

# CACTUS COURIER

*Newsletter of the Palomar Cactus and Succulent Society*

Volume 55, Number 9

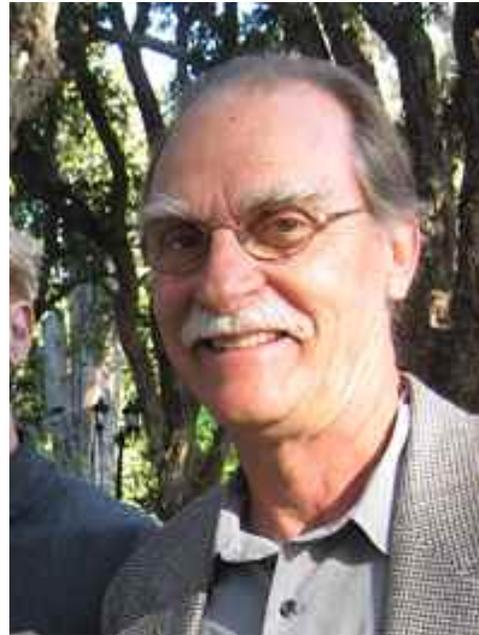
September 2009

The Meeting is the **4th** Saturday

**September 26, 2009**

**Joslyn Senior Center  
724 N. Broadway, Escondido**

**12 Noon!!**



Julian Duval  
President/CEO – Quail Botanical Gardens



*Quail – Gone, but not forgotten ...*

***“Quail Botanical Gardens is changing its name...”***

Julian Duval’s presentation will of course be about *Quail Botanical Gardens*, which on September 12th changed its name to San Diego Botanic Garden. We would guess members of the Palomar Cactus and

Succulent Society will have some feelings and comments about the name change!

Julian plans on retracing some of the Garden’s history and also providing a photographic tour coupled

with how we see the experience for the visiting public is an expression of their mission and why the Garden exists.

Many of the long existing and most of the newest additions to the Gardens present plant material from around the world that is the stock and trade of the PCSS. The Hamilton Children's Garden opened in June and represents the most extensive addition to the Garden in its history. Horticulturally this new area has provided both soil and climate conditions different than in most of the existing space, which has enhanced the range of range of plant material, we can grow well. While this newest addition is

titled a children's garden Julian says he would be willing to bet the price of admission that any member of PCSS would find a visit very much to their interest and liking.

In 1996, Julian and his wife Leslie moved from Indianapolis for him to take the position at QBG. He moved a personal plant collection of some 800 potted specimens to Encinitas as well. While it was a collection grown in Indiana in a heated greenhouse in the winter, and thus did not have the character of southern California grown plants, most of these plants are what PCSS members recognize and enjoy growing.



**Board Meeting • Brag Plants • Plant-of-the-Month • Exchange Table**

## REFRESHMENTS

*We all enjoy the refreshments brought by our generous members (and even their guests!!!)*

**Jean O'Daniel ••• Teri Schmidt ••• Royal Akin ••• Barbara Martin**

**Charlie Ambruster ••• John & Michelle Mellein ••• Lore Johansen ••• Red & Connie Bernal**



### *“Landscape for Fire Safety”*

The Landscape for Fire Safety Garden at Quail Botanical Gardens has 1,000 fire-resistant plants, which have high water retention, provide less fuel in fires, contain no oil and leave small amounts of litter in the yard. They weave a 20,000-square-foot mosaic of bold lines and soft edges that wrap around the Ecke Family Building. The collection showcases succulents that store water and are fire-resistant. Fires always are a concern in Southern California, where native chaparral tends to dry into tinder during the summer months. The roofs of two utility buildings are covered with succulents to demonstrate how one of the most vulnerable parts of a structure can be protected from wildfires. Not only that, says Julian Duval, but the rooftop succulent gardens prevent water from running off the roofs to the sewers and then out to sea, thereby reducing pollution in the ocean.

*[I so wish they had used botanical names!!]*

**Succulents:** aloe, jade, sticks on fire, African baby toes, tiger jaws, red yucca, Indian fig cactus, prickly pear, starfish flower, and agave.

**Trees:** loquat, flame, peppermint, orange, lemon, carob, Australian willow, California black walnut, ponytail palm, olive, and coast live oak.

**Shrubs:** oleander, quail saltbush, manzanita, bottle brush, California lilac, white rock rose, coast sunflower, poinsettia, pomegranate, toyon, English lavender, India hawthorn, and lemonade berry.

**Perennials:** bird of paradise, kangaroo paw, beach evening primrose, sea dahlia, coastal buckwheat, daffodil, bear grass, and society garlic.

**Flowers:** California poppy, swan daisy, and some roses.

**Ground covers:** ice plant, sage brush, ground morning glory, California fuchsia, ivy geranium, trailing rosemary, and thyme.



*...not so flammable!*



### *Garden Days*

*Dick Henderson*

The next meeting will be **Saturday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>** from 11 am to 2 pm. Come and enjoy the pleasures of the Garden! (Work in the shade!)



### 2009 MEETING SCHEDULE

**26 September**      **Joslyn Center**

**24 October**        Joslyn Center

**21 November**     Joslyn Center

**NOTE !!! 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday !!**

**20 December**     Joslyn Center

**NOTE !!! 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday !!**



*"Nothing for me, thanks."*

## PLANT SHOWS AND JUDGING

By Dorothy Dunn – Late Member of PCSS

Exhibiting your 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 very 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, many of us hesitate to enter plant shows because of a lack of information concerning just 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, first of all, that judging is a very individualistic, opinionated, 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 cactus and succulent shows 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 a 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 fertilizer)? Is it sunburned, scarred, discolored, or diseased? Is the growth uniform and even? Are there any signs of mealy-bugs, scale, or ants? An experienced judge will note immediately and automatically all of these things, because an 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. Pots may be ordinary clay, stoneware, ceramic, or even plastic, but they must be in good condition (no chips or cracks) and they must be clean (no alkali encrustations, algae, dirt clinging to the pot, etc.). The pot should be of a complementary 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 pot should always subtly enhance the plant, it should never overwhelm or detract from it in any way. The judges will, however, take the overall effect into consideration. The plant must, of course, be straight 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), coarse sand or decomposed granite. Aside from being neat-appearing, top dressing is also beneficial to the plant; it keeps the soil from caking and cracking, conserves

moisture, and discourages weeds. Here, as with the pot, it should never detract from or clash with the plant. If you choose not to use a top dressing, the soil around the plant should be clean and fresh-looking and free of weeds or debris. The plant itself should be as immaculate as you can possibly make it – no spider webs and/or (worse!) spiders, no snail tracks and/or (worse!) snails, etc., ad nauseum, and it should be cleaned of hard water marks on the leaves or body, and be free of dust, dead leaves and other debris. Dead blooms should be removed unless they have been left on the plants for the purpose of setting seed.

A large, relatively mature “specimen-size” plant, if well-grown, will always take precedence over immature or seedling plants. This is where Size and Degree of Maturity come in. It is especially satisfying to display a plant you have successfully grown from a seedling into a handsome and mature specimen. Due to the proper 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 also 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 plants shown 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 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 very rare or difficult to grow plant is bound to influence most judges. [*Note from your editor – a common but beautifully grown plant can still take the prize over a rare but not quite perfect plant*].

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 owner's 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.



## Judging Succulent Plants for Awards

By David Naylor – The Cactus Factus (Ontario, Canada)

*Q. I would like to know the correct way of judging succulent plants for awards. At a recent show, I watched in awe as a raggedly-leafed *Beaucarnea* was awarded the first place ribbon with an explanation of “That is how it grows.”*

A. It is difficult to comment on this specific case without seeing the plant and the other entries in that class. Judges should keep in mind the main reason for the show -- usually to encourage more people to grow these plants. This means that the ribbon winners should at least look the part -- a mangled old rarity shouldn't get a first place ribbon just because it's seldom seen. Plants in the wild may be misshapen, chewed by goats or have insect damage, but that doesn't mean that plants like that may get ribbons. Leaves may naturally dry up at the tips from the dry desert air, but we don't want this too evident on our show plants unless it makes them look nicer. Plants are judged to a level of perfection, and every defect that takes away from that perfection is counted against the plant. Damage to a plant, and usually this includes dried-up leaf tips, should be weighed during judging according to how far it is from the growing point. In other words, damage low down on a plant's body should not weigh so heavily against perfection as the same damage nearer the top. We wouldn't want a plant that had been grown perfectly for the last 30 years to lose a lot of points due to a bad scar at its base. Whereas a 30-year-old cactus with a spine cluster missing near the growing point (in other words -- recent damage) would not have a chance for a ribbon. Likewise with broken spines and leaves.

Let's consider another case, a jade (*Crassula ovata*) with a damaged leaf. The exhibitor needs to consider what looks best -- the plant with the damaged leaf in place, the plant with the whole leaf removed, or the plant with only the damaged portion of the leaf removed. The choice should be the one that will be the least noticeable -- to both the public and the judge. As plants may get damaged on the way to the show, an exhibitor should be prepared to make last minute pruning and/or clean-ups.

So in the specific case of the *Beaucarnea* (or *Nolina* as they are currently known). Leaves near the growing point should not have dried-up tips. Lower leaves do dry up with age and may be expected, but for show purposes I would like any dried portions to be removed by lightly pruning them. As a judge, I would notice that the plant had been pruned but this would be more preferable to me than seeing dried or damaged portions remaining on the plant. Another plant, identical in all respects but without dried-up leaves or leaf tips would rank higher in my judging. However, another judge, with a “That is how it grows” viewpoint, may decide to award the other way as the dried leaf tips could be viewed as being more true-to-type.

Don't construe the above to apply in all cases like this though. Judging is quite difficult and requires knowledge of the natural form of most species. General “rules” or guidelines like the above cannot be made. For example, a *Haworthia lockwoodii* needs to have the dried leaf tips in place. In this instance, removal of any dried leaf-tips would be severely down-pointed.

In general, most exhibitors fail to spend enough time cleaning up their plants for a show. So a judge often awards ribbons to plants which could have looked much nicer. If the plant referred to in the question only had partially dried-up bottom leaves this wouldn't have been enough of a “flaw” to withhold awarding the first place ribbon if it was the best plant in the class. But in my opinion (and remember that this is without seeing it) a well-grown and cleaned-up plant of equivalent maturity in the same class should have been able to beat it.



North County Times  
August 21, 2009

## CALIFORNIA GARDENS:

### Succulents a green option for low-water landscaping

– TINEKE WILDERS

I have been receiving numerous questions about low-water-use plants, especially those able to survive our infamous annual droughts. Plants that will typically be able to withstand times of low or even no water have always been those in the succulent family.

The main characteristic of succulent plants is their built-in survival instinct. In their natural habitat, they store all the water they can capture during the rainy season and then gradually use it up from their swollen leaves, stems, branches and roots during the dry season.

We can take advantage of this efficiency, especially during our infamous droughts. For instance, many cactuses will produce abundant flowers after a dry period, followed by a short, often intense, period of water.

Cactuses are members of the succulent family and have actually survived because of their survival mechanisms, by eliminating their leaves, which then over time morphed into spines. A spiny cactus may look unfriendly, but actually make ideal plant-mates, since they will thrive on little care.

As a general rule of thumb, during spring and summer, cactuses are best given a thorough watering and then not again until the soil is completely dry. This might translate to a once-a-month watering, as opposed to other plants that like to be kept moist at all times. But in weather emergencies, such as excessive drought, these plants amazingly adjust their metabolism in order to survive.

Most succulents grow best outdoors, in a garden, a partly covered patio or deck, but many will adjust nicely to bright indoor growing conditions. Some shun direct hot midday sun, as many come from the semi-shaded areas of the tropical jungles where taller trees filter out the sunlight.

Cactuses grow best in at least five hours of full sunlight per day, while indoors you can offer an eastern or western unobstructed windowsill. Of course, a southern exposure is always ideal; however, indoors you might have to provide some protection from the hot midday sun.

Soil for succulents should consist of a fast-draining mixture, usually amended with coarse sand, crushed gravel or perlite. In other words, the water runs through pretty quickly and the soil does not hold onto moisture.

Succulents have a small root system, so stay with shallow containers, such as shallow terra cotta pots or bowls, troughs, even a cracked birdbath or a retired fountain.

Here are my recommendations for easy-to-grow succulents: Sedums, hens and chicks (*Echeveria*), cobweb houseleeks (*Sempervivum*), *Crassulas*, such as the jade plant, *Aeoniums*, *Haworthias*, red or yellow crown of thorns (*Euphorbia splendens*) and other *Euphorbia* relatives.

*Aloes*, with their salmon-pink tubular flowers on a tall stem, are great for attracting hummingbirds, who will surely visit several times a day feeding on the nectar of these flowers. You will also notice that many of these succulents grow in a rosette shape.

To create your own succulent garden, look for plants with different texture and foliage shapes, leaves, spines and flowers and group them using your own creative ideas. For decoration, add shells or interesting rocks.

Like a tall-growing succulent (4-6 feet and up)? Choose the Madagascar palm (*Pachypodium lamerei*), but plant it in a deep terra cotta or ceramic pot to balance out its height.

If you live in an apartment and have only a balcony, you can still grow a collection of succulents in containers. Think of wooden boxes, barrels, handmade ceramics and other whimsical pottery. Even a large clay strawberry pot makes a wonderful apartment-style home for your choice of succulents.

To get some more ideas from an established succulent garden, visit the Balboa Park Desert Garden in San Diego, just north of the rose garden, right along Park Boulevard, across the street from the San Diego Zoo entrance. This garden contains an impressive collection of euphorbias (cactuslike succulents native to East and South Africa), barrel-type cactus as well as some interesting succulent trees, such as aloes, agaves (with its towering giant asparagus-tip like flower spike), Boojum trees from Baja, Ocotillo, palos verdes (in Spanish: green wood) and South African coral trees.

Get acquainted with the exciting world of succulents – you may find them hard to resist, once you get to know them up close.



## Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society

P.O. Box 840, Escondido, CA 92033

### *Membership Application*

I/We wish to join/renew membership in the  
**Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society**

**\$20.00 Single Membership**  
**\$25.00 Dual Membership (Same Address)**  
(1/2 price after June 30th)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to:  
**“Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society”**  
P.O. Box 840, Escondido, CA 92033



### CACTUS AND SUCCULENT POTS



*As an avid cactus and succulent collector I found it almost impossible to find suitable pots for my specimen plants. Years ago I came across a used pottery wheel for sale and remembered how I loved the feel of clay as a child in school and realized that I could learn to create my own pots. This is the point where a great adventure began, bringing me to a career as a full-time potter, bringing me full circle back to the plants that I love.*

– Barbara Wesson

[http://www.etsy.com/shop.php?user\\_id=5752065](http://www.etsy.com/shop.php?user_id=5752065)

