



Cactus Courier



Newsletter of the Palomar Cactus and Succulent Society

The North San Diego County Cactus and Succulent Club

Volume 71, Number 11

November 2025

What's Inside



Club Info	1
Speaker	1-3
Fall Festival Recap	4-9
People's Choice Award Winners	10
CSSA Article - Debra Baldwin.....	11
Home Garden Brag Plants	12-15
Plant of the Month	16
El Cajon Library Plant of the Month.....	17
PCSS 2026 Membership Renewal	18
Note about Entry Slips.....	18
Tribute to Donors	19
Misc. Club & Meeting Info.....	20

PCSS Welcomes New Members

Laura Fish
Sally Luedeman
Assaf Magen
Scott Malcolm
Barbara & David Mathis
Hernan Morales
Kym & Arthur Schadeberg
Pamela Bell
Marlene Hein
Ann Henkel

November Speaker

Paul Erickson

Topic: Dragon Fruit



Paul is a teacher, dragon fruit grower/hybridizer, and member of California Rare Fruit Growers. He advises farms and hobbyists how to grow dragon fruit successfully

through talks and several social media platforms. Paul has a vast collection of dragon fruit some of which he inherited from the late Leo Manuel, a pioneer of the California Rare Fruit Growers. Some of the plants are almost 30 years old now and still thriving!

Paul grows over 400 named varieties of dragon fruit (who knew there were that many!) and has around the same number of his own hybrid varieties.

Please see pages 2&3 for more information and links to Paul's online resources.

Meeting Fourth Saturday, Nov. 22

11:00 am—3:00 pm

Grace Presbyterian Church, 1450 E. Vista Way, Vista

- Brag Plant Table: **Plants must be labeled and on the table no later than 11:30 am to be judged.**
- Benefit drawing and exchange tables and auction will all be held.
- Plant of the month: monstrose & crests



Good News



You'll be happy to know that the church has installed a new water fountain for our thirst-quenching pleasure!

Below is part of an interview with Paul Erickson. You can read the whole interview at:

[HTTPS://SDVOYAGER.COM/?POST_TYPE=INTERVIEW&P=308658](https://sdvoyager.com/?post_type=interview&p=308658)

Conversations with Paul Erickson, *SDVOYAGER* APRIL 28, 2025

Paul, we appreciate your taking the time to share your story with us today. Where does your story begin?

I am a San Diego native and have always been fascinated with fruit trees and unique plants. In 2009, we purchased a home with 1¾ acres of land. Since then, I have been collecting and growing a wide array of interesting plants starting with bamboo, cacti, succulents, grevillea, citrus, and many more rare and exotic plants. I bought my first dragon fruit plant, also known as pitahaya, in 2015 and treated it like a desert cactus. It never thrived and I eventually removed it and replaced it with something else. In 2019, I decided to focus on growing more edible plants and came across around a dozen dragon fruit plants at a local nursery. Some of them looked like nothing I had ever seen before and were different species. Some of them had cool names like “Bloody Mary”, “Purple Haze”, and “Physical Graffiti”. I bought them all and started to research them online. Later that year I went to a Pitahaya Festival and learned some useful strategies and tips about growing them in our climate. Currently, I grow around 400-500 named varieties and have about the same number of my own hybrid seedlings. My friend Scott and I started a YouTube Channel called “Rare Dragon Fruit” to share the information we had learned and to teach any viewer how to grow them successfully.

As you know, we’re big fans of you and your work. For our readers who might not be as familiar what can you tell them about what you do?

I am known for having one of the most unique collections of dragon fruit plants in the world and for sharing everything I know about these mystical plants on social media. Some of the plants I collected are from the late Leo Manuel, a pioneer of the California Rare Fruit Growers. Some of the plants are almost 30 years old now and still thriving! I am most proud of the information and support that I share in the global dragon fruit community. Our Facebook group called San Diego Dragon Fruit Growers and Swap now has over 32,500 members from It all starts with using the right soil. After interviewing a second-generation professional horticulturist named Gary Matsuoka of Laguna Hills Nursery, I started to experiment with a silica based potting soil mixture and it has been a game changer for my plants and their health/vigor. Another important aspect is that many of these plants are self sterile and won’t

set fruit with their own pollen. Therefore, it is vital to grow a few different varieties and/or species to cross pollinate the flowers to set fruit.

Contact Info:

- Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/dragonfruit_encyclopedia/
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RareDragonFruit/>
- You tube: <https://www.youtube.com/c/RAREDRAGONFRUIT>
- Other: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/332218314495124/>
- Slide Show: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tRgJL0bMDnaHZp-IOQz681jCf9xROOEP/view>





Fall Festival

Photos by Charlyne Barad, Lorie Johansen, and Brita Miller
Captions by Brita



Jamie Straub, Francis Granger and Richard Miller are ready to greet members and guests and share info about our club.



Jamaye Despaigne is all set just in time for the open.



Ask festival chair, Eleanore Hewitt, if having that title guarantees only the most dignified jobs!



People gathering waiting for the Festival to open and be the first to get the best buys.



Bruce Barry and new member Scott Malcolm



Lois Walag embraces Halloween by festooning Stacy Day's and her table with spiderwebs. Eeek!.



Some of the 9 tables with plants donated to PCSS. Each Festival brings more and more donations with PCSS receiving 100% of the sales.

Sherman Blench takes a well deserved break from volunteering with the PCSS plants.



Robert Kopfstein chats with a shopper.



Lyn Mardesich, like many of our members, is always carrying big boxes.

Another shopper is very happy with getting a beautiful agave free as she was leaving.





Lottie Foster with her plants.



New member Scott Malcolm talking with Julian Duval about his plants.



Marlene Walder with great prices. "Everything must go."



Bill DiAngelo at Moni Waiblinger's table.



Harold Dunn, super volunteer ever since our first Festival, taking a well deserved break.



Keith Umbreit brought an extra-large table for all his plants.



We even had furry customers. Did they sign in?



Gary Vincent and Sam Stelletello



Looks like Moni needs a box.



Shoppers standing in line to pay. Some have attended before and are prepared for serious shopping (white basket).



↑ Windy Chen and Ken Brown seem to be having too much fun. Teri Shusterman and Liz Rozycki are hard at work helping a customer. Lynn Cahill (not photographed) rounded out our great cashiering team.

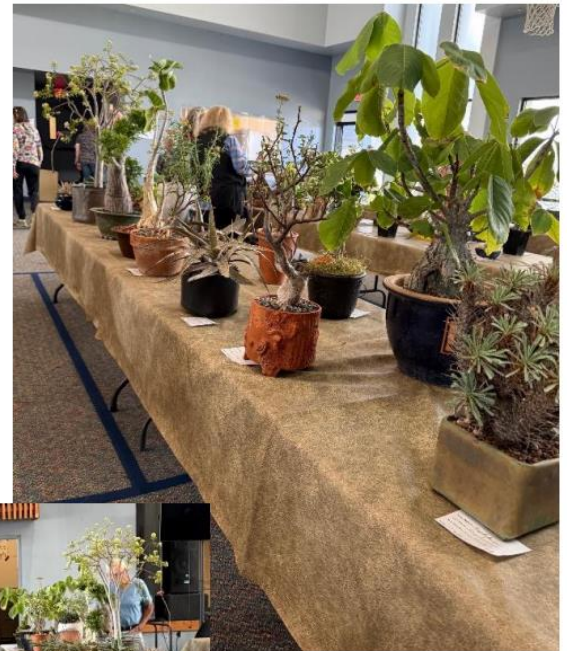


← Windy and Teri are pointing to Ken. Wonder why? What did he say or do??



Teri Lorie Susan Snow Bonnie DiAngelo
Bonnie - "Did you see what Lorie just bought? What a deal."

Festival Show



Catching up with friends



Patti Nelson, Candy and Jerry Garner, and Mike Nelson



Francis Granger and Julie Kort



Keith Umbreit, Lou and Suzi Harris



Jerry refueling on some delicious sweets



Fall Festival Wrap-up



Thank you, everyone for a delightful, engaging, and profitable Fall Festival! Our treasurer, Teri, said we had gross sales of \$9,418. \$3104 of which was from plants donated to PCSS. The net was about \$4084, almost double last Spring's Festival earnings. We had 105 guests, 10 of whom are now new PCSS members! That's double the number from spring. We all know the adage that begins with, "It takes a village..." Fall Festival was evidence that our PCSS village is an enthusiastic, talented, and generous village indeed!

Many thanks to publicity chairs, Lou Harris and Tom McCarter and to all members who publicized the event through news media, various clubs, neighborhood flyers, Facebook pages, and word of mouth. Our guests signed in and indicated where they learned about the event. Their varied answers showed that all our publicity sources were effective. Many of them who came for the first time were friends of members. Also, we had a number of members of the San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society club come. Thanks again, Debra Lee Baldwin for writing about our event in your newsletter and website. Winning the "Around the World - How Did You Hear about Us?" publicity prize was a lady whose daughter in Belgium saw it and put it on Instagram.

Many thanks to members who helped set up indoors Friday afternoon, arrived super early Saturday morning to set up outdoors, and stayed late to clean up. Saturday morning volunteers set up tables and canopies out in the courtyard and filled a number of them with donated plants. In the afternoon, volunteers folded tables - those belonging to members and moving those belonging to the church indoors. They took down canopies, packed up plants, boxes, cash registers, etc. and loaded everything into vehicles. Brian Youens was an immense help. He came early to help set up and then came back to help with the take down. Everyone worked hard to make the area look like we were never there. Everybody respected the need to put plants in boxes without holes because we had to store the plants in the church overnight. There was so little litter on the carpet that we did not need to vacuum. We are grateful to members who brought tables and canopies for us to use. Joe Cobb again brought the most tables again, seven!

Speaking of generosity, thank you, everyone who propagated and donated plants for PCSS to sell. Mike Peters donated 70 one gallon pots! Wow! The number of donated plants was mind-blowing - far, far more than ever before! Some of the plants were re-potted, cleaned up, and top-dressed by Lorie, Sherman, Jamie, Liz and Kevin to make them even more attractive and ready to sell. The bulk of the donated plants were stored at Lorie Johansen's home. Kevin Smith took the unsold plants to grow them out.

Thanks to Brita for keeping track of who was bringing what - tables, canopies, donation plants, etc. Some people brought tables for others to use, some sellers needed to borrow tables. A little like musical chairs. Brita also did the layout for the courtyard and assisted sellers as needed. She also did some gentle arm twisting finding all the volunteers needed. She made sure all the supplies were there and made much of the signage.

Thank you to everyone who brought plants, pots, etc. to sell. The courtyard was bustling with happy shoppers!

The food everyone brought to share was delicious as always – wow, what a feast! We are known for our food. Huge thanks to Sandy, Bruce, and the rest of the kitchen volunteers for organizing the kitchen and making sure all the food was plated and ready to eat. They worked hard to clean up afterwards, leaving the kitchen spotless!

Special thanks to our cashier team: Teri, Ken (from SDCSS), Liz, Lynn, and Windy! They handled shoppers' purchases with efficiency and grace. Shoppers left with their prized plant bargains securely packed and padded in boxes for a safe ride home.

Thank you Eleanore for chairing the show. The plants that everyone brought were magnificent! Visitors ooh-ed and ahh-ed at the vast array of beautiful and bizarre plants that were on display.

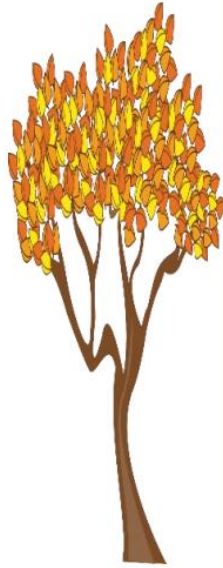
Thank you, everyone for a glorious show and a profitable sale!



Fall Festival People's Choice Winners



Novice Level
Jamie Straub
Stapelia gigantea



Novice Level
Mary Bentley
Dish Garden



Intermediate Level
Pauline Wong
Aeonium leucoblepharum



Advanced Level
Candy & Jerry Garner
Euphorbia francoisii



Advanced Level
Julian Duval
Operculicarya decaryi

PCSS Member Debra Lee Baldwin Featured in CSSA Journal

The following article appeared in the SDCSS newsletter.



Debra's Sand Bouquet

A 24-page illustrated article profiling one of our members is in the Winter, 2025 issue of the CSSA Journal, coming out in November: "Capturing beauty, cultivating trends: Debra Lee Baldwin's succulent journey." Editor Peter Breslin suggested it when they met at the CSSA convention. The article tells how, during Debra's journalism career, her articles, bestselling books, newsletter, website, and videos helped launch an increase in awareness of succulents among the gardening public.

Here are excerpts, photos and a summary:

Excerpt: "My motto is, 'If it's beautiful, shoot it.' For decades, I've hunted and collected gardens and plants with my camera. Having thousands of photos organized by date, location, and topic has proved invaluable for illustrating articles, videos, books, web pages, and social media; inspiring watercolors (my hobby); and designing gift and decorative items. What began as a side interest in succulents became integral to my work as a magazine contributor and author."

Authoring *Designing with Succulents* (Timber Press 2007; revised 2017) resulted in Debra's doing articles about succulents for *Better Homes & Gardens* and *The Wall Street Journal*, being interviewed by international media, and speaking at horticultural venues from Florida to Hawaii. There's also a French edition. In the CSSA article, Debra includes excerpts from the Chinese edition of her third book, *Succulents Simplified*. It shows the late Don Hunt staging *Fockea edulis* in one of his art pots at a San Diego show and sale; and Kelly Griffin standing beneath the arching inflorescence of *Agave* 'Blue Flame'.

Photos include those of Debra's own garden, well-groomed succulents in art pots, professionally landscaped gardens, and new cultivars developed to meet the growing demand. The article also tells how drought and wildfire concerns have boosted the plants' popularity.

Excerpt: "I encourage my viewers, site visitors, and newsletter subscribers to attend CSS meetings, shows, and sales. There, they'll meet knowledgeable growers, pick up design inspiration, discover rare and unusual plants, and—best of all—experience the thrill of the hunt.

"As a semi-retired content creator, I continue to find joy in interviewing experts and exploring gardens, my antennae aquiver for topics and photos to engage and entertain my followers. My ad-free website, updated frequently, offers well-researched information to succulent enthusiasts worldwide. What could be more rewarding?

"If I've sparked your curiosity, do visit [my website](#) and [YouTube channel](#). For videos specific to the CSSA, browse my YouTube playlist: ['Cactus & Succulent Society Experts, Shows, Gardens, and Collections.'](#)"

HOME GARDEN BRAG

by Joan Herskowitz

Share an especially nice section of your garden, a plant that bloomed in between meetings, or one that is too large to bring to the Brag Table. Earn 2 points for each published photo. You may send in photos of a maximum of two plants. Send photos to: jmherskowitz@yahoo.com. SUBMISSION DATES IN 2025: November 3rd, December 3rd.



Cereus forbesii 'Spiralis'
Christina Sangster



Stapelia mutabilis
Lorie Johansen



Adromischus herrei
Joan Herskowitz



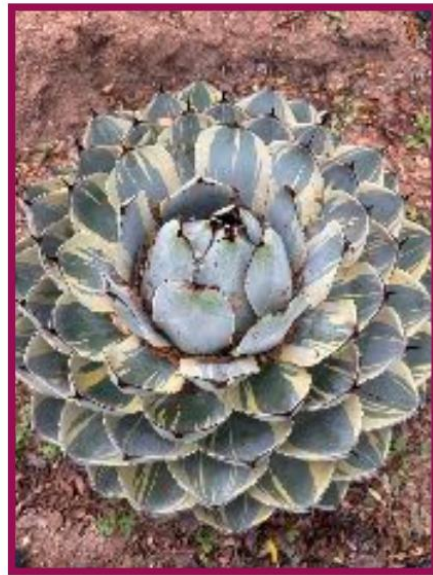
Fascicularia bicolor (bromeliad)
Lorie Johansen



Disocactus anguliger
Joan Herskowitz



Aloidendron dichotomum
[unbranched and multi-branched specimens]
Kim Schadeberg



Agave parryi truncata 'Orizaba'
Hernan Morales



Dioscorea elephantipes
Hernan Morales



Euphorbia ingens
Chet Reed



Echinopsis hybrid
Chet Reed



Mammillaria plumosa
Lynn Cahill



Gasteria hybrid
Lynn Cahill



Echinopsis pachinoi
Susan Snow



Aloe ferox
Susan Snow



Kleinia stapeliiformis
Lottie Foster



Aloe plicatilis, Euphorbia
trigona & Aloe nobilis
Martina Reed



Ferocactus wislizeni
Jeff McNair



Aloidendron barbara
Jeff McNair



Haemanthus albiflos
Kathy McNair



Echinocactus grusonii
Kathy McNair



Echinopsis hybrid
Christina Sangster



Adenium swazicum (left) & Stapelia gigantea (right)
Plantings in the Old World Succulent Garden at the Safari Park
May-Fong Ho



Epiphyllum hookeri subsp. guatemalense
Lois Walag

The following photo was not available for the October newsletter.



September Brag Table
Novice Succulent
3rd place
Jow Draskinis
Crassula tricolor

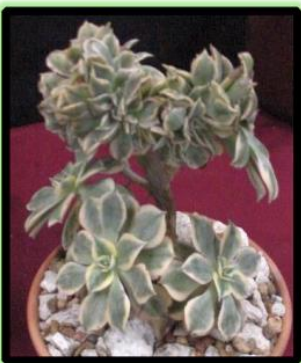
PLANT OF THE MONTH

Monstrose and Crests

by Russel Ray

I do not know how to explain monstrose and crests other than to use their dictionary definitions and provide lots of pictures.

- ❖ Monstrose: Having an abnormal, distorted, or disfigured growth of the body (especially of a cactus).
- ❖ Fasciated/Cristate growth: The most common botanical definition for a “crest.” It occurs when the plant’s growing tip (apical meristem) elongates abnormally, producing a flattened, often decorative, crest-shaped structure on the stem, flower, or fruit.



Plant names, left to right, top to bottom:

Monstrose: *Gymnocalycium mihanovichii*, *Cereus forbesii*, *Copiapoa tenuissima*, *Euphorbia lactea*, *Cereus peruvianus*, *Mammillaria polythale*, *Lophocereus schottii*

Crest: *Myrtillocactus geometrizans*, *Opuntia subulata*, *Austrocylindropuntia subulata*, *Aeonium kiwi*, *Aeonium* ‘Sunburst’

For more on these interesting plants,
see PCSS member Debra Lee Baldwin’s super duper YouTube video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pNCkXB0-Os>

El Cajon Library

November Plant of the Month

Sponsored by Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society

Haworthiopsis attenuata

by Russel Ray



Haworthiopsis attenuata is native to South Africa. It is a great little succulent that offers a lot of visual appeal with relatively minimal effort. The bold white stripes or bumps on the dark green leaves create a unique and attractive pattern that is very eye-catching and results in its common name of zebra haworthia. Because its small, delicate flower stalks are not as showy as flowering succulents, it primarily is grown for its interesting foliage. Plants generally stay relatively small and compact, making them great for windowsills, desks, small shelves, or as part of a succulent arrangement. Once their basic needs for light and watering are met, they don't require a lot of fuss.

Watering usually is the most critical factor in growing *Haworthiopsis attenuata* since overwatering can result in root rot. Use a very well-draining cactus or succulent potting mix so that good aeration and quick drainage can help prevent root rot. Potting soil can be amended with perlite, pumice, or coarse sand. When growth slows in the winter, watering should be reduced as well. Since the fleshy leaves store water, plants are quite drought-tolerant.

Although bright, indirect light is best, plants can tolerate lower light conditions better than many other succulents, making them good as indoor plants. Some gentle, direct, morning sun can be beneficial, but avoid prolonged exposure to harsh, direct afternoon sun, which can scorch the leaves. If the plant starts to stretch or lose its compact form, it likely needs more light.

Average room temperatures between 65-80°F are ideal. They can tolerate slightly cooler temperatures but should be protected from frost.

The plant on display here is owned by Sara Velarde. Thank you, Sara!



It's PCSS Renewal Time!

For those of us who love PCSS (and who doesn't!) it's time to renew our memberships. Annual dues remain at \$35.00—a bargain for a year of cactus pleasure and succulent excitement! Dues are due no later than Dec. 31 and may be paid anytime from now until the end of the year.

You may pay by cash, check or credit card at meetings or
send a check by mail to: PCSS, P.O. Box 840, Escondido, CA 92033

If they can, members are asked to support the PCSS, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization
with a tax-deductible donation at the
Crassula \$100, Ocotillo \$250 or Saguaro \$500 level

Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society

The North San Diego County Cactus & Succulent Club!

Membership Application – Please ✓ a category ~ New Member ____ OR Renewal ____

____ Annual Dues w/email newsletter ~ \$35 ____ Annual Dues after June 30th ~ \$18
____ Additional Household Members ~ \$5 each ____ Engraved PCSS Name Badge ~ + \$8

NEW! Tax-Deductible Donation

____ Crassula Level ~ \$100 - benefit = $\frac{1}{2}$ off annual membership
____ Ocotillo Level ~ \$250 - benefit = 1 year free membership
____ Saguaro Level ~ \$500 - benefit = 2 years free membership

____ Permission to list donor's name(s) in newsletter by category. Amounts will not be listed.

PCSS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. A receipt showing your deduction will be emailed to you.

Payment: Cash ____ Check ____ Charge ____ Total = \$ ____

Please Print! We must be able to read it! Name(s) _____

Address _____ City / State _____

Phone # _____ Email _____

Membership Directory: Please ✓ which, if any, we may include: ____ City ____ Phone # ____ Email OR ____ None

Make checks payable to PCSS. Credit cards accepted at meetings. Please bring this form & check or cash to a meeting, or mail it in to: **Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society or PCSS** ~ P.O. Box 840, Escondido, CA 92033



A Few Words about Brag and Show Plants and Their Entry Slips

As most of you know, your brag table and show entry slips are the way you are credited for entering plants and earning points toward your holiday party reward plants.

Recently, when we've collected entry slips, we've found that some have been taken away with the plants they represent. That means that the owners of those plants don't get credit for their entries.

At shows it's best if both plants and entry slips can be left until the end of the show. If you must take your plant early, please leave the entry slip where the plant was. In the case of People's Choice Awards, voting is based on a number written on the entry slips, so we have no way of knowing which plant won if it and its slip have left the table early.

Tribute to Our Donors

Thank you, Generous Members!

Crassula Level (\$100 – \$249.99)

2024 (for 2025)

Lorie Johansen
Charlyne Barad
Liz Rozycki
David & Debi Buffington
Sandy Wetzel Smith
Anonymous

2025

Anonymous (4)
Ron Chisum
Debra Lee Baldwin
Phyllis Flechsig
Robert Kopfstein

Ocotillo Level (\$250.00 - \$499.99)

2024

Julian & Leslie Duval
Candy & Jerry Garner
Lynn Cahill & Joe Cobb

2025

Anonymous
Stan Yalof
Sandy Wetzel-Smith

Saguaro Level (\$500 & Above)

2024

Anonymous (2)

2025

Mike & Nancy Peters

Other amount

Woody Minich (2024)



PALOMAR CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY

Board of Directors

President — **David Buffington**, president@palomarcactus.org
Vice-President — **Sherman Blench**
Treasurer, Meeting Cashier — **Teri Shusterman**, treasurer@palomarcactus.org
Secretary, Meeting Cleanup — **Moni Waiblinger**
Director at Large, Assistant to the Treasurer — **Liz Rozycki**
Director at Large, SDCSS Liaison — **Brita Miller**
Director at Large — **Martina Reed**

Other Volunteers

Coordinator — **Brita Miller**, eventcoordinator@palomarcactus.org
Membership — **Richard Miller**, membership@palomarcactus.org
Brag Plant Table — **Libbi Salvo, Jamie Straub, Barbara Raab**
Brag Table Judging Team — **Mike Nelson, Wanda Mallen, Debra Lee Baldwin**
Brag Table Photographers — **Charlyne Barad, Libbi Salvo**
Brag Plant Tally — **David Buffington**
Benefit Drawing — **Martina Reed**
Exchange Table — **Brian Magone**
Program, Plant Auction — **Robert Kopfstein**
Meeting Sales — **Teri Shusterman, Liz Rozycki**
Name Badge Drawing — **Julie Kort**
Guest & New Member Ambassadors — **Brita Miller, Lorie Johansen**

Newsletter Team

Charlyne Barad — Coordinator, Club Info, Speakers, Meeting Wrap-up, Brag Table Winners
Annie Morgan — Reviewer, misc.
Russel Ray — PCSS Plant of the Month, Plant of the Month for San Marcos and El Cajon libraries,
Newsletter Collator and Distributor
Winston Chan — Miscellaneous Information
Joan Herskowitz — Garden Brag Plants
Brita Miller — Spring Festival, Fall Festival, Holiday Party Recap, misc.
Wanda Mallen — Proofreader

Other Volunteers

Publicity — **Tom McCarter**
Librarian — **Barbara Raab**, librarian@palomarcactus.org
Website — **Annie Morgan**, info@palomarcactus.org, **Russel Ray**
Meeting audio/visual — **Russel Ray**
Additional volunteers who keep meeting running — **Sheila Grasso, Graciela Conde**

Volunteers Needed

Refreshments
Assist at meeting with setup, bringing in plants, etc.
Assist at meeting with cleanup
If you have specific talents or interests, PCSS could use your help!

Social Media

Website: palomarcactus.org
Instagram: palomar.cactus.succulent.org
Email: info@palomarcactus.org
Facebook group for members: Palomar Cactus and Succulent Society Group