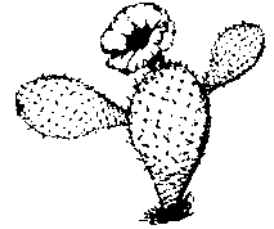




Rancho Los Alamitos
Long Beach CA
Photo by JC Hargreaves

The Cactus Patch



Opuntia basilaris var. treleasei

Volume 18 **September 2015** Number 9

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BAKERSFIELD CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

This Month's Program
**Rock and Tree Dwelling Succulents of
Australia**

Attila Kapitany
@ St Paul's Episcopal Church
6:30 PM

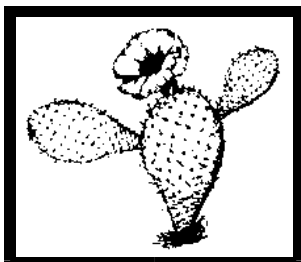
Monthly Meeting

**Tuesday,
September 8th**
at
6:30 PM
Dinner @ 5:00

Meet the Speaker

Dinner @ 5:00 PM

Sizzler
900 Real Road



The Cactus Patch

Volume 18 Number 9

September 2015

The Cactus Patch is the official publication of the Bakersfield Cactus & Succulent Society of Bakersfield, California



Membership in the Bakersfield Cactus & Succulent Society costs \$20 per year for an individual and \$25 a year for a family.

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www.BakersfieldCactus.org

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September 8th MEETING

Rock and Tree Dwelling Succulents of Australia

“Unlike my usual talks which cover desert plants from sandy arid regions of the continent, this is a look at the exciting plants that can be found on the east coast and closer to major cities. Here you will see and learn about some of the weirdest succulent plants in the world, including ‘ant plants’ and orchids.”



Attila is immediate past president of the Cactus & Succulent Society of Australia with 10 years in this position, and is also currently editor of its journal.

He has thirty years of experience growing and marketing cacti and succulents. Attila is also a member of the Horticultural Media in Australia, writing regularly in magazines, journals and newspapers and promoting succulent plants.

Attila has co-written seven books with Rudolf Schulz about succulents, with an eighth book a solo effort on Australian native species. His newest publications are a series of eight booklets on xerophytic Australia plants.

Since 2007 Attila has dedicated much of his time and resources to promoting our lesser known Australian succulent plants, touring the Australian speaking circuit regularly and featuring on television and radio.

Attila is a succulent expert and author of many popular books on the subject will be along with pictures to show, and knowledge to share. Get an autographed copy of some of his publications.

~3~

Kern County Fair Information

The Floral Department has given us the same space as the last two years for our club's display. Please pick out a few of your plants that you would like to display. Bring them on September 19th, and 20th, from 8 am to 5 pm. (Saturday, Sunday) If you know the names of your plants, give them to me. I will be making the plant name tags. If you would like to help arrange the display, be there on Sunday.

Pat, from the fair, asked if we could put up displays on the two tables that are used for different clubs' workshops. These are usually easy to move plants as they're moved when a club needs the tables. This year we would like to have some unusual pots/container gardens for these tables. BCSS (okay, so I did!) has agreed to give three workshops on how to plant a container garden. One is on Senior Day, Friday the 25th, at 10 am. Two are on School Days (Kid's Day). Tuesday, the 29th and Wednesday, the 30th. Both at 9 am. If you would like to participate in any or all of these workshops, let me know.

All exhibits must be picked up between 8 am and 7 pm on Monday, October 5th. If you can't pickup your items on Monday, let me know.

Sidney Kelley



~4~

The Bakersfield Cactus & Succulent Society's



16th Annual Cactus & Succulent Show & Sale



Pleiospilos netii

At the East Hills Mall Center Court
3100 Mall View Road, Bakersfield, CA

Saturday, October 10th, 10:00am - 5:00pm
Sunday, October 11th, 11:00am - 3:00pm

MORE Dealers!
MORE Pots!

MORE Plants!
PLUS Yard Art!

Something for everyone. From the novice to the collector.

Plant Dealers:
Nick Wilkerson from "GROW" in Cambria, CA
John Matthews "The Haworthia Guy"
Rob McGregor from Riverside, CA

Potters: Marlene Tatsuno and Kim Manfredi

Yard Art: Shelly's from Porterville

*Free Admission
Free Parking*

www.BakersfieldCactus.org www.facebook.com/BakersfieldCactus

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Rancho Los Alamitos

A Letter From Bruce

On the 30th of July, Woody phoned and asked if I would be willing to talk to the Long Beach Club as Rob Skillin, the scheduled speaker, was off to South Africa. I agreed and so Polly, John and I set off on the 2nd of August. We reached the area about 11 and had lunch at the Fantastic Café which is right next to CSULB. It was a good thing we got there early. By the time we had ordered there was a line out the door.

At noon we went to nearby Bixby Hill which is a gated community. They do allow visitors to the historic Rancho Los Alamitos where the Long Beach Club now meets, but it stresses on the permit that visitors are not allowed to park or visit elsewhere on the hill. (In the past the Long Beach Club met at a historic Adobe which is a little more accessible.)



The Rancho Los Alamitos, which dates back to 1800 in the days before the U.S. took over California, is surrounded by a succulent garden with plants that look to be about as old as the buildings! (The Adobe where

the Club met before had a nice, but rather young, garden.) Along the drive there is a hedge of huge Aloe arborescens. There is also a patch of naked ladies with three foot high bulbs sticking up. There are cacti and Euphorbias of great size and enormous Figs hung with the largest staghorn ferns I have ever seen. (Bigger than wild ones I saw in Mozambique.)

The meeting started at 1:30 and I presented my talk on the cucumber family in Botswana.



This was followed by Polly's talk on our family in Botswana. John ran the computer setup.

Afterwards I was asked to judge the mini show that they always have. This month it was Bromeliads for the succulents and Copiopoas for the cacti (which are also

succulent). It was easy as there were some really good plants which were well potted.

After the meeting the president Gary Duke took us to his nearby home where we toured his collection. He has a couple of fascinating plants of *Leuchtenbergia principis* which had numerous off sets on the stem. He also had a crested *Orbea variegata* which had a number of flowers. After the tour we went out the back gate to dinner at Johnny Rebs. (Gary says he has no problem with diners blocking his gate.) His mother, Berniece, aged 96, ate with us.



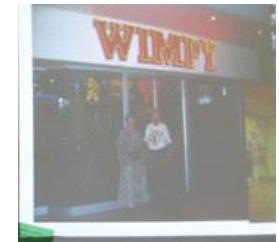
On the 6th Polly and I went to Fresno and heard Elton Roberts talk on cacti. We had heard him before when he spoke on *Micropuntias*, but this time there was no organized theme- just a lot of beautiful flowering cacti. It would have been better to have a field trip up to his nursery in Ripon.

Both times he expressed an exaggerated sense of splitting and continually put down lumpers.

Of course we were at the Old Hacienda on the 11th. The food was good and the conversation lively. I hope everyone else was satisfied.

Bruce Hargreaves

[Bruce's opinions are his own and are not necessarily that of the BCSS]

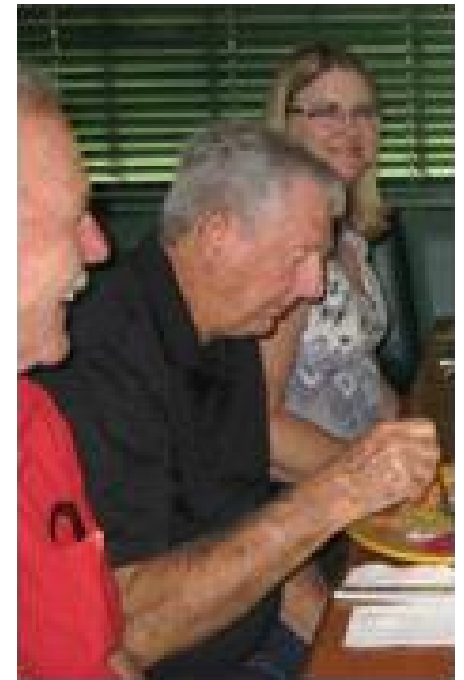


Meeting on August 11th

There was no **BRAG TABLE** this month, though many of us found our dinner plates at “The Old Hacienda” worth a comment or two. The service was great and there were no complications with the bills.



~8~



~9~



WATERING THE PLANT OF THE MONTH

We recently had a demonstration of how to mix a growing medium and repot succulents which was very instructive and also thought provoking. So I wanted to give my thoughts on the matter of growing medium and water where succulents are concerned.

Think about a succulent plant in nature. It has physical requirements with regard to water, temperature range, light etc. An animal can move around and seek out its needed environment but a plant is anchored in one place. When the plant reproduces its seeds are scattered by various means which are often random meaning that they will land in a range of different environments, soils, moisture and temperature. Plants that have a wide tolerance range reproduce better than plants with narrow tolerances. Succulents as a group tend to be pretty forgiving in the range of conditions that they can live in. The fact that they are succulent means that they grow in dry environments which have thin, stony, nutrient poor soil. Our growing medium should reflect this.

If you want to generate a heated debate among succulent growers just announce to a gathering that you have the perfect growing medium and then give the ingredients. Almost without fail one or more will tell you are an idiot and explain why you are all wrong. The point is that succulents will grow in a range of different mediums if one pays attention to the other part of the equation, the water.

Almost any well draining growing medium will do if you pay attention to the plant and watch for its signals. Drainage is very important because most succulents do not want their roots to be in a soggy environment. Notice that I say "growing medium" instead of soil. I do this because the stuff we put in a pot is pretty different from soil. In general particle size of a good succulent growing medium should be 1/8-1/4 in. in diameter. This size holds adequate water and allows for good air penetration. Roots need oxygen as well as water. Smaller particles hold more water but leave less room for air, making it easier for root rot to get started. Organic particles tend to break down and become ever smaller over time so old organic soils will become oxygen poor and root rot is there waiting for these conditions.

One of the main differences and one which most people don't think of is depth. In a pot the water column extends from the surface to the drain hole. In the ground the water column extends for perhaps hundreds of feet depending on geology. Water is pulled by gravity downwards. There is a deep area where the proper conditions for root growth can be found. When you water a pot the growing medium becomes briefly saturated and then the water runs out through the drain hole. Some remains behind clinging to the particles and the roots of the plant. This water is not evenly distributed, gravity is still at work. The bottom of the pot is wetter than the top. As time passes evaporation from the surface makes the top even drier. The roots are in a "Goldilocks" predicament. The top may be too dry and the bottom may be too wet. Shallow pots make this problem more severe. The Goldilocks zone gets narrower and narrower. Terracotta pots allow excess water to leak through the surface. I like them for general culture but not for show they are too unattractive. High fired glazed pots don't breath and neither do plastic ones. This needs to be taken into account.

Succulents will probably grow in pure "potting soil" if you don't water too often and change mix every couple of years and use deep pots. You will be improving your chances if you use a gritty mix with pumice or scoria as a major component. Manny Singer and Charlie Glass used a very simple mix for almost everything which was about four parts pumice to one part small orchid bark. I have a Bombax that lived in that mix for about 15 years before I re-potted it this year.

There is no substitute for a watchful eye and knowing what your individual plant likes. When I got my Brighamia, which is native to Kauai, I treated it like my Pachypodiums because it had a big thick trunk which looked like it should store a lot of water. It dwindled, the leaves got small and yellow. Thought and research told me that this is a succulent that grows on one of the wettest islands in the world. It needs two or three times as much water as a Pachypodium and loves being under the swamp cooler which is as close as I can come to a sea breeze.

Jack G. Reynolds

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<https://www.facebook.com/BakersfieldCactus>

The Succulent Garden at Cal State



Leuchtenbergia principis

Leuchtenbergia is one of those bizarre looking cactus. It has very long tubercles (arms) with long papery spines on the tips. It looks quite like a small agave. Its common name is Agave Cactus though I have never heard anyone call it that, they just say,

“*Leuchtenbergia*.” When it is in flower there is no mistaking it for an agave – it has a nice, big, beautiful cactus flower. This unusual cactus comes from northern central Mexico and it is unique enough to be the only one of its kind. There is only one species of *Leuchtenbergia*. However, it is closely related to *Ferocactus* (barrel cactus) and hybrids have been made.

Despite its uniqueness, *Leuchtenbergia* is fairly easily grown. The most important factor is good drainage as it can rot if it gets too much water. In our garden it is in full sun with no protection from frost. It does just fine, blooming every year.

Leuchtenbergia also makes a good potted plant as well. It needs very bright light to keep it looking its best and it doesn't get big enough to cause problems. A slow grower, ours are about 15 years old from seed and are less than a foot across and high.



Stephen Cooley



September 8th BCSS Meeting
Rock and Tree Dwelling Succulents
of Australia
Attila Kapitany on a return visit

Sept 23 - Oct 4, 2015
Kern County Fair

Sept. 29th BCSS Board Meeting

October 10th & 11th, 2015
Show and Sale
East Hills Mall

October 13th BCSS Meeting

Oct.. 27th BCSS Board Meeting

November 10th BCSS Meeting

Nov. 24th BCSS Board Meeting

December 8th BCSS Meeting
Family Potluck Dinner & Silent Auction