. But I don't like growing them nearly as much as I like growing succulents. Here are my top five reasons, in no particular order:

1. **Otherworldliness** — Plants like *Echeveria etna*, *Crassula moonglow*, and *Haworthia maughanii* look like they've been beamed down from Neptune. Their unapologetic weirdness charms me.
2. **Nearly infinite propagat-ability** — The idea that I can reproduce an entire plant from a single leaf still blows my mind. It's also amazingly cost-effective for those of us who are, say, full-time graduate students writing dissertations, working on the side, and making student loan payments. Just hypothetically.
3. **Sheer variety of shapes and colors.** — If you're reading this page, I doubt I have to convince you of this one!
4. **Amnesty for my neglect.** — I'm a busy gal, and sometimes I can't get to my plants for two days... or three... or four. When I had a vegetable garden, this was problematic (note that I'm using the past tense). With the exceptions of seedlings and very young plants, succulents actually seem to prefer it when I neglect them for a little while.
5. **Collective fanaticism surrounds them.** — Maybe this is true of lots of things, but I adore the photos, writings, and community that surrounds succulents. Succ-ers are a lot of fun, and getting to know other

## DATES & DETAILS — (CON'T)

succulent gardeners and attending events like the Succulent Celebration has been awesome. There is SO much to learn, and I never seem to tire of it.

How about you, fellow, succ-ers? What do you like best about succulents?

### ➤ SUCCULENTS AS THE 'TOP DRESSING'?



Have you ever thought of using Succulents as the 'Top Dressing'?... A potted patio Olive Tree along with Succulents ... Corsican Stonecrop (Sedum dasyphyllum 'Major'). (photo/design [Roger's Garden](#) via [Succulent Perch](#))

### ➤ DOES YOUR DOG HOUSE HAVE A GREEN ROOF?

In the latest issue of [ReadyMade magazine](#) is an article about creating a green roof on an existing dog house. Yes,



the latest green sensation has gone to the dogs! If you're already got yourself a dog house, there's no need to purchase a new one, so why not make it into a planting bed? After all, if your dog isn't using it, then at least you can get

something out of it. If your dog still enjoys it, now it can do double duty. This is an extra bonus if you have limited space. For the full instructions on planting a green dog house roof, grab the August/September issue of ReadyMade. The

project is inspired by [Sustainable Pet Design](#), a California-based company offering dog houses with a "Greenrrroof."

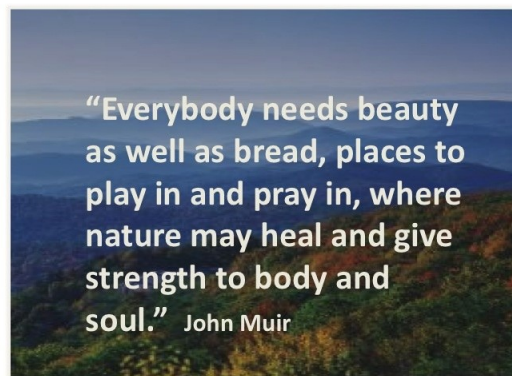


The catch is that they don't ship planted roofs outside of CA, but they offer recommendations for plants in your region. The company was started by landscape designer Stephanie Rubin after the loss of her dog, Gust. She decided to merge her love for landscape design with her passion for animals, and thus Sustainable Pet Design was born. Their incredibly unique dog houses are cutting edge, but they will also design a custom house to suit your pet.

## Mini Show Winners — July, 2013

Cactus — Echinopsis	
1 <sup>st</sup>	<i>Echinopsis glaucina</i> , Mary Schuett
2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>Echinopsis sp.</i> , Michelle Egan
Succulent — Haworthia/Gasteria	
1 <sup>st</sup>	<i>Gasteria sp. Variegata</i> , Michelle Egan
2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>Gasteria liliputana</i> , Bobbie Handen
3 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>Haworthia sp.</i> , Bobbie Handen
HM	<i>Gasteria armstrongii</i> , Mary Schuett
HM	<i>Gasteria armstrongii</i> , George Krigas
HM	<i>Haworthia sp.</i> , Dennis Ragasa
HM	<i>Haworthia attenuata variegata</i> , Marilyn Vilas

Thought for the Month



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](mailto:ldybugg6@comcast.net)**

Respectfully your editor, Mara Aditajs



Mammillaria  
schumannii ssp.  
Globose  
Courtesy Elton Roberts

# FIRST CLASS

Next Meeting Date ♦ Monday, August 26

SACRAMENTO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

c/o Mara Aditajs, Editor

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Click on the 3 links below to go directly to our website, Facebook, or the CSSA website

[www.sacramentocss.org](http://www.sacramentocss.org)



## September, 2013

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
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15 Delta Gesneriad & African Violet Sale, 9 - 4	16	17 ██████████ ████████	18 ██████████ ████████	19	20 	
22  First Day of Autumn	23 ██████████ ████████ Country Store	24 ██████████ ████████	25 ██████████ ████████	26 ██████████ ████████	27	
29 ██████████ ████████	30					 Euphorbia ammak