

# Central Spine

February, 2011

*Newsletter of the Central Arizona  
Cactus & Succulent Society*

*An Affiliate of the Cactus & Succulent Society of America*

On the Web at [www.centralarizonacactus.org](http://www.centralarizonacactus.org)

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Crassula rupestris near Nieuwoudtville, Western Cape, South Africa, Sept.14, 2009  
Photo by Doug Dawson

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## Plants of the Month

Plants of the Month is on hiatus.  
Bring a plant that looks awesome

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## February 20, 2011 Program

Michael Buckner, our speaker for February, will teach the art of plant presentation. The CACSS Annual Show and Sale is just around the corner and everyone should be thinking about the plants they intend to show. Michael will show you how to make a plant more attractive and how to highlight its features. Michael and his wife, Joyce, own The Plant Man shop in Old Town San Diego and have been showing plants in California for years. They will be bringing plants to sell.

### Find newsletters online at

[www.centralarizonacactus.org](http://www.centralarizonacactus.org). Scroll down the list on the left and click on newsletters.

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## President's Letter February, 2011

I am sitting in my greenhouse as I write this and I am contemplating the third cold snap we've had in as many months, but I am not going to talk about the near-freezing and below freezing weather anymore ( I guess I just did?). I am looking forward to spring!, and I think many of my plants are, too. They seem to be champing at the bit, ready to get growing. For me this is a great time for the plants. Worry about excessive heat seems far enough away (really???) so let me enjoy it while it lasts, as I hope all of you do as well. This is a good time to be planning what to repot or clean up weeds from, and to start getting your plants ready for our Show and Sale (April 1,2 and 3 are the dates); it is fast approaching. Don't forget to volunteer at the Show if you are able to; we really appreciate your help. We will also be announcing the date(s) of upcoming workshops and other fun and educational activities. If you have any suggestions or wish to conduct a workshop, be sure to let me or another board member know. I know some Clubs have an annual picnic. Would there be any interest in that? It might be incorporated into a field trip as well. There is also talk about a propagation committee, as well as many other new committees to be announced. This is your Club and let's make the most of it!

See you at the meeting.

Steve M

# SURGE WATERING

by Tom Gatz

*(Reprinted from the DBG volunteer newsletter)*

If you missed our monthly meeting this past October, nurseryman Dr. Jon Weeks, who owns and operates Landscape Cacti near Tucson, gave an insightful presentation on “hardening off” your cactus during the fall to help them survive the winter by making them 8 to 10 degrees more cold tolerant.

His two main “take home” messages were:

- 1) Stop watering your cactus in the fall, sometime around Halloween. This allows the cactus to dehydrate causing a decrease in the amount of water it contains, resulting in an increase in the percentage of sugars in the cactus that act as a natural anti-freeze.
- 2) Stop fertilizing your cactus with high nitrogen levels 6 to 8 weeks before you quit watering them, sometime in early September. Nitrogen is indicated on your fertilizer container by the first number. Dr. Weeks still hits them with a high phosphorus (the middle number) fertilizer such as 9-45-6 just before Halloween to stimulate spring blooming.

During the question and answer period, he was asked about summer watering of cactus and he recommended something interesting that he calls “surge watering”, especially for cactus in pots.

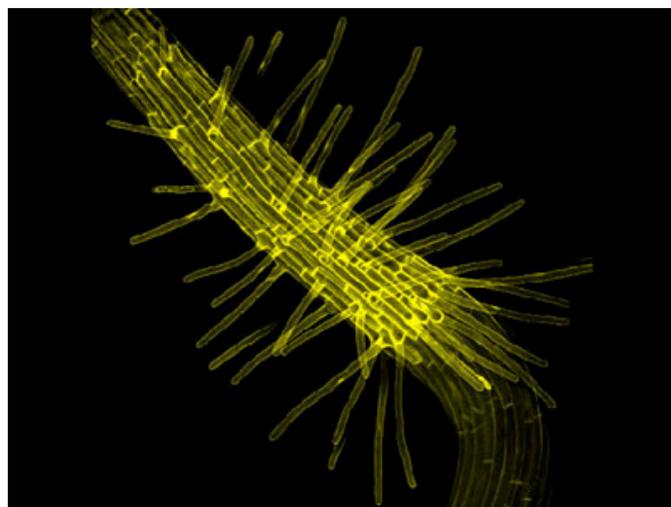
He explained that when a dry cactus or other succulent gets watered, it begins to grow new root hairs within 24 to 48 hours to take advantage of the moisture in the soil. However, in a hot pot during our dry summer, the pot often dries out in just a day or two (or just a few hours in a tiny pot), before the root hairs can fully form and begin to function. He

likened these root hairs to “temporary soda straws,” that quickly dry up and fall off once the soil goes dry. Therefore, watering potted cacti once a week or every 10 days as many of us do during the hot and dry Arizona summer, may not allow our plants to fully utilize the water we are providing.

## What to do?

Dr. Weeks recommends providing a periodic “surge” of water over a period of several days during the hot and dry part of the growing season. He suggests watering your pots every other or every third day over a 5 to 7 day period of time, then back off on watering for a longer period of time before repeating. This will provide continuous soil moisture for several days in a row, which will favor the production of ephemeral root hairs and the uptake of water and nutrients.

Scott McMahan and I are thinking of experimenting with this next summer; watering some of our cacti the “old way” and some with the surge method and comparing the results at the end of the summer.



Temporary root hairs (magnified 63 times) act like disposable soda straws, growing only when soil moisture conditions are suitable and drying up when not.  
Photo by Dr. Jessica Lucas

## DUES ARE DUE

The 2011 membership dues for the CACSS are \$20 for individuals and \$25 for households. The monthly newsletter is emailed to members as part of their dues; the additional charge for post-office delivery is \$5.

Please send your dues-checks along with any changes in mailing addresses, phone numbers and email addresses to CACSS, P.O. Box 63572, Phoenix, AZ 85082-3572

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# **CENTRAL ARIZONA CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY**

## **DECEMBER 31, 2010** **FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2009</u>
Year-End Cash Balance	\$23,858	\$19,575
Sustaining Reserve Balance	8,000	8,000
Plant Rescue Reserve	2,500	2,500
Restricted Donations	<u>175</u>	
Net Cash After Reserves	\$13,183	<u>\$ 9,075</u>

Year-to-Year Increase in Cash: \$ 4,178

The CACSS improved its financial condition in 2010. Revenues for 2010 were virtually unchanged from those of 2009 - \$45,610 vs. \$45,454. Expenses, however, declined by 10% from \$45,986 in 2009 to \$41,432 in 2010; the net result was a surplus of \$4,178 for the past year versus a loss of \$532 in 2009.

Among the highlights for 2010 was a gain of \$1,093 in plant sales over last year, which was mainly due to the success of the October silent auction. A major expense reduction was the almost elimination of newsletter-costs. Because almost everyone receives the newsletter online, expenses for it last year were only \$67 compared to \$661 in 2009. A new cash register was purchased in 2009 for the Show & Sale, and this expense did reoccur in 2010. Because expenses exceeded revenues in 2009, the Board reduced its donation to the Desert Botanical Garden; a \$1,000 was donated vs. \$1,850 in 2009. Also fewer purchases were made for the library in 2010, reducing expenses in that area from \$573 in 2009 to only \$52. The results from the Show & Sale were off by \$468 from the previous year. Because the annual holiday party was not held at the DBG in December, the CACSS incurred nearly \$250 in facility-rental costs.

Membership held steady in 2010, ending the year with 251 members, up by three over 2009. This slight increase was due entirely to a large influx of new or rejoining members as 30% of the members at the beginning of 2010 did not renew. Last year, 33% did not renew and 25% in 2008.

T. Wayne Whipple, Treasurer

# Annual Show and Sale

By Sue Hakala

Our annual show and sale is scheduled for April 1, 2 and 3 in Dorrance Auditorium at the Desert Botanical Garden. Plants will be dropped off on Wednesday, March 30 until 8 p.m. and judged on Thursday, March 31. The show will open on Friday, April 1. Plants are picked up after the show closes on Sunday at 4 p.m.

This year there are four judges:

- Jim Elliott has owned and operated Arizona Cactus Sales in Chandler since 1977. He joined our club in 1986, has been president several times, and has judged the show many times. He and his wife Electra have organized and lead many of our out-of-state trips.
- Scott McMahon, *Cactaceae* collections manager at the Desert Botanical Garden, has responsibility for the world's largest cactus collection. Holding B.S. and M.S. degrees in plant protection from the University of Arizona, Scott shares his knowledge freely, and by teaching classes on desert trees, cacti and other succulents. His personal plant collection began in the late 1970's. He's been a member of our club since the early 1990's, and president twice. Scott has judged the show several times.
- Greg Starr holds a B.S. in horticulture and a M.S. in horticulture with a special emphasis in botany from the University of Arizona. He owns Starr Nursery

specializing in low water use plants for landscaping in southern Arizona. Greg's been a speaker at our club, and has written *Cool Plants for Hot Gardens*. He has described a new species of *Agave*, two new species and a subspecies of *Hesperaloe*, and revised the genus *Hesperaloe* in a monograph. Greg teaches classes in plant biology and plant materials.

Jim and Greg will be judging succulents, Scott and the fourth judge (unconfirmed as of this writing) will be judging cactus.

Enter plants in the show--it's fun. Enjoy the time cleaning and grooming them as a way to get to know your plants better. The first year I entered in the novice category submitting a *Mammillaria schiedeana*. Not an overly impressive plant I thought, but one I loved. The judges gave it a trophy! Imagine my surprise. This could happen to you too.

You can enter specimen plants in a non-judged category if you'd just like to show something you love. As Steve Plath said, "People should not be intimidated about entering. The purpose of the showing your plants is to educate the public and fellow growers. It's a chance to join in friendly competition, and to praise those who grow common plants well as well as those who grow plants that are difficult in cultivation."

If you choose not to enter, do attend the show and sale. You'll have a chance to buy some great plants and unique handcrafted pottery. You can also see what fellow club members grow, and be supporting your friends and club.



*Euphorbia hamata* near Vanrhynsdorp, Western Cape, South Africa, Sept. 14, 2009 Photo by Doug Dawson



*Conophytum pageae* near Vanrhynsdorp, Western Cape, South Africa, Sept.14, 2009 Photo by Doug Dawson

## **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 (Just call or e-mail Bob Torrest—480-994-3868; robertst9114@msn.com).

For now the list is simply alphabetical with principal interests. When more members add their information, the list will be cross-referenced by topic.

### **DOUG DAWSON**

480-893-1207

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Specializations include Flora of Namibia, Growing from Seed, Lithops, other Mesembs, and Melocactus.

### **MIKE GALLAGHER**

602-942-8580

mgallagher26@cox.net

Specializations include Aloes, Haworthias, Columnar Cacti, and *Turbinicarpus*.

### **STEVE PLATH**

623-915-7615

revegduke1@juno.com

Specializations include *Ariocarpus*, *Astrophytum*, *Cyphostemma*, *Echinocereus*, *Fouquieria*, *Thelocactus*,

General Propagation, and Desert Revegetation.

### **BOB TORREST**

480-994-3868

robertst9114@msn.com

Specializations include Desert Landscaping, Unusual (including Rare Fruit) Trees and Shrubs, Aloes, Agaves,

Columnar Cacti, *Trichocereus*, and *Opuntia*.

## **CENTRAL ARIZONA CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY**

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