



## ***A hearty welcome to the CSSA e-newsletter, To The Point!***

Much like the printed TTP of the past, this space offers a forum for all members to share experiences and pertinent information. Cactus and succulent enthusiasts from novice to expert are invited to participate.

Want to show off your plants, your photography, or relay your know-how with different growing techniques? Email me your ideas, articles and photos [NOW](#). Visiting the collections of other C&S devotees counts as a big perk when joining the CSSA and local affiliates. While it's not possible to arrange tours and trips to every garden, your articles and photos will give us a peek into each other's growing styles. Grab your pen and your camera today!

Keep up to date with CSSA and local affiliate events and, of course, when the plant sales will happen. Send me your stories and photos of affiliate events [here](#).

Did your vacation take you to a fabulous botanic garden? Maybe you or your neighbor grows something unique, or in a novel manner. Share that with us!

Got a question about a plant's health? An unidentified pest chewing on your gassterias? Is that sunburn, or does it mean the roots are dead? Send a [photo](#) and we'll see if the group can help figure it out.

Do you have ideas for future issues? We want to know that as well. Drop me a quick [email](#) right this minute!

This e-newsletter is for you - so make it yours by participating. We ask that articles be kept to approximately 800 words or less. Longer articles will be considered, but please send a query to the editor first. Send word documents or paste text into the body of an email. Keep formatting to a minimum. When sending photos, send only photos that are in focus and without unnecessary distractions in frame. Unsure? See full guidelines on page 25 or drop me an email! Send your information or questions to [TTP Editor](#).



A plate showing blooming *Echinopsis turbinata* (left) and *Echinopsis multiplex* (right) from *The Cactaceae Book* by Joseph Nelson Rose and Nathaniel Lord Britton found on the Biodiversity Heritage Library site at [biodiversitylibrary.org/page/32127355](https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/32127355)

See more illustrations from the amazing and extensive Biodiversity Heritage Library in this issue "Biodiversity Heritage Library" on page 19

# CSSA News

## Rod Haenni Webinar “Secrets of Success with Cacti/Succulents in Cold Climates”

Saturday, July 11, 10:00 PDT

My passion for cacti and succulents that could thrive in a cold climate began 42 years ago when I traveled to the Colorado Plateau and the Southwest



desert as a minerals geologist, looking for uranium deposits. Cacti, yuccas, and agaves were commonly seen in my travels and I wondered what I could grow in Denver.

Today, I grow thousands of plants outdoors and in the lightly heated conservatory of my one acre microclimate - based succulent gardens. I have traveled the world to see what exotic cacti and succulents might be hardy in Patagonia, South Africa, and from European collections. I am an adventurous seed grower and utilize a wide network of other growers, nurseries and seed brokers, always expanding my search for new cold - tolerant succulents.

**New C&S book.  
Get yours TODAY!**

**[Beginner's Guide to  
Adromischus, Aeonium,  
Dudleya, Euphorbia,  
Pelargonium and other  
Succulent Dicots](#)**

**[by Tom Glavich](#)**

## CSSA Quarterly Calendar 2020

Full details and updates at  
[CSSA Calendar](#)

### AUGUST 2020

- 15-16 35th Annual Inter-City Show & Sale - Canceled
- 29-30 Central Coast Cactus and Succulent Show

### SEPTEMBER 2020

- 5-7 Huntington Botanical Gardens Succulent Symposium (may be rescheduled)
- 5-7 Cactus and Succulent Society of New Mexico
- 11-12 Victoria Cactus and Succulent Society Fall Show
- 12-13 Houston Cactus and Succulent Society Annual Show & Sale
- 12 Los Angeles Cactus and Succulent Society Fall Sale
- 26 Santa Fe Cactus and Succulent Club Fall Sale

### OCTOBER 2020

- 10-11 Bakersfield Cactus and Succulent Show & Sale
- 18 Conejo Cactus and Succulent Society Sale

### CSSA Officers

Jeff, Pavlat, President  
Rod Haenni, Vice President  
Roxie Esterle, Secretary  
Clifford Meng, Treasurer  
Tim Harvey, Managing Editor  
Linda Tamblyn, To The Point Editor  
Gunnar Eisel, Executive Director

# AFFILIATE SOCIETY UPDATES

## Making the Old New: The Succulent Explosion and a Local Club

Karen Summers, [Cascade Cactus and Succulent Society of WA](#)

Since the early 1970s the Cascade Cactus and Succulent Society of Washington State plodded along enjoying monthly gatherings to talk about all things succulent. There were peaks and valleys; the peaks being hosting the national convention in 2007 and hosting regional conferences with Desert Plant Society of Vancouver, BC and the Oregon Cactus and Succulent Society. Speakers were occasionally invited to make their way to the far northwest corner of the continental US to astound the members with slides of enormous plants in habitat that we grew in greenhouses in 4-inch pots. We engaged in the

national convention and had a member who was invited to speak at these conventions. Overall, it was a friendly, simple club with nice people who spoke a good deal of Latin.

“Once upon a time....” changed quickly to “When suddenly.....” It started when some young people (in their 20s and 30s) showed up at our meetings. When ideas were needed, they offered suggestions like “Instagram,” “Amazon Fresh” (in response to who will bring refreshments), “Square” and “Apple Pay.” In addition to Latin, our meetings were now peppered with tech words and with people pulling out phones to



Field trip group in Oregon. Photo: Candi Hibert

make notes, checking facts as presenters talked, and who referred to plants with easily pronounced names such as ‘bunny ears,’ ‘pincushion,’ ‘peanut,’ ‘zig zag,’ etc.

Reading the body language of these sometimes, disengaged young folk, the leadership quickly rallied, realizing that unless things changed these vibrant, young members were going to leave as quickly as they arrived. In assessing the situation, we felt involvement to be invaluable - to encourage bonding to the club and to get their ideas for programs of interest. The program chair began a brainstorming and voting process in order to prepare the program selections for each year. As a result programming shifted from educational lectures to a mix of more collection visits, succulent related hands on activities (terrariums, macramé hangers for pots, dish gardens, photography), and lectures on topics chosen by the members. At the request of members bored with too much “meeting talk” we implemented surprise Bingo games, with number calling integrated into meetings. One

of our older members, a quiet, respectable fellow, who was amazed to be even asked to play Bingo at a club meeting (a game he had never played before), delighted us by being the very first prize winner. His uncontained excitement to be the winner pleased all present.

Our archaic website seriously needed an overhaul and one of the new members offered to do that in partnership with the program chair. As a result, new features were added including Instagram, a short-lived Twitter account established for our plant sale, FAQs, online membership forms, and an improved photo gallery. Since that time, the website has had a second facelift resulting in a more sophisticated look, a member forum, even online membership payments. We used our formerly quiet Facebook page as a tool to reach out to possible new members, promote

our sale, and as a forum to address cactus and succulent-related questions.

As a result of our extremely successful annual plant sale and Instagram/Facebook presence, our club membership has increased by 33% in the past 3 years. Quickly incorporating many new members into our club has also been a strategic focus. Creating a climate of welcome we implemented friendly greeters at the door. These club members orient new members to the meeting room and explain our meeting agenda,



Jose Alvarez Guerrero, our youngest club member who graduated high school this year. Photo: Candi Hibert

provides a new member info sheet. We encourage all members to wear their name tags when they greet new faces and ask visitors and new members to introduce themselves to the group. All this combines to make people feel comfortable at each meeting. In addition, our leadership team makes a point of greeting new faces, as well as members, during pre-meeting social time.

What is the result of incorporating new younger members? One of the most dramatic shifts in our club has been in our annual sale. What was once a cluster of tables with 10 sellers has transitioned to a well-planned, highly organized sale with nearly 19 vendors, two check-out lanes (including Apple Pay), a children’s activity, a greeter at the entry and a “thanker” at the exit. Our 2019 sale featured a formal show table display curated by three of our newer members, and a professional artist designed photo booth at the exit, again a contribution from a new member. Instagram lit up with shots taken with the fun backdrop. Free publicity.

What makes our club work is our leadership listening and trying on new ideas. We invite change and those with years of experience in the club work with those who are new to bridge the gap of “the way we have always done it

because it works” to “this new thing we want to try.” We use surveys, ask for feedback, check in with members individually to keep whole club involvement in making the shift to a younger vibe. The bottom line is we adapted with social change in order to meet the needs of our members.

In the past three years we have experienced a membership increase of 50% (from 70 to 105 members), meeting attendance increase of 125% (from 20 to 45), participation in weekend overnight field trips increase of 400% (from 5 to 25), 491% increase in Facebook followers from 100 to 591, and the unmeasured results of frequent hugs between members, a culture of inclusion of new members and visitors, and an atmosphere of play. Bingo!



Some of the plant sale volunteers with the lovely photo backdrop. Photo: Candi Hibert

## HSC&SS's New Martin Schweig Award Recognizes Volunteers

From the Henry Shaw Cactus and Succulent Society January 2020 - <https://hscactus.org/resources/digest/member-news/new-martin-schweig-award-recognizes-volunteers/>

Jerry Beckerman deservedly received the first Martin Schweig Appreciation Award.

Henry Shaw Cactus and Succulent Society has established a new award to recognize volunteers who freely give their time and energy to support the club. Named in honor of a long-time member who worked for HSCSS on many levels until his passing in 2017, the Martin Schweig Appreciation Award will be presented periodically at club events.

Schweig was a former HSCSS president, board member and garden liason, whom many considered a true Renaissance man. He was a prominent professional photographer, Missouri Botanical Garden trustee and board member of the Audubon Society, Humane Society and St. Louis Zoo. He was a lover of plants and animals, and a friend to many.

The first recipient of the Martin Schweig Appreciation Award was Jerry Beckerman. Don Lesmeister presented the award to Beckerman at the 2019 Winter Gala, calling it “a fine award for a fine person.”

In his January newsletter column, HSCSS

President Ralph Olliges noted that Beckerman “works tirelessly behind the scenes without much recognition. He is always lending a hand in making our events flow smoothly.”

Among other volunteer efforts, Beckerman is key to the operation of the annual HSCSS Show and Sale. He helps guide the setup process and oversees plant pricing and organization. For several years he has also helped promote the event through appearances on radio and television.

Members like Beckerman are indeed special. “These important members are the symbolic glue that helps keep this successful club together,” Lesmeister said. “This special award is for them.”



Jerry Beckerman with his Martin Schweig Appreciation Award. Jerry is the first recipient of this honor.



# ASK IT

Everyone learns when we share our experiences and our knowledge. Let's start the discussion! Send in your question - or your answer - [here](#) TODAY. These will be printed in an upcoming *To The Point*.

Send your Q or A to [TTP.Editor@gmail.com](mailto:TTP.Editor@gmail.com)

Q: Does anyone have experience growing *Stephania erecta* ↓?

My Google search turned up conflicting information - some say indirect light, others recommend full sun. The



sources are also at odds about the amount of water needed in the growing season. My plants go outside in the summer and sleep under lights and on windowsills during the winter.

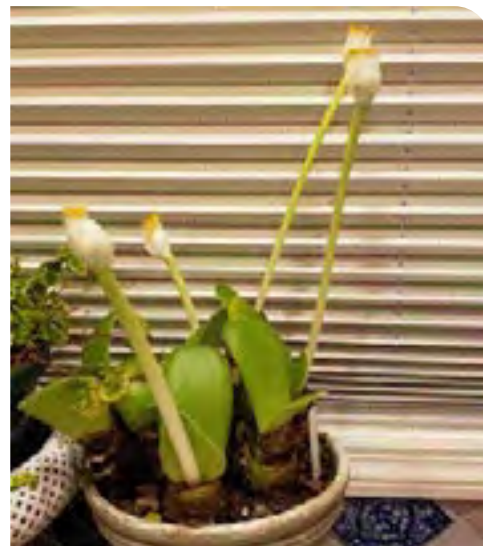
Linda Tamblyn  
Merriam, KS

Q: I have several leaves from different plants that have this unhappy marking ↑ happening to their leaves. Can anyone explain it for me? It is neither hot nor cold weather when this happens, it is a mystery.  
MA Bjarkman, Los Angeles, CA

## Show & Tell

Sharon SmithDelisle,  
Editor Connecticut C&S Society

At long last, my *Haemanthus albiflos* → bloomed This plant was a 2016 CCSS holiday grab bag gift, which was in full bloom at that time. While it grew well, it hasn't bloomed since - until it got a cool, dry rest this past autumn.



Wouldn't Judy Becker be so proud to see her ← *Dioscorea elephantipes* in full bloom! This 30+ year old plant has been in my care since Judy's passing this past summer. Needless to say, it is a great responsibility and I held my breath until it came out of dormancy this past October.

From Connecticut Cactus & Succulent Society, January 2020.

Photos: Sharon SmithDelisle



# Growing From Seed

Sue Haffner, Cactus Corner News - Fresno, CA

Have you ever tried growing cacti or succulents from seed? Or, have you tried growing other 'exotics' from seed, having been seduced by gorgeous photos in the seed catalogs? You might have succumbed and ordered seed, planted it, and been disappointed by the results. (Or, on the other hand, you might have had some beginner's luck and had everything come up. Enthused, you tried again, only to have disappointing results. Maybe you gave up, after this.) Not everyone is attracted to the practice. One veteran grower exclaimed to me, "I won't live long enough to see my plants bloom [if I grew them from seed]!" (Actually, that isn't true, as some species of cacti can produce blooms when less than a year old - but that's another story.)

Successful growing from seed involves a number of variables: quality of the seed, the medium used, moisture, temperature, light. A medium recommended by Peg Spaete, founder of the CSSA Seed Depot and an expert grower, is this one: 4 parts coarse sand, 3 parts milled sphagnum, 1 part coarse vermiculite, 1 part commercial potting soil, and 1 part pumice. Ask a dozen different growers, and you will get a dozen different 'recipes'. You can pasteurize your mix by baking it in an oven: moisten the mix, cover it with foil, place it in the oven and bring it to 180°F soil temperature and bake for an hour. In the microwave, set the probe for 165 degrees; or you can pour boiling water through the mix after you have placed it in the pots or flats you intend to use for seeding. Let the mix cool before planting the seeds.

Sow the seeds evenly on the surface. Don't bury them; press them into the soil with a flat object or spoon. You may sprinkle tiny gravel (#4 size) over the sown seed. Sow larger succulent seeds upright, leaving the top of the seed uncovered. I have heard that euphorbia seeds should be planted with the pointed end up - if you can figure out which is the pointed end. If you can't tell "which end is up", plant them sideways.

Cover the seed containers with a clear plastic wrap or a see-through dome and place them in a warm place or over a heating cable. Warmth may speed up germination. But if you don't have a heating cable, don't worry; the seeds will germinate; it

will just take a little longer. Most seeds need some light for germination. A windowsill is fine; some people construct a light garden just for seed-raising. A simple shop light arrangement is usually sufficient.

Seed of some of the hardier cacti, such as *Sclerocactus*, *Pediocactus*, *Opuntia* and related genera, need some special treatment, a "mock winter." Sow the seeds in a moist soil mix, cover with clear plastic, and put the pots in a refrigerator at 35–40°F for 6–8 weeks. Then put them under lights or in a warm area with light to germinate. For a real winter, set them outside in a cold frame. Some Southwest desert seeds need a cycle of freezing and thawing in order to overcome germination inhibitors. Succulent seeds with hard coats, such as *Ipomea*, *Cyphostemma*, *Beaucarnea*, etc., should be soaked at least overnight, or should have their seed coats abraded or nicked.

When seedlings appear, you can begin to ventilate the seed pans by lifting the coverings, but be sure not to let them dry out, as this is likely to be fatal to the baby plants. Don't be in a hurry to transplant the seedlings, either. Many cacti can be kept in their seed pans for up to a year. Keep the seedlings moist for the first year; you can begin a more normal cycle in the second year. Peg recommends feeding with 20-20-20 fertilizer with each watering.

The July/August 1995 issue of *The Cactus and Succulent Journal* was devoted to the subject of seed-raising. Now out of print, it has been the most popular of the special issues. Most cactus and succulent books have sections on growing from seed. Remember that no procedure works perfectly for everyone, as there are too many variables involved. Don't be discouraged if you have the occasional failure. It happens to everyone. Keep trying!



*Thelocactus saussieri*

Courtesy of Creative Commons,  
Dornrnwolf,  
<https://flic.kr/p/ekT2WU>

# THE DESERT GARDEN AT THE HUNTINGTON

Article courtesy of [The Huntington Gardens](#)

The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens is known for many things. Ask a history buff, and you'll hear about the priceless rare books and manuscripts housed here. The connoisseur of art will tell you of the world-class collection of paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts. And garden lovers will rhapsodize about the beauty of the 12 themed landscapes, from a 100-year-old Japanese Garden to a new classical style Chinese Garden, that comprise the 120-acre grounds on this former private estate.



But among all its acclaimed treasures, one of the things The Huntington is most famous for is its outstanding collection of cacti and succulents. The 10-acre Desert Garden, established in 1907, is one of the oldest and largest assemblages of arid-adapted plants in the world, showcasing more than 2,000 different species. Hundreds more reside in the Desert Garden Conservatory and nursery. The Huntington's Desert Collections are the institution's most important research and conservation collection among the gardens, containing a number of species that are now extinct in the wild. Since The Huntington first opened to the public in 1928, the Desert Garden—with its vibrant colors, unusual



↑ A stunning view of the Desert Garden at The Huntington Gardens.  
↪ *Puya alpestris* in bloom.  
Photos courtesy of The Huntington Gardens



forms, and varied textures—has been a visitor favorite. Mature, massed plantings create dramatic displays, such as the winter flowering of hundreds of *Aloe* species; the spectacular spring/summer bloom of the *Puya* collection; summer blooms from 20–30 different species of *Yucca* and numerous varieties of cacti; large groupings of golden barrel cacti (*Echinocactus grusonii*); and dozens of *Echinopsis* cactus hybrids with their astonishingly beautiful blooms. The hillside landscape of the Desert Garden is also rich with *Opuntia*, *Mammillaria*, *Agave*, *Echeveria*, *Crassula*, *Sedum*, *Fouquieria*, and *Aeonium* species, along with many more. Delicate succulents that would not survive outdoors in Southern California’s cool winters are housed in the Desert Garden Conservatory, located at the top of the garden.



The Desert Garden serves as a living classroom, as well, introducing school children to the amazing diversity of succulent plants and their adaptations to dry climates.

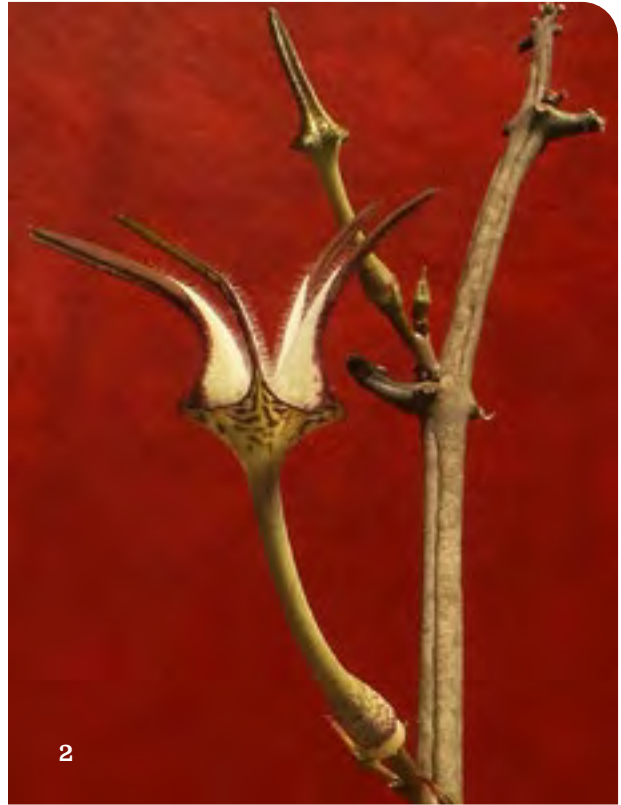
Behind the scenes, the desert collection supports a wide range of research and conservation activities, including a tissue culture laboratory and cryopreservation research program. The International Succulent Introductions (ISI) is the Huntington’s plant introduction program, and an annual list of offerings is published in the *Cactus and Succulent Journal* and on the Huntington’s website.

The Huntington is located just 12 miles from downtown Los Angeles at 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino, CA 91108. It is open to the public Wednesday through Monday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Tuesdays and major holidays. Adult admission is \$25 on weekdays and \$29 on weekends; discounted rates are offered for seniors, students, children, and groups. Members are admitted free. Admission is free to all visitors on the first Thursday of each month with advance tickets. Information: 626-405-2100 or [www.huntington.org](http://www.huntington.org).



↑ *Echinopsis* 'Celeste' blooming at The Huntington Gardens.  
 ↓ Prolific bracts of *Euphorbia lambii* also known as Truffula Tree.  
 Photos courtesy of Huntington Gardens.

# Octopus Flowers?



*Dorstenia crista* (1) Photo: Linda Tamblyn  
*Ceropegia* sp. (2)  
*Hoya multiflora* (3)  
*Euphorbia globosa* (4)  
Photos: Mike Ferguson

From the April 2020 British Cactus and Succulent Society eNews:

## Biscuithead and the Biscuit Badgers NEW BCCS video

As mentioned in eNews a few months ago, 'British Cactus and Succulent Society' is an amusing song on Biscuithead & the Biscuit Badgers' album, 'Thought Porridge'. The band has recently released a video which may prove entertaining. I have seen comments which say that the tune is quite catchy and it grows on you.

You can watch the video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o80wjw--0kk>

# STAPELIADS:

*Caralluma*, *Edithcolea*, *Orbea*, *Echidnopsis*, *Hoodia*, *Huernia*, *Orbeopsis*, *Orbeanthus*, *Stapelia*, *Stapelianthus*, *Tavaresia*, *Trichocaulon*<sup>1</sup>, *Tromotriche*, *Piarranthus*

By Dennis Kucera

From Open Gates - July 2000 - [Gates Cactus and Succulent Society](#) Redlands, CA

These leafless succulent stem plants are members of the milkweed family, *Asclepiadaceae*. There are about 300 genera and 2,800 species of plants in this family. They come from most continents from temperate to tropical and desert climates. They can be leafy shrubs, vines or clump forming low leafless succulents.

We are most interested in the Stapeliae group listed above. These leafless, thick stem succulents have very reduced leaves or tubercles or teeth. Their very succulent flowers have 5 petals or petal lobes and often are very bad smelling. The reddish brown color and smell of rotting meat of the flower attract carrion flies, blue tailed flies and other insects for pollination. They are native to the deserts of Arabia, Africa and Madagascar.

*Edithcolea* has two species with 5-angled stems to 12 inches tall from eastern Africa and Yemen. *Edithcolea grandis* has reddish brown and yellow star-shaped flowers to 5 inches across.

*Caralluma*, syn. *Frerea*, is a genus of 80 to 100 species of clump forming perennial succulents from Africa, Socotra, Arabia, India, and Burma. They have open, bell shaped flowers with 5 lobes. *Caralluma burchardii* is a cushion-forming, leafless succulent with gray-green stems to 3 inches. It has clusters of small reddish-brown flowers in summer. It comes from Morocco and the Canary Islands. *Caralluma joannis* is another leafless succulent to 4 inches tall with purple-green stems. In summer it has clusters up to 10 flowers with each 1 inch across. These bell flowers are red-spotted inside with velvety purple lobes tipped with fine hairs. It comes from Morocco.



▲ Bushman's Hat, Queen of the Namib, *Hoodia gordonii* (Masson) Sweet ex Decne, Biedouw Valley, Cederberg Local Municipality, Western Cape, South Africa. Courtesy of Wikipedia.

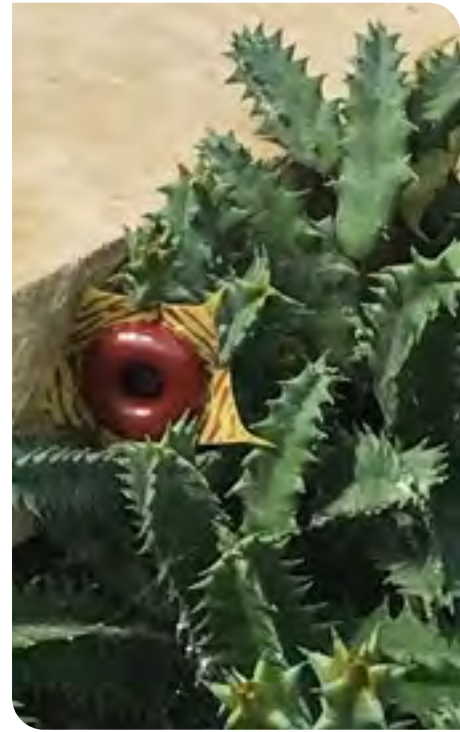


▲ *Edithcolea grandis* Photo: Mike Ferguson

*Hoodia* is a genus closely related to *Trichocaulon* with about 20 species of erect branching perennial succulents with spines. They come from Angola, Botswana, South Africa and Namibia. They produce large saucer to cup-shaped flowers with a foul odor. *Hoodia bainii* is a subshrub to 8 inches high. It has erect stems with up to 15 angular ribs bearing brown spines. The dull yellow flowers are up to 3 inches across. It is native to S. Africa and Namibia. *Hoodia currorii* is an erect shrub to 24 inches with spiny ribs. The terminal flowers are cupped-shaped up to 8 inches across, green to ivory to pink. It comes from Angola and Namibia.

*Huernia* is genus of about 65 species of low-growing erect succulents from S. Africa to Ethiopia and Arabia. *Huernia pillansii* from S. Africa has short 1½ inch green stems that are very bristly. It has starfish-shaped flowers to 1½ inches across and are colored cream, pink or red. *Huernia zebrina* from Namibia, Botswana and S. Africa has creamy-colored flowers with numerous purple-brown bands.

*Orbea* is a genus of about 20 species of dwarf, clump forming, leafless succulents, closely related and originally called *Stapelia*. They come from dry rocky hillsides of eastern and southern Africa. Their flowers are 5-pointed stars with a carrion scent that attracts blue bottle flies for pollination. *Orbea ciliata* grow into a 2 inch high mat of erect 4-angled toothed stems that are green with red tips. Bowl shaped yellow, purple-spotted flowers, 3 inches across develop in summer. *Orbea variegata*, Syn. *Stapelia variegata*, is commonly called starfish cactus and they do smell fishy when in flower. It forms a clump of 4 inch high erect toothed gray-green stems mottled purple. In summer it produces groups of up to 5 flat, very wrinkled



▲ *Huernia zebrina*

Photo: Linda Tamblyn



▲ *Stapelia gigantea* flower close-up. White masses in the bottom of flower are ill-fated maggots.

Photo: Linda Tamblyn

dark brownish-red, yellow mottled flowers. It comes from the east coast of S. Africa.

*Stapelia* is a genus of about 45 species known as the carrion flower. They come from hilly terrain of tropical and southern Africa. *Stapelia gigantea*, syn. *S. nobilis*, is a clump-forming succulent with 4-angled, velvety, light green stems to 18 inches high and 1 inch thick. Its foul smelling yellow and dark red flowers are up to 14 inches across and are fringed with silky red hairs. *Stapelia grandiflora* has erect 12 inch stems that are toothed and mid-green about 1 inch thick. Dull purplish-red flowers to 9 inches across are produced in summer. It is native to the western and eastern coasts of S. Africa.

<sup>1</sup>This submission was originally created in 2000. There have been some nomenclature changes since then. The milkweed family Asclepiadaceae is now classified as the subfamily Asclepiadoideae of the dogbane family, Apocynaceae. Most of the genera mentioned in this article are in the tribe Ceropegieae in the subfamily Asclepiadoideae. *Trichocaulon* is now *Larryleachia*. -John Matthews

# TIPS, TRICKS AND ANECDOTES

## Helpful Hint: Draining Heavy Pots

Thomas M. Schwink, [Mid-Iowa C&S Society](#)

<http://cactusandsucculentsociety.org/cssaarchives/NewsLetterArchives/news15.html>

Some of my potted plants (in my home) are now too heavy for me to lift. These include some of my *Aloe polyphylla* plants. Since I usually water from above and need to remove what drains out the bottom of the pots to prevent buildup of salts, I had to figure out how to do this without lifting the very heavy pots. I use folded paper towels to drain the water from the saucers. The paper

towels function as wicks and as siphons, allowing me to empty the saucers without lifting the pots. In my greenhouse I have several pots which are also too heavy for me to lift easily. I use the paper towels in the same way there, putting one end in the saucer and letting the other end hang over the side of the bench, so that the water drains from the saucers onto the greenhouse floor.

## Insects that Suck

Linda Tamblin, [KC Cactus and Succulent Society](#)

Bayer Tree and Shrub©, at a rate of 1 tablespoon per gallon of water, works well for me to keep sucking pests at bay. Used as a drench, twice a year, it has solved my mealy bug and fungus gnat problems.

Follow us on Facebook at



[Cactus and Succulent Society of America](#)

**MAKE A DONATION TO THE CSSA**

**SUPPORT THE MISSION**

**AND PROGRAMS OF CSSA**

# LOVE, WAR AND CACTI: A LITTLE STORY OF A SYRIAN CACTUS

Chaden Yafi, Houston, TX

Reprinted from Kaktos Komments, [Houston Cactus & Succulent Society](#), May/June 2020

My mother fell in love with my father who was her college professor of philosophy at Damascus University in Syria. Her love was genuine and went beyond a youthful crush or infatuation of a young mind with a well-recognized thinker and writer. Years later, they got married. When she moved to his rather small apartment in the heart of Damascus, she thought she knew everything about the man she loved--until she went to the balcony! More than fifty pots of cacti were waiting for her, spiny, dry, and strange looking! My mother tried her best to like them but complained many times about their spines hurting her skin every time she tried to clean the balcony. Yet she admitted: The scene was spectacular every year by the end of spring! All of the cacti flowered at the same time giving mainly yellow flowers! They were mostly Opuntia cacti, the type common in Syria, and seemed to thrive well in the dry climate and high summer temperatures. When my parents had children, they moved to a bigger apartment on the top floor, so they also owned the roof of the building. My father

moved his beloved cacti and placed them on the spacious roof. In the cold nights of winter both of my parents would climb up and cover the cacti with blankets. My father took a job with the United Nations that made us travel a lot. Worried about the cacti, he decided to give them to neighbors in the basement apartment of the building who owned a yard. That move was a big mistake! The neighbors were negligent and didn't like those cacti; they even offered many of them as gifts to their friends. When we came back to settle in Damascus, there were only about a dozen left. They could all fit on the balcony. Growing up, I didn't care much about plants, and I don't remember any of the cacti ever flowering, as if they were angry at us for neglecting them. However, I still remember how one of our next-door neighbors used to send us, once every year, a strange, big white flower that had a very strong, exotic fragrance. My mother would place the flower in a cup of water. The whole apartment would smell like perfume for a couple of days. Many years later I came



Cold and delicious prickly pear fruits! (Top)  
Opuntia fruits for sale. (Center)  
Photos: Khaldoun al Khan  
At the Market. (Bottom)  
Courtesy: Facebook Page: All about Damascus



to realize that it was the flower of the Night Blooming Cereus cactus. Our neighbor owned a large specimen that gave many flowers every year for just one night. In Syria, this cactus is called Laylat al Qadr, "Night of Decree." In Islamic culture this phrase refers to the night when the Quran was first sent to the world from heaven, and when the first verse of it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. One of the most common fruits, during the hot

summers of Syria, is the prickly pear. With the beginning of the hot weather, the streets of Damascus would be filled with little kiosks selling this orange fruit. The merchants would display the fruits on large blocks of ice, and they would have a few chairs around for customers to sit on while eating. The seller would be wearing rubber gloves, and when the buyer pointed at the particular piece of fruit he wanted to eat, the seller would pick it up and gracefully peel it with a knife. Then the customer would pick up the fruit with his hand and devour it, fresh, cold, ripened, and extremely delicious. In Arabic, the prickly pear plants and fruits are called Sabbara which means "patient," an adjective derived from the word "Saber," meaning "patience," referring to the plant's ability to endure the arid desert climate without rain. The Sabbara kiosks were favorite hanging out spots for lovers and teenagers. My father used to bring large boxes of prickly pears from the Opuntia farms where he befriended many

*Opuntia* farm (Top, left); *Opuntia* fruit for sale (left, second down). From Facebook Page: All about Damascus Me (bottom, left) and my beautiful *Echinopsis* cactus (top - right, center, bottom).

Photos: Chaden Yafi



At home in Houston. Photo: Chaden Yafi

owners. My mom would soak the fruits in buckets of water, then, wearing gloves, would peel them and arrange them in large bowls. This was such a treat. We devoured many at a time, but my mom wouldn't eat any of the fruit. I saw her many evenings with tweezers and a magnifying glass trying to remove spines from her fingers.

In 2007 I went back to Damascus after finishing my studies in Music at Boston University. The balcony still had cacti among other plants, but I was somewhat indifferent towards them until the day I noticed a long, hairy stem coming out from a cluster of cacti! I had no clue what it was! The next day, to my surprise, the end of the stem turned into the most beautiful pink flower that I have ever seen! I was thrilled! I rushed to get my camera to take photos! I spent the entire day looking with amazement at the flower. The next day it was gone.

Perhaps that cactus enjoyed my attention so much that a few months later, she gave seven flowers at once. This extravaganza was without any fertilizers or any care from my part, just the regular, once a week watering to all the plants

on the balcony. That day I called all my friends and neighbors to come visit and admire the cactus! There has been a change in my heart since that day. I fell in love so deeply with cacti, with their patience, endurance, resilience, tolerance, and surviving powers. I started to take better care of them and spent more time looking at and observing them.

In March 2011, the unrest started in Syria and quickly turned into a very ugly war that forced me to escape a year later, leaving my beautiful Echinopsis cactus and her friends alone on the balcony. Living in Houston, I didn't want to own any cactus as I missed my "Syrian" cactus so much. Then little by little I started to encounter many beautiful types of cacti. Getting the first cactus was difficult; it gave me a bitter sense of guilt. I felt like I was sort of betraying my cacti in Damascus, that I was forgetting them by starting a new collection. After a while, however, the new Texan cacti were able to cheer me up with their varieties and colorful blooms. They brought solace and peace to my heart, away from home.



# HARDY CACTUS GARDENING IN MID-AMERICA

Judy Pigue, Raytown, MO



↑ Me between two, almost 20 year old, *Yucca elatas*. I grew these from seed that my trucker husband, Bill, brought me when he was driving between Texas and New Mexico. A very thoughtful gift since I like yuccas and I like growing from seed.

↴ An orange tea rose (left) added to my garden for additional color - and for the personal significance when I saw the name was 'Cynthia', my late daughter's name. I had to buy it.

↷ *Opuntia strigil* (right), which was also a gift from Bill. He brought me a single pad of this at the same time as the Yucca seeds. It has done wonderfully for me. It's my most favorite Opuntia. Why? It will take anything that's thrown at it: -17°F temperatures or too much rain with never any spots or rot. It blooms reliably and is very prolifically as you can see.





↑ *Escobaria missouriensis* is native to Wilson County in Kansas about 20 miles from where I grew up. A friend of my mother's, who was also interested in C&S, invited us to his farm to see his hardy cactus in the fence row. This clump is from the starts we were invited to take home.

↓ *Aloe aristata*, from South Africa, proves to be marginally hardy in my garden. Once I tried it in my garden where it rotted and died. Last winter, I tried a new one using a clear plastic container turned upside down over it, then weighted that with a rock on top. It came through temperatures dropping to -10°F and now is just fine. It has added several offsets on the left side and popped up one out in right field...I love my cactus and succulents! Never a dull moment!

All Photos: Judy Pigue

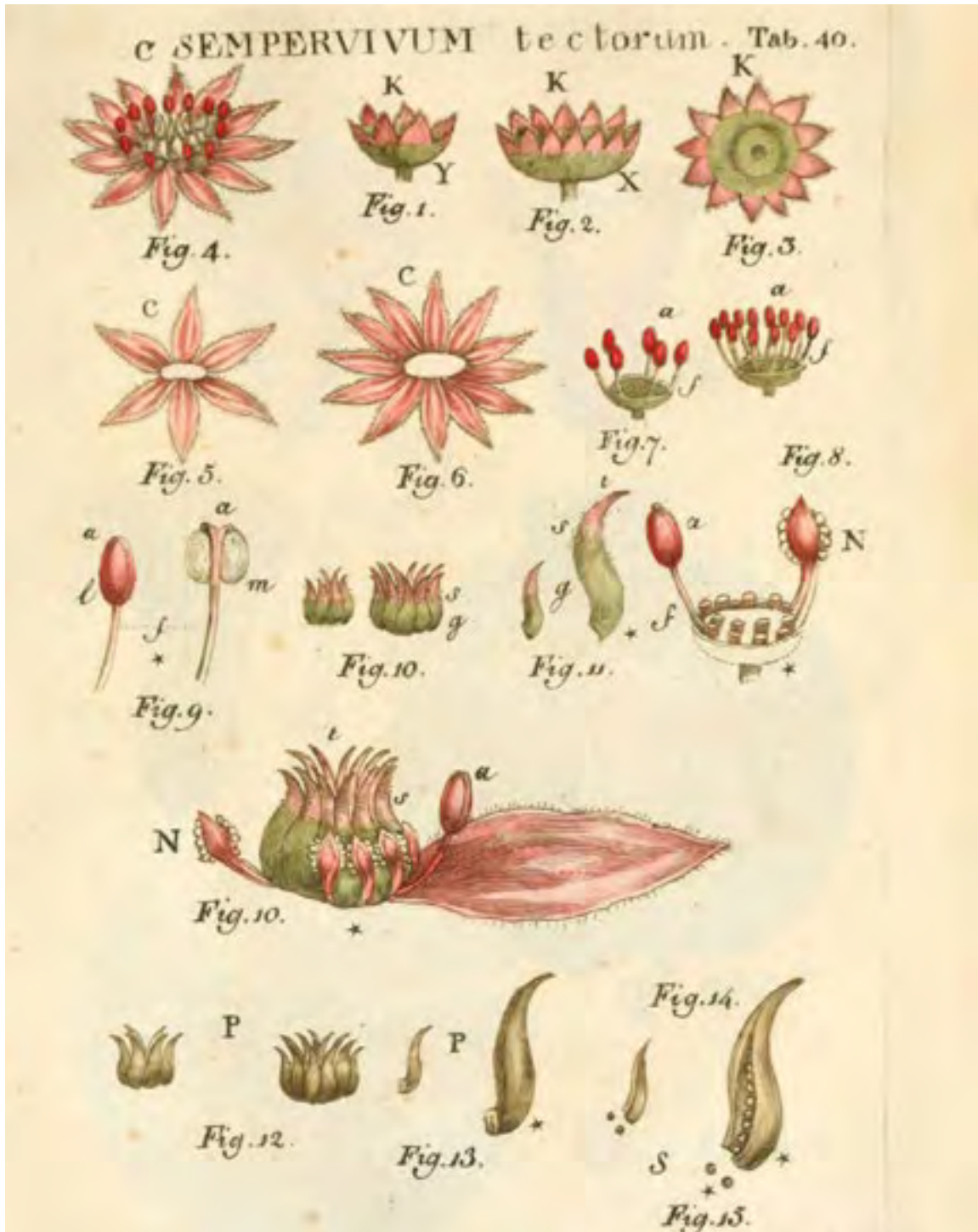


# Biodiversity Heritage Library

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From their website : "The Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) is the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. BHL is revolutionizing global research by providing free, worldwide access to knowledge about life on Earth." Earlier this year they began releasing new botanical illustrations. It's a collection worth looking through. While the Library contains illustrations of insects, anatomy, sealife..., the following photos are a minute sampling.

(Links in article may change due to changes on Library site)



▲ *Illustratio systematis sexualis Linnaeani*; Francofurti ad Moenum, Varrentrapp et Wenner, 1789. [biodiversitylibrary.org/page/7360233](https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/7360233)



Revue horticole., Paris :Librairie agricole de la maison rustique,1829-1974., [biodiversitylibrary.org/page/49673731](https://biodiversitylibrary.org/page/49673731) (Top, left)

Icones plantarum selectarum Horti Regii Botanici Berolinensis cum descriptionibus et colendi ratione / Berolini :[Decker],1820-1828., [biodiversitylibrary.org/page/35991397](https://biodiversitylibrary.org/page/35991397) (Top, center)

The botanical cabinet. London : John & Arthur Arch ..., 1817-1833., [biodiversitylibrary.org/page/29149770](https://biodiversitylibrary.org/page/29149770) (center, middle)

A narrative of four journeys into the country of the Hottentots, and Caffraria :, London :J. Johnson,1789., [biodiversitylibrary.org/page/47246887](https://biodiversitylibrary.org/page/47246887) (Top, right)

The Flowering plants of Africa. Pretoria [etc.]Botanical Research Institute, Dept. of Agricultural Technical Services, Republic of South Africa. [biodiversitylibrary.org/page/41933529](https://biodiversitylibrary.org/page/41933529) (Bottom, left)

The zoological miscellany :, London :Printed by B. McMillan for E. Nodder & Son and sold by all booksellers,1814-1817., [biodiversitylibrary.org/page/28686960](https://biodiversitylibrary.org/page/28686960) (Below)





M. E. Eaton del.

1. Flowering plant of *Escobaria dasyacantha*.
2. Fruit of *Dolichochele sphaerica*.
- 2a. Seed of same.
3. Flowering plant of *Neomammillaria arida*.
4. Flowering plant of *Escobaria bella*.

- 4a. Tubercle of same.
5. Flowering plant of *Neomammillaria crocidata*.
6. Flowering plant of *Bartschella schumannii*.
7. Flowering plant of *Neomammillaria carnea*.

# Cactus Up-potting Methods Survey

Katherine McCoy, Buena Vista CO

This article was compiled from a survey in Fall 2018 and published in club newsletters by the Colorado Cactus & Succulent Society, Cactus & Succulent Society of New Mexico, Santa Fe Cactus and Succulent Club, and Chinle Cactus & Succulent Society.

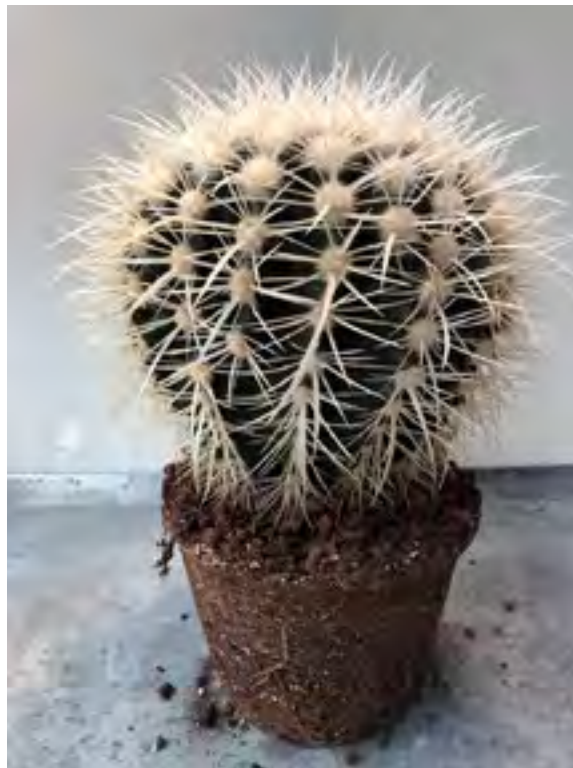
We all have our tried and true greenhouse methods. But recently, while repotting a big batch of cactus, I started wondering if these were actually horticultural best practices. So I emailed a little survey to seven distinguished Colorado and New Mexico C&S growers, known for their exceptional plants. Here's a summary of their enlightening recommendations on some of the fine points of repotting, beyond those first concerns of soil recipes and pot materials, shapes and styles. Our contributors are Steve Brack (formerly of Mesa Garden, Belen NM), Don Campbell (Grand Junction CO), Mike Crump (formerly of Crump Greenhouse,

Buena Vista CO), Joyce Hochtritt (J&J Cactus & Succulents, Oklahoma), Sig Ludwig (White Rock NM), David Salman (High Country Gardens, Santa Fe NM), and Keith Woestehoff (Larkspur CO). There's considerable consensus, but also some interesting contrasts. This reminds me of Steve Brack's response to a novice's question about the best potting soil: "Well, that's like asking what the best religion is!"

**Q:** When removing a plant from its old pot, should its roots and soil be dry or moist?

**A:** Experts nearly all prefer plant roots and soil to be dry when removing a plant from its old pot. David Salman feels dry soil minimizes root damage when unpotting a plant. Mike Crump likes soil to lean towards the dry side but not dusty dry. Don Campbell opts for soil in the "Goldilocks Zone:" not too moist nor too dry. Joyce Hochtritt usually waters a plant about a week before repotting. Sig Ludwig prefers a dormant plant to be dry, but thinks a growing plant is fine either way.

Steve Brack mentions that on the rare occasions when a plant's roots



The current pot (top) had 6.5" diameter top opening. Watering was becoming difficult and the plant and pot felt heavy, indicating dense roots. It seemed time for a larger pot before removal from the current pot became too challenging.

Fortunately, the plant came out of its pot without a big struggle. Although its weight indicated a dense root ball, the plant turned out to not be too badly pot bound (bottom).

Photos: Katherine McCoy

are very difficult to clean, he soaks the old root ball and rinses it. Joyce says that when she finds it necessary to wash the soil off roots, she lets the roots dry for two or three days.

**Q:** Do you remove old soil from the roots? Do you bare-root the plant? Or do you place the plant's intact root ball in a larger pot with additional soil?

**A:** David Salman says, "It is essential that cacti be transplanted bare-root, even seedlings. The soil should be dry to minimize any damage to the roots as one gently teases away the soil." Steve Brack also removes most or all of the old soil from the roots when repotting. Don Campbell likes to free most of the roots without doing too much damage in the process and to rearrange the roots to be compatible with the new pot's configuration.

Joyce Hochtritt, on the other hand, says that if the plant is healthy and has already been growing in her own mix, she only removes the old soil and gravel from around the neck of the plant, and then gently loosens the soil around the edges and



With gentle patting, much the surrounding faintly moist soil fell loose, exposing many of the roots of the healthy root ball (top).

The cushioning material used here to protect both the plant and the human handler is a dense foam called "Ethafoam" by Dow Chemical, used widely for packing electronics and other high-end products.

The new thicker-walled pot (bottom) has 9.15" diameter top opening which will hopefully accommodate the plant for a number of years.

Photos: Katherine McCoy

bottom of the root ball. Keith Woestehoff also likes to retain an intact root ball, unless he's unhappy with the soil quality, or finds bugs or unhealthy roots. Sig Ludwig says, "Never mess with the root ball!"

Everyone agrees that it's essential to look for problems when repotting. Mike Crump removes old soil only if it has signs of bugs, or if he's changing to a different soil type. Also, if the plant has been in the pot for an extended time, Mike feels that removing some of the soil from the roots helps new roots move into the new soil.

Mike cautions that some cactus have very delicate root systems that should not be disturbed any more than absolutely necessary. Species that dislike having their roots disturbed include *Melocactus* that have begun to grow a cephalium, and also *Discocactus* and *Astrophytum*.

**Q:** Do you immediately repot? Or do you leave the plant bare-root for the roots to harden off? If so, for how long?

**A:** Mike Crump, Joyce Hochtritt, Sig Ludwig and Keith Woestehoff usually

repot their plants immediately. Don Campbell and Steve Brack both say a plant can be repotted right away if the roots have not been damaged.

On the other hand, David Salman likes to set aside the bare-rooted plants in a shaded spot for a couple of days before re-potting. This allows air circulation to assist any cut or torn roots to callus over. Mike also lets a plant callous for a few days if it has been completely bare-rooted or has a sensitive root system. Steve agrees that if roots have been cut, leaving a wound, a plant should sit out until the tissue has calloused. Joyce says that if roots have been severely damaged or have rotted and need to be removed, she washes the roots off and lets them dry for at least a week – and sometimes up to several months.

**Q:** Do you trim the roots? If so, how much?

**A:** David Salman believes that trimming the roots is highly beneficial and helps increase the number and density of the roots. For seedlings, he trims off half of the fine hair roots, and for larger plants about a third of the hair roots. But he cautions NOT to cut a tap root, and to trim only the hair roots around a tap root.

Steve Brack likes to trim long very thin roots and roots that are less than about 1 mm thick, so that new roots can grow. For a plant with very thin roots, he suggests leaving an inch or so to start the new root system.

Joyce Hochtritt, Don Campbell, Keith Woestehoff and Mike Crump only trim roots that are unhealthy or damaged. Sig Ludwig says he prefers not to “mess with the roots.”

**Q:** How dry or moist should the new potting soil be?

**A:** Steve Brack and Joyce Hochtritt both use dry potting soil because it flows better around the roots with no empty air pockets. Don Campbell likes his soil “on the dry side” for the same reason.

David Salman, Keith Woestehoff and Mike Crump all prefer slightly moist potting soil. Sig Ludwig feels either is fine for a growing plant, and dry is OK for a dormant plant.

**Q:** How soon after repotting do you water?

**A:** Joyce Hochtritt says she waters 98% of her cactus plants right after repotting and Don

Campbell generally likes to mist or lightly water the soil of a freshly repotted plant. But David Salman waits a day or two before watering the new transplant just to make sure there are no damaged roots that might become infected with pathogens.

Steve Brack feels that small seedlings can get a light watering soon after repotting, but cautions that large or more mature plants should not be watered right away to avoid soggy soil that could cause root rot. He recommends just a splash of water on the body of a large plant in the first few days; then 3–7 days after repotting, a good soak



is beneficial, but only during the growing period. During dormant times, soaking the soil should be avoided.

Steve also recommends waiting a day or two before placing the plant back into a hot bright location; the root system helps cool the plant and needs a chance to acclimate to its new environment.

**Q:** When should a plant be up-potted?

**A:** Joyce Hochtritt thinks that cactus grown in a greenhouse environment (rather than a windowsill) can tolerate more year-round horticultural activity, including repotting, propagating and pruning.

Sig Ludwig recommends fertilizing rather than up-potting. He up-pots only when he wants to grow a plant bigger for showing; to produce flowers and seed, he relies on generous fertilizing during the growing period.

Mike Crump cautions not disturb a plant’s root system any more frequently than necessary: “Cactus do not necessarily like new digs as much as most humans!”



## Mission Statement

CSSA is a community of individuals who are passionate about promoting the appreciation, knowledge, and conservation of cacti and succulents in cultivation and in wild populations.

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- Submission due dates are as follows:
  - Articles and photos for 2020
    - February issue: Due January 17
    - May issue: Due April 17
    - August issue: Due July 17
    - November issue: Due October 17



↑A variety of cactus and succulents provide color and texture on the front porch of this Mission, Kansas home. A 25-year-old *Parodia* sits in the foreground with a 25-year-old golden barrel behind it. The plants remain indoors in a north-facing picture window from mid-October until they return outside in mid-May.

Photo by Mark Raduziner

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