



The Beaver Tale February 2009

From the President:

I hope everyone is enjoying the nice winter weather of our New Year and that your holiday celebrations were enjoyable. Thanks to all of you that visited my home New Year's Day. It was nice to see you and watch you mix and mingle in such a nice social way.

While we know that winter is not really over, most of us are starting to turn our attention toward spring. If achieving heavy blooms on cactus is on your "desirable" list, don't forget about low nitrogen, high phosphate fertilizer. We're still too cold to water frequently, but this does seem to be a warm winter. Splashing a bit of moisture around by hand during the next warm spell is a temptation.

Speaking of warmth, is it possible that excess (extreme) water in a landscape at this time of year could be warming enough to keep agave weevil active? Upon a visit to a neighborhood home, I removed several agave. All were eaten off at the soil level. The landscape was water saturated. In a minute and with a small trowel, I filled a small paper cup with squirming larvae. Even the slower growing, Medio Picta Alba was infested. The agave looked perfectly fit in October. The neighboring three landscapes are turf. I'm told they over seeded late in the year and were given permission to water daily this winter. I just wonder if the water that over sprayed in the tight HOA landscapes kept the weevils going through what normally would have been "down time" for them. Any opinions?

Moving along to important news:

COUNTY FAIR: April 9, 10, 11, 12 in Logandale. Will CSSSN have a booth?

SALE TIME: Springs Preserve, Sat., April 11., Many different kinds of plants for sale.

SALE TIME: CSN, Charleston Campus, Sat. & Sun. April 25 & 26. SSSN is only seller.

We'll need to get organized. Please come to the meeting to see how you can participate.

SHOW TIME: I've included previously published material about "show" plants in this issue. We are not certain about our ability to have a show here this year, but SOME OF US MIGHT WANT TO SHOW OUT OF STATE! The articles might help you prepare.

MEMBERSHIP: If you are reading this and are not a member yet, consider paying up! People that serve on the Board of Directors must be members!

WEBSITE: A traditional calendar feature may be in the offing soon. Meanwhile, please stay in touch through these links:

YAHOO GROUP SITE: <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/CSSSN/>

WEB SITE: http://www.csssn.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=21&Itemid=37

2009 Officers & Committees:

http://www.csssn.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=29

I hope to see you Thursday.
Susan Kent



Next Meeting: February 5, 2009

Garden Center at Lorenzi Park
3333 W. Washington
Las Vegas, NV

Board meeting at 6:00 PM. Members may attend. Open meeting starts at 7:00 PM. **Tentative plans indicate that a light snack will be available. (This could be as small as a pot of coffee.) If you want to make sure finger food is available, pick something up at the super market on your way.**



Monthly Meeting Program

Donnie Barnett from the Springs Preserve (and Colorado) will present again this month. His topic, CHHCTEGO? promises to be understandable and enjoyable. HMMMM Got a guess what it means? You may recall that Donnie prepared the Agave Hardiness Information published in our 2008 November newsletter. He does "good work."



Photo from Susan Kent's 5504 Lochmore (former) home n 2004 (Agave Weberi)

PS: Please use the lobby area for the children's quiet play area and utilize pre-meeting, post-meeting, and the break period for mingling. Try to refrain, if possible, from talking while the program is being presented so that all of us can enjoy it. The old adage, "If you are talking, you are not listening, and the person you are talking to can't listen either..." applies. Thank you



Book review by Dick Askew

THE ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SUCCULENTS

Gordon Rowley---1978 256pgs.

In the foreword, the author describes his attempt to distance himself from the usual format of an encyclopedia. In his words, "...an overall view of succulents as one element of the world flora, noting their distinguishing features in structure, mode of life, habitat, reproduction and survival, their evolution and their systematic classification." This book is written in a manner that will appeal to the neophyte as well as the more experienced cactophile. Considerable information on cultivation, propagation and care. Also well organized and illustrated.



Thought for February

The plant labors all year, green and growing and undistinguished. At last, in its season, it blooms, and all the folk remark on the beauty of the flower. Yet that bloom is only the product of the plant. It is wrong to see the flower as the only important thing, for it is the plant that makes it---yet it is the aspect of the plant designed to receive attention, and should be judged as such. Anon.

Provided by Dick Askew

**Membership Dues: Individual - \$15.00;
Household - \$25**

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E-mail address: _____

Email & website are default methods of communication. If you have an e-mail address, we e-mail the newsletter. If you wish a paper copy, please notify Liz at dicnliz7067@netzero.net.

Dues can be paid at any monthly meeting, or you may mail them. Thanks for your continued interest!

CSSSN – Membership
P O Box 571101
Las Vegas, NV 89157



Shows and Judging

by Dorothy Dunn

Reprinted from the Cactus Courier, Newsletter of the Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society San Diego, CA

Exhibiting plants in a show can be fun, stimulating, and very educational. If it is a competitive show, judged by discerning and knowledgeable plant experts, it becomes even more challenging. And exciting. It's also gratifying to overhear strangers ooh-ing and ahh-ing over your "pampered darlings" which you have (hopefully) groomed and dusted to perfection for their public appearance. Unfortunately, too many of us hesitate to enter plant shows because of lack of information concerning just exactly what constitutes a "show-worthy" plant. So-the purpose of this article is to acquaint the timorous uninitiated with a few basic guidelines in preparing plants for a show. Remember that judging is a very individualistic, opinioned, and often subjective process and that rarely will any two judges ever see the same plant in the same way on any given day. A plant which sends one judge into paroxysms of delight may be passed over almost without comment by another.

The criteria most often followed in a cactus and succulent show is the CSSA (Cactus and Succulent Society of America) Judging Scale, which is as follows: Condition = 70%; Staging = 15%; Size and Degree of Maturity = 10%; Nomenclature = 5%

The condition of the plant relates to general culture. How well has the plant been grown and cared for? Condition reflects on the grower's ability to assess a particular plant's needs to maintain characteristic, healthy growth. Is the plant etiolated?-(too green and lanky, indicating too much shade and/or too much fertilizer)-Is it sunburned, scarred, discolored, or diseased?-Is the growth uniform and even?-Are there any signs of mealy bug, scale or ants? An experienced judge will note immediately and automatically all of these things, because the experienced judge knows what the plant should-ideally-look like. (In some shows, plants are judged "against perfection" as opposed to being judged against each other).

Staging is the manner in which the plant is displayed, and includes pots, top dressing, and cleanliness. Pot may be

ordinary clay, stoneware, ceramic, or even plastic, but they must be clean (no alkali encrustations, algae, dirt clinging to the pot, etc) and in good condition (no chips or cracks). The pot should be of a complimentary size, shape and color for the plant: no garish, shiny colors or elaborate designs, and no fanciful, overly ornate or too-cute shapes. Remember, you are displaying the plant-not the pot, and while the pt should always subtly enhance the plant, it should never overwhelm or detract from it in any way. The judges will, however take the total effect into consideration. The plant must, of course be upright and centered in the pot. Top dressing is optional, but generally adds to the well-groomed effect. It may consist of clean gravel, small natural looking pebbles, lava rock (scoria), or coarse sand or decomposed granite. Aside from being neat appearing, topdressing is also beneficial to the plant; it keeps the soil from cracking, conserves moisture and discourages weeds. Here again, as with the pot, it should never detract from or clash with the plant. If you choose not to use top dressing, the soil around the plant should be clean and fresh looking and free of weeds and debris. The plant itself, should be as immaculate as you can possibly make it-no spider webs and (worse) no spiders, no snail tracks or (worse!) snails, etc ad nauseum, and it should be cleaned of hard water marks on the leaves or body and free of dust, dead leaves and other debris. Dead blooms should be removed, unless they have been left on the plant for the purpose of setting seed.

A large relatively mature "specimen-size" plant, if well grown, will always take precedence over an immature or seedling plant. This is where size and degree of maturity come in. It is especially satisfying to display a plant, which you have successfully grown from a seedling into a handsome and mature specimen. Due to the recent emphasis on conservation and endangered species, most judges tend to cast a somewhat jaundiced eye on obviously collected plants, and there is some discussion about disqualifying them altogether. Most show rules require that the plant must be grown by the exhibitor for at least six months prior to the show, and some judges feel that the plant should ideally reflect the end result of several years of painstaking effort on the part of the grower. Rarity and how difficult the plant is to grow in cultivation although not listed in the judging scale, can also be factors with individual judges, especially when all other points

(condition, staging, etc) are virtually equal. A rare or difficult to grow plant is bound to influence most judges. Nomenclature has to do with the proper labeling and correct botanical name (including spelling) of the plant. Even though it counts for only 5%, you should make every effort to provide the correct name for your plant. When in doubt, if all else fails, it is probably better to label it (for example), simply "Mammillaria species, rather than to give it an erroneous specific name, or worse yet an ambiguous common name such as; "Pincushion Cactus". Labels should be clean, neat and inconspicuous, if used. Many shows use entry cards instead of labels. The owners name cannot be visible to the judges.

So, now-start making plans to cart your favorite (and most delectable) plants off to the next show with confidence, relax and enjoy it, and try to accept with grace and suitable modesty the compliments and ribbons which are sure to reward your efforts.



Finding The Perfect Pot

by Stephen Cooley

Reprinted (with permission) from *The Cactus Patch, Newsletter of the Bakersfield Cactus & Succulent Society*

I personally have never had a problem finding the perfect pot. I have lots of them. They're all sitting empty in the backyard. I've even had to build storage shelves to hold them all. My problem has always been in the filling of the pots. I have tried my best to stage my plants correctly but I'm never really satisfied with the results. Recently, while going through my pots and trying (in vain) to imagine which plant I could stage in each, I found that one had already been filled. It seems my enthusiasm has spread and infected a pair of Doves.

These Doves (in an obvious attempt to show me up) have chosen a blue bonsai pot in which they have placed two flawlessly grown white eggs. These eggs are perfectly set off by a top dressing of dry grass along with two clay pots set off to the side just for ornament. It is a striking display, one that has captured the attention of myself and my family.

And the enthusiasm is still spreading—it seems that the cats have become interested as well.



Finishing Touches — Top Dressing

by Bob Smoley

Reprinted from *Prickly Pages, Newsletter of the Greater Pittsburgh Cactus & Succulent Society*

It is surprising and at times amazing how much beauty and value ten cents worth of top-dressing can add to a plant. Believe it or not, this ten cents could even be the tie-breaker in a show plant (even though it shouldn't be). Top-dressing a plant with a color-coordinated stone that picks up or contrasts the color of the show plant tells the viewer, who could be the judge, that the grower of this plant is putting forth an added effort in showing and displaying his or her prized specimen. As a grower, I find that an attractive top-dressing also increases the value of the plant. If two identical plants were side by side, I could easily receive an extra dollar for the plant that is attractively top-dressed. But where does one get all of these rocks and pebbles? I will try to point everyone in the right direction, and as you will see, a strange direction at times it will be. Two of the most unlikely places to find top-dressings are your local feed store and sandblasting supply houses. Others that are more recognizable would be pet and tropical fish stores, and of course, your local garden centers and nurseries. At the feed store, you can find what is called what is called chicken grit. This is a crushed granite that is fed to chickens to harden their egg shells. It comes in two or three sizes, the smallest size working just fine to dress 2-3 inch pots for lithops. It also works well to top-dress freshly sown seed, but be sure to use only a thin layer up to an eighth inch. The larger size of grit is OK for pots up to six inches or so. Since it is granite, the rock is a grayish silver color with a bit of a sparkle to it. Moving on to the sandblasting supply yard, we found a number of choice toppings available. Q rock, which comes in four grades, or sizes, is great for smaller pots and is inexpensive at seven to eight dollars for a hundred pound bag. Number 2 Q-rock is also great for covering newly sown seeds. Another sandblasting rock, black beauty, is a byproduct of the steel industry and is a shiny, jet black glass. Black beauty is really sharp looking when used to top-dress small pots of lithops and mimic plants, and

provides a striking contrast color for echeverias and other succulents. Finally, some sandblasting supply yards sell a small graded river gravel that is about an eighth inch in diameter with nice earth-tone colors that look great on any pot.

Lets travel next to a good, nice-sized pet supply or tropical fish store. Here you can find some really fantastic looking aquarium gravels in almost any size or color. Some that are especially nice looking are the epoxy stones that have a nice, clean shine to them. You can also find crushed quartz that is very natural and clean looking. Also available is volcanic rock, which usually comes only a few sizes and in black, brown, and shades of dark red. The heavier grades are very good for pot sizes of six inches and larger. Well, what's left for the garden center or nursery to sell? Well-stocked garden centers should stock many of the tropical fish gravels and small pea gravel. They might also have pumice, which can be used as a great soil additive for cactus and succulents and a top- dressing as well. A more recent product that is good for large pots is expanded clay, which are small pieces of clay that have been heated and popped, much like popcorn. Also available for larger pots are various grades of crushed marble.

If you want to get really exotic and a bit expensive, travel now to your local gem and mineral store. Here you might find crushed chips of amethyst, quartz, rose quartz, citrine, agate, and many others for those extra special plants on which you need to spend that dollar in the back of your wallet. Larger pieces of gems and minerals also make really nice accent pieces in mixed plantings. Try an all succulent planting of echeverias, crassulas, kalanchoes, or any other succulents in a low, natural clay bowl top-dressed with a clean, white aquarium gravel and accented with a few pieces of amethyst crystals and iron pyrite (fools gold) and you have an exquisite planting.

There are some practical reasons for top-dressing your plants. First, as a fine topping over newly-sown seed. Since seedlings should be kept moist at all times (in most cases), the top-dressing helps keep moisture in so you don't need to water as much. Best of all, the pots that have been top- dressed will show a lighter color as they dry out on the surface compared to the darker color of ones still moist, making it easy to tell when to water. In larger pots, the top-dressing helps hold down the germination of weed seed, which makes for a lot less work later.

One final comment wash the top-dressing material and let dry before use. This removes any impurities and finer dust particles that may be present. And please don't add any of that glue, cement, or whatever it is that the mass producers use to hold the top-dressing in place for shipment - its not good for the plants and is really tacky.

Happy Growing!!

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If you have veggie or tropical plant gardening questions, contact club member, **Leslie Doyle, aka the "Tomato Lady"**

<http://www.sweettomatotestgarden.com>

Watch for her several Workshops around the Valley!

*******General Public CLOSING SALE*******

Dave & Kris continue the process of closing Turner-Greenhouse- <http://www.turner-greenhouse.com>

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