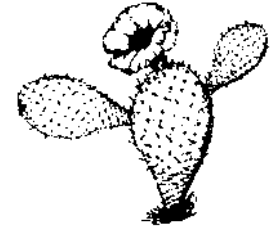




Agave Americana
Blooming
On Olive Drive

The Cactus Patch



Opuntia basilaris var. treleasei

Volume 19 **July 2016** Number 7

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BAKERSFIELD CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

This Month's Program
"Staging Plants for Shows"

Peter Walkowiak

@ St Paul's Episcopal Church
6:30 PM

Monthly Meeting

**Tuesday,
July 12th**

at

6:30 PM

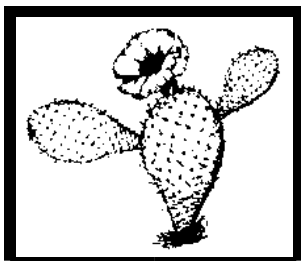
Dinner @ 5:00

Meet the Speaker

Dinner @ 5:00 PM

Sizzler

900 Real Road



The Cactus Patch

Volume 19 Number 7
July 2016

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.

CONTACT INFORMATION

President: Paul Bowles
corvis797@yahoo.com
Membership: Maynard Moe
Immoe44@gmail.com
Newsletter: Polly Hargreaves
pollypearl@hotmail.com
Website: Stephen Cooley
thecactuspatch@bak.rr.com

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July 12th MEETING

Peter Walkowiak

B.S. Ornamental Horticulture

“Staging Plants for Shows”

Interest in plants started as a child of five, amazed at the beauty of roses and the taste of blackberries right off the vine Twelve years ago started to propagate plants from the collection of plants that had been acquired in the previous 25 years, which led to the current business that has been a part of my life long dream, PW Plants, my own nursery.



Fascination with succulent plants started in college, a friend had this amazing *Bombax ellipticum*. The collection has grown from those early days to well over 1,500 plants. Interests center on the fat plants, caudiciforms, cacti and euphorbias.

Current President of the Palomar Cactus and Succulent Society, on the board of the San Diego CSS and CSSA. Show chair for the two shows for SDCSS and the one show for Palomar. Co-chair for the Intercity Show, the largest succulent show in the world. Participate in many other shows in the southwest from Phoenix to Los Angeles.

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Staging Workshop

The main part of this talk will focus on staging your plants. Staging is often likened to framing an expensive painting, the pot is the frame, top dressing and rocks is the matting and the plant the picture. The pot offers many sizes, textures, colors, choosing the right one is important in the context of the overall design. Then the top dressing has many colors and texture. How do you choose?

I will demonstrate with several plants, couple of cacti and a couple succulents to give a variety of type of plants and styles that you may want to try. Time permitting, I will help with the staging of some of your plants.

Just bring in a plant with a pot, (staging rocks) you want staged but are not sure how to proceed. I will help or do the staging for you. I will provide top dressing , if you have a special top dressing bring it.

Peter Walkowiak



~4~

Meeting on June 14th



John Hargreaves told us about his various trips to the Channel Islands. One was a day trip to Santa Cruz Island where he saw Dudleya and cactus as well as many other non-succulent plants. Since he also did a diving trip another time, he also saw mammals great, whales, and small, the Santa Cruz Fox. Under water he pointed out the kelp as well as other invasive species that are crowding out the urchins..There were many kinds of fish as well as very large jellies. He had videos as well as still pictures of many ecological niches.

~5~

Spring



A Letter From Bruce

It's been an abnormally hot spring, but some things are surviving. The *Agave Americana* which I inherited from one my grandfather had in Stockton is once again blooming. This is unusual since it is only ten years since the parent plant bloomed here. Perhaps it's because I trimmed off the suckers at the base.



Another spring activity is the humming bird nest in the *Ficus benjamini* by our front door. We have two babies this time-one

large and one small.

On 21st May we had the joy of owning a house for the first time – home repairs. John spent the day replacing the face boards below the roof in back. They had dry rot and there were big holes. There was even a large bird's nest in under the eaves! Our nephew Daniel and brother in law Dave came over and helped as well. They managed to get the boards replaced and the new ones painted all in one day.



On the 2nd of June Steve Frieze spoke to the Fresno CSS. It was an excellent tour of Oaxaca, but there were a few too many very similar pictures.

Next day we helped set up the Show and sale for the FCSS.



The S&S has always been a bit heavy on the sale side, but this year they have really unbalanced it. The few show plants were mixed in with the sale plants. Some vendors wisely elevated these so they were recognizably different, but some left them rather hidden. Finally the show opened on Saturday, after which Polly and I returned to Bakersfield. We did not stay for the Sunday half.

On the 7th, of course, we voted. I will not comment on the politics except to say this is a wild and scary election.

On the 14th we helped John with his video on the Channel Islands. I hope this last minute substitute was enjoyed by all. I certainly enjoyed being a part of it. I hope Daniel gets some prickly pear pads for his tortoises. They are quite remarkable. I will take some pictures for next month.

Bruce Hargreaves

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

Fire of the Month

Erskin Creek

by

Jack G. Reynolds

About 4 PM on Thurs. 23 June, my daughter Melissa, called me from work and said that there was a fire on Cook Peak between the town of Lake Isabella and Squirrel Valley where we both live. She said she was going home which is only three blocks from me. Then the phone went dead. When I went outside there was a large plume of smoke off to the west; clearly a fire. The prevailing winds were pushing it our way. I estimated I had about an hour because it would have to burn downhill to get to the valley floor a distance of about a mile.

I loaded the photo albums and some valuables into the car. Spent a few minutes looking for the dog's collar so she could be leashed easily but could not find it. I decided that I could not save the birds if we burned so turned my attention to the yard and how to protect it. Garden hoses were on all the hose bibs already and I had two water buckets and a shovel.

The fire department requires all valley residents to clear the weeds from their property to a distance of 100 ft. by June 15. I had done mine by the 12th, working an hour or two at a time over several days. Nothing stood over about 2-3 in. high. That proved to be very important.



I went up to the greenhouse and tried to remove the shower nozzle from the hose there so I could get a free flow with more volume. It was stuck, too tight, no time to get the vice grips. I positioned the hose so that the shower fell on the area I deemed most vulnerable and turned it on full. While I was doing this I saw the first flames topping the ridge. I filled the buckets with another hose that had no nozzle

and while I was doing that the fire arrived at my yard. It had covered the distance in about ten minutes. The winds were blowing 40-50 mph. and it just leap-frogged down the mountain and across the valley. It entered my yard at the southwest corner and burned diagonally across toward the northeast corner, driven by the wind. The main flame front crossed the whole yard in less than two minutes.

Smoke and heat were very intense. I had no mask or goggles. There is a foot path running from the patio on the west side of the house to the greenhouse. It is about two feet wide and made a firebreak that stopped the flames in that area. If the grass had been higher it probably would have jumped it and as luck would have it no embers blew across. I realized that my main threat was the travel trailer parked on the north side of the house about six feet from the side porch. If it burned the porch would burn and then the whole house. I concentrated my efforts there. With the buckets and hose I was able to drown the leading edge of the flames before they got to the tires on the trailer.

While all this was going on I kept hearing very loud whooshing explosions punctuated by what seemed to be small arms fire. It turned out that the explosions were propane tanks venting as pressure built up due to heat. The tanks don't actually explode they just vent some of the propane to reduce the pressure, That makes the whooshing sound and shoots a great plume of fire twenty or thirty feet into the air. Many homes around mine burned completely and their tanks were venting. I never actually saw one go off, the smoke was too thick and I was too busy. A number of my neighbors had stored small arms ammunition which also cooked off.

A couple of hot spots developed which were handled with the shovel to break them open and buckets of water to drown them. The worst was over in about 30 min. When I returned to the greenhouse area I found my neighbor there with his hose putting out last straggling flames that had just crossed the fence line. A job well done.



I then noticed that one of my oaks had been blown down and crushed the corner of the aviary enclosure. When we built the aviary eleven years ago I was concerned about varmints molesting the birds so had it surrounded by a protective barrier about two feet out from the aviary itself. The oak had damaged that but not the aviary itself. The birds were all OK as well. We all survived the smoke and heat.

The oaks were all singed and now a week later they are losing those damaged leaves. I have not done an exact count but I

probably have about 30 oaks ranging from seedlings up to one or two mature trees 80-100 years of age on my one acre lot. They are very important to me. I hope none die.

My daughter had to fight the fire at her house as well and she successfully defended it so the Reynolds and Oliver households survived. The valley was without electricity for a week after the fire but we have backup generators which ran the houses. We were without internet for a week and water for a day and a half. About 30 homes burned in the valley and two people died. Many of the homes that burned were ones that had no one to protect them. Even so luck had a lot to do with it. What if the fire had jumped the foot path while I was occupied elsewhere? What if Melissa had not called? What if my neighbor had not seen the need at his corner? It could easily have gone the other way. If you live in a fire zone keep your weeds short, don't have flammables next to your house and keep a few water buckets handy.

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BRAG TABLE



Both Jack Reynolds and Richard Ayala brought the plant of the month, *Tephrocactus articulatus* var. *papyracanthus*. Jack's was grown in the sun and had short, round stems. Richard's plant showed the long thin stems which result from too much shade.

Jack Reynolds also brought a beautiful

blooming plant of *Pachypodium brevicaule*. He pointed out that it was grafted as it is difficult to grow on its own roots.



Sabrina Mesa brought a giant plastic "Mister Potato Head" which had a Bulbine growing out the top as "hair".

Polly Hargreaves brought *Plectrathus ernstii* which is named for Ernst Van Jaarsveld who has published a book on South African ones. It was in bloom

Bruce brought last month's plant of the month, *Euphorbia garipeana*. It had long thin branches due to too much shade. The name comes from Gariep, or Great River, the original name for the Orange River which forms the boundary between Namibia and South Africa.

The Succulent Garden at Cal State



Tephrocactus verschaffeltii

This small, South American version of cholla is a new addition to our garden having been planted last fall. It grows in the Andes at elevations of 5000 to 12000 feet in Argentina and Bolivia and

has recently been found in Peru. In the wild it forms one foot high branching clumps among the grasses in dry, rocky soil.

Though a high altitude resident, it has taken this very hot beginning to our summer quite well. It is tolerant to cold down to about 20F and is said to not like cool wet winters. Fortunately, our scant rainfall doesn't qualify as 'wet'.

This would be a good container plant as it doesn't get very big and there are few spines (spination varies, ours is practically nude). It needs some cold in order to flower so should be left outside all winter.



Stephen Cooley

As an update on the Channel Islands, the July/August issue of Natural History has an article on **Heirloom Vegetation-Endangered plants of the U.S. national parks** by Robert H. Mohlenbrock. It lists 72 such plants, 49 of which are in the two Hawaiian parks. Next comes the Channel Islands with twelve species. This includes the Santa Barbara Island live-forever (*Dudleya traskiae*) and the Santa Cruz Island desert dandelion which is an annual with fleshy leaves. Next in numbers is Capitol Reefs N.P. which has three such species including Wright's fishhook cactus and Despain's pincushion cactus. The other six parks with endangered plants have only one or two each, none of them succulents.



July 12th BCSS Meeting

Peter Walkowiak

Staging Plants for Shows”

August 9th BCSS Meeting

Dinner out at
“The Old Hacienda”

5303 Olive Dr

August 13—14 Inter-City Show & Sale

LA County Arboretum, Arcadia CA

September 3rd

Huntington Succulent Symposium

all day at the Huntington Gardens, San Marino CA

