

Central Spine



July 2015 Newsletter of the Central Arizona Cactus & Succulent Society

An Affiliate of the Cactus & Succulent Society of America On the Web at www.centralarizonacactus.org

2015 CACSS Meeting
2 pm, Sunday, July 26
Presenter:
Scott Calhoun
Presentation:
The Gardener's Guide
to Cactus
(Board Meeting 11 am,
Farrington Conference Center)

Articles

- ◆ **President's Letter**
- ◆ **Library Notes**
- ◆ **Cool Things We Learned About Adeniums From Dave Palzkill**
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- ◆ **Propagating Plants with Dean Patrick**
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- ◆ **CACSS 2015 Meeting Schedule**
- ◆ **Plant Questions??? Whom To Contact!!!**



Yucca sp.

Photo by Scott Calhoun

Join author and garden designer Scott Calhoun for a journey into the world of garden cactus.

Scott Calhoun loves wildflowers, spiny plants, tacos, and rocks. He spends as much time as possible deep in the Mexican backcountry searching for new plants and eating local specialties. He has gardened in the American Southwest for over 20 years and is the author and photographer of six books about the region.

Scott is the recipient of the 2014 *Phoenix Home & Garden* "Master of the Southwest" award. His work has been featured in *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. He writes a monthly column for *Sunset* magazine and freelances for numerous publications. Scott runs Zona Gardens, a design studio in Tucson, Arizona. He designs, writes, and lectures throughout the US. Find out more at www.zonagardens.com.

Scott will bring books for sale, including the book on the topic he will speak on:

The Gardener's Guide to Cactus: the 100 Best Paddles, Barrels, Columns and Globes.



Agave pelona, left, and *Agave parryi*, right. Photo by Scott Calhoun



Astrophytum myriostigma Photo by Scott Calhoun

August, 2015 *Central Spine* Deadline: August 13, 2015

2015 CACSS Officers

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Archivist/Historian	Lois Schneberger
CSSA Affiliate Representative	Sue Hakala
Facebook Coordinator	Dan Smith
Finances/Accounting	Nick Diomede, Ingrid Swenson
Holiday Party - December 6, 2015	Sue Glenn
Library Co-Chairs	Wendy Barrett, Nancy Mumpton
Membership	Beth Kirkpatrick
Members-Keeping-In-Touch	Jo Davis
Mailed Newsletter Subscriptions	Sue Tyrrel
Newsletter	Diana Decker
Nominating Committee 2015	Chuck Brush, Dan Smith, Jo Davis, Lois Schneberger
October 2015 Silent Auction	Mike Gallagher
Plant Rescues	<i>Open Position</i>
Private Plant Sales at General Meetings	Sue Tyrrel
Monthly Speaker-Programs	Diana Crummey
Pumice Sales	Gard Roper
Refreshments	Kat Hanna
Show & Sale – 2016	Dan Smith
Website	Beth Kirkpatrick

Telephone numbers, email addresses, and street addresses can be found in the CACSS Member List emailed periodically to members by Beth Kirkpatrick.

**For questions, and to send articles and photos for the newsletter, contact the newsletter editor,
Diana Decker:
(602) 220-9825
dianadec@cox.net**

PRESIDENT'S LETTER
July 2015
Wayne Whipple

Every year since 2007, the President's Letter for the July *Central Spine* started with a discussion on the monsoons. I will not break with tradition. I have found that this summer's monsoons may be helping our plants in many ways. One of my adeniums that I have had for several years got caught in a surprise downpour late last spring, and the untimely rain caused severe rotting to the plant. So I put the plant out by the trash container to eventually toss it out. But the recent lightning and rain has caused the plant to begin to leaf – but slowly. Maybe it was afraid of being dumped and thus was shocked back to life.

July marks the one-year anniversary of our Facebook page under the management of Dan Smith. Participants have grown to over 450 people. Although they are not all CACSS members, most are, and we have gained many new Members through our Facebook page. I check it daily and really enjoy the posts.

I cross-checked the names on our Facebook page with Beth Kirkpatrick's list of 408 current CACSS Members. It was interesting. Around 200 listed in our Facebook registry are not Members of the CACSS, and probably at least half of those people live in the Valley of the Sun. Probably all are potential CACSS Members.

Many of the Facebook followers did not list where they live. But I could identify participants from 10 states outside of Arizona and from 10 foreign countries. Does anyone know where Kragujevac (pronounced Kragujeuats) is located? Thanks to Google I found out it is the fourth largest city in Serbia. Our Facebook friend from Kragujevac works at the university there – probably as a botanist. The 10 states that I could identify where CACSS non-members live are: California, Florida, Kansas, New Mexico, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and Utah. I thought the list of foreign countries was quite surprising. Besides Serbia, it includes Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, India, Iran, and Italy. There was also a South American country, which I could not identify, and the island of Puerto Rico.

I am looking forward to hearing the presentation by Scott Calhoun at our July meeting; many of our Members requested that this well-known author be invited. Prior to the General Meeting, the Board of Directors will be meeting at 11:00 A.M. at the Farrington Conference Center. Members are always welcome to attend the Board Meetings.

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**Please Wear Your Name Tag
at Monthly Meetings**

Board Member Jo Davis asks members to wear their name tags at monthly meetings and other club events. Members then can more easily spot guests and talk with them about the guest's interests and CACSS.

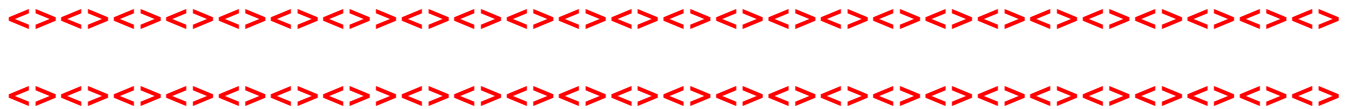
If you need a lanyard to hang the name tag around your neck, see Jo at the meetings.

CACSS NEW MEMBERS

Sean Duncan
Lauren Marks
Larry Starkweather
Mike Sippel
George Van Ess
Melody Van Ess

Membership Chair:
Beth Kirkpatrick

Please bring boxes to the meetings so you can carry plants home more easily.
Jo Davis



LIBRARY NOTES

Nancy Mumpton

Check-out procedure:

If you decide to take out an item from the library, please locate the check-out card at the front of the material and sign the current date, your name, and preferably you email address (or phone number, if no email). Be sure that you give the card to one of the co-librarians to file so that we have a record of who has the item.

New books added recently:

500 Cacti: Species and Varieties in Cultivation by Ken Preston-Mafham

Cacti & Succulents for Modern Living by Merchants Publishing (2 new copies)

Both of these books have great information on how to grow and care for individual species of succulents and are written for the hobbyist.

New Cactus Lexicon-Illustrations edited by David Hunt. This book contain more than 2,500 high quality color illustrations of nearly all currently recognized species and subspecies, contributed by more than 130 photographers.

Arizona Gardener's Guide by Mary Irish

This book especially for gardening in the Arizona desert climate is packed with wonderful information, much of it on cactus & succulents for the home landscape.

The Gardener's Guide to Cactus: The 100 Best Paddles, Barrels, Columns, and Globes by Scott Calhoun. Scott lives in Tucson and is a landscape designer using succulents adapted to the Arizona desert environment. He has written several excellent books on the topic and this is his most recent. He has taught classes at the Desert Botanical Garden and will be speaking at our July 26th meeting offering great practical information and advice.

Cool Things We Learned About Adeniums From Dave Palzkill

By Tom Gatz

If you missed the May CACSS meeting or didn't get a chance to take notes, here are just some of the great tips we got from Tucson nurseryman Dave Palzkill. His talk drew what may have been a record crowd in attendance, over 250 people.

Potting: Dave uses a mix of 50 percent pumice, 25 percent peat, 15 percent compost, five percent vermiculite, and five percent sand. He recommends moving adeniums to a slightly bigger pot every year or two to push growth.

Watering: To push growth, Dave waters the adeniums in his nursery every day during the summer. However, at home he only waters his large specimens once a week. He said twice a week would be better for faster growth. Be sure to water deeply to flush out salts to prevent leaf-tip dieback. Most adeniums die from the soil being cold and wet. It is best to stop watering in late October. If you keep them outside under a patio or in a cold garage like I do, protected from winter rain, keep them bone-dry until nighttime temperatures consistently warm up to over 50 degrees in the springtime, when you can water them lightly until they start to put on new growth and they can take up more water. If you bring them inside your home or into a heated greenhouse for the winter, once they are completely dry, you can wet just the top inch of soil once or twice a month during the winter.

Fertilizing: At his nursery, Dave uses Osmocote 18-6-12 incorporated in his soil mix to push growth in new plants. In late spring he applies a balanced 20-20-20 (water soluble), and starting in July he changes to 10-16-38. This high potassium later in the summer may increase their cold-tolerance. At the nursery, he fertilizes once a week. However, at home he only fertilizes his adeniums once or twice a year because he is not interested in rapid growth in these plants. He has not observed any increase in flowering by using extremely high phosphorus (the middle number) 'Bloom-Buster' formulas.

Pinching and Pruning: Pinch back growing tips on young plants to promote more branching and less 'leggy' growth. Be sure to remove every growing tip on the plant, or those you miss will grow like crazy at the expense of the other stems. You can drastically prune back leggy branches on older plants to promote branching without hurting it.

Growing from seeds: Be careful not to crush the delicate seeds. They are viable for only about two years. Lay seeds flat on the surface of well-draining soil one inch apart, cover with ¼ inch of potting soil and then a thin layer of pumice. Keep moist and warm until germinated, sometimes within one week. Seedlings can be transplanted after about a month, or maintained in the community pot for a year or more.

Stem cuttings: Remove a three-to-six inch actively growing stem tip, cut off half of each leaf to reduce water loss, dip in rooting hormone (Hormex, Hormodin, Rootone, or Dip n' Grow), place in a 50:50 perlite/vermiculite mix or in pumice and mist every 10 minutes, and provide 80-90 degree bottom heat. He has had 50-100% success in his greenhouse. (Without a greenhouse, bottom heat, or misting and with water only every other day, my success has been only about 25 percent for cuttings taken in May).

Grafting: Dave uses either a cleft (˘v˘) graft or a flat graft. He mainly uses small seedlings for rootstock primarily because they are easy to work with, but they are also more active than older and larger plants and might result in more success (this may explain my hit-or-miss success with grafting large diameter scions to large, established adeniums). There is no need to match the scion size to the diameter of the rootstock, although doing so will result in a better-looking graft union. His cleft graft scions are about two and a half inches long and his flat grafts are about ½ inch long. The piece being grafted (the scion) should have at least two or three buds. Longer scions for cleft grafts can have a dozen or more buds. Secure the cleft graft with grafting tape or just use green nursery tape. Secure the flat graft scion tightly in place against the flat surface of the rootstock with a piece of a plastic grocery produce bag and rubber bands or string. To hold in humidity,

upend a plastic cup over the cleft graft. He keeps his newly grafted plants in a humid greenhouse with 70 percent shade. For making clean cuts, he recommends the yellow- and green-handled Henkel kitchen knives available at Bed, Bath and Beyond or just using a straight-edge razor blade. Cleft-grafting is well-illustrated in the book *Adenium: Sculptural Elegance, Floral Extravagance* (Dave is a co-author) from the CACSS library or view the copy in the DBG library (open week days noon to 4 pm). A good site to learn how to flat-graft is found at: <https://adeniumlove.wordpress.com>



(Left) Flat-graft: Pull the plastic tightly and hold in place with two rubber bands. (Right)The author learning the art of flat-grafting from Dan Smith

Air-layering (best method for certain success): Wind stem on either side but at different levels just above where you want to eventually cut off a stem, prop open cuts with pieces of toothpick to prevent healing and to promote new root growth, apply rooting hormone, cover with wet sphagnum moss (squeeze out excess moisture), wrap with poly-film (a cut zip lock bag works), tie the ends tightly with string to hold in moisture, and wrap in tin foil to keep out light. Expect roots in four to six weeks.

Miscellaneous stuff: His favorite species are *Adenium arabicum* and *A. I.* He hasn't had much luck getting dwarf adeniums to bloom. The best time for potting, pinching, pruning and all propagation techniques is late May and early June, so you may have to sacrifice some flowering during that season. For fun, try growing some adeniums with the roots clinging to a large rock. Stem cuttings with four or five major roots are ideal for this. Bind the roots tightly to the rock, cover with wet sphagnum moss and expose roots after about a year. Alternatively, the plant can be attached to a rock and then the rock with plant attached is 'planted' in a large pot with the rock completely buried. Treat as any other adenium for a year, and then re-pot with the rock and attached plant exposed. Dave didn't mention sun exposure, but when Dan Smith and I visited his nursery in Tucson, he said that his adeniums are under 33% shade cloth. Here in Phoenix, Dan and I have found that adenium flowers tend to fade less in filtered sun versus full, all-day sun.



Commemorative Tribute Tile

At the January, 2015, Board Meeting, the board of directors voted to make a \$1,500 donation to the Desert Botanical Garden for a tribute tile to commemorate the 40th anniversary (1974-2014) of the Central Arizona Cactus & Succulent Society. The funding of a tribute tile provides support for the DBG's research programs, horticultural exhibits, and maintenance of the garden.

Our CACSS tile has been installed on a tribute wall on the patio at the Center for Desert Living Trail (CDL). The tile, designed by local ceramic artist Jim Sudal, pictures a "prickly pear" with an over-all green glaze and an inscription. The next time you visit the DBG be sure to take the time to visit the CDL and take a look at our new tile. To get there, just follow the Desert Discovery Loop Trail to the Center for Desert Living Trail. You can also find a map of the garden in the DBG Trail Map and Guest Guide.



Propagation Education Group (PEG): **Propagating Plants with Dean Patrick**

By Sue Hakala

Dean grew up outside of St. Louis, Missouri, with a father who farmed and kept greenhouses. "I earned pocket money in the 1940's building flats for the plants, and have had a hand in the plant industry for years," Dean said.

As an adult living in Indiana, Dean was the only person in his neighborhood who had a vegetable garden. "I just enjoy growing things," he says.

Now, when Dean sees a plant for sale, he starts wondering if it can be propagated. "I get such enjoyment from propagating plants. I don't know what it is, but I just do."

Dean says he's not big on growing plants from seeds, but likes doing divisions of a plant, air-layering or growing clones like from an agave. He best enjoys working with succulents that grow rapidly, but has worked with cactus, too.

"I found an unusual specimen of *Portularia afra* several years ago. This plant has big fleshy leaves. I've probably propagated thousands of this plant. I have some rooting all the time and enjoy giving them away."

Dean volunteered for several years at the Desert Botanical Garden in the propagation area. He learned to successfully root plants outside in a shaded sand bed. "I was directed to put cactus cuttings in the sand bed and water them once a week. In just a few weeks the plants would be rooted." So Dean set up a similar sand bed in his yard and started rooting agaves. He was so successful that he ran out of space. He then moved 1,000 agaves in pots on to his patio roof as he had no other space. "I'd climb a ladder to water them. My neighbors thought I was nuts, but I sure enjoyed it," he said. He's had success rooting all kinds of cactus and succulents in the moist sand.

Dean advises that if you don't want to transplant a plant after it has rooted, fill the pot 3/4 full of your regular soil and the last 1/4 with just sand. Put the cutting in, keep it moist in a shaded spot, and in two weeks the roots will start growing into the soil. You will have saved yourself the trouble of repotting.

"My yard is literally filled with plants, mostly in pots. My wife isn't a plant person, so we battle sometimes about keeping walkways open and such," he said.

Dean joined the (then) CACSS Propagation Committee when Gard Roper and Doug Dawson invited members to participate. "I really enjoy the group and how we share problems and solutions with each other. We discuss insect problems and exchange info in a round table discussion that is very productive," he said. As the group grew, Dean helped provide leadership. Now due to other life commitments, Dean asked Tristan Davis to get involved in the group (now called the Propagation Education Group) and to take over the leadership. "I'm committed to helping in any way that I can," Dean said.

When Dean needs answers to propagation questions, he turns to the book, *Succulents Simplified: Growing, Designing, and Crafting with 100 Easy-Care Varieties* by Debra Lee Baldwin as it provides step-by-step information. "I also go to the Internet, Wikipedia and youtube.com, which must have a video for every subject you can think of," Dean says.

Consider joining the Propagation Education Committee (PEG) so you can learn how to be a better propagator, too. **The group meets next on Saturday, July 18, from 10 a.m. until noon at the Desert Botanical Garden in the Education Building.** It doesn't matter if you've never propagated anything or are at any experience level. Join this fun group. You're sure to learn a lot.

Please Send Articles for Newsletter

For a more interesting newsletter, articles about plants and taking care of them are very important. Please send your articles or suggestions for topics to the editor: Diana Decker--dianadec@cox.net

*Publication of material in the Central Spine does not imply agreement with the ideas expressed therein by any portion of the membership of the CACSS, nor does it constitute an endorsement or support for any portion of such material by the CACSS, or the Central Spine, regardless of any position or office held by the author.
All such material represents a comment and/or personal opinion of the author.*

PLANT QUESTIONS??? WHOM TO CONTACT!!!

Many CACSS members have experience with different kinds of succulent plants. I hope they will add their names to the following list. Call or email Diana Decker, *Central Spine* editor, dianadec@cox.net, 602-220-9825. For now, the list is simply alphabetical with principal interests. When more members add their information, the list will be cross-referenced by topic.

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Specialization in softwood stem-cuttings, plant division and seed starting (rooting cacti, agave and aloe).

STEVE PLATH

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