

# Cactus Courier

Newsletter of the Palomar Cactus and Succulent Society

The North San Diego County Cactus and Succulent Club

Volume 72, Number 6

June 2026

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**Meeting Fourth Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup>,  
11:00 am - 3:00 pm**  
Grace Presbyterian Church, 1450 E.  
Vista Way, Vista

- Brag Plant Table closes to entries at 11:30 am.
- Benefit drawing and exchange tables and auction will all be held.
- Plant of the month: **Opuntia**

## URGENT REQUEST... NAY, PLEA!

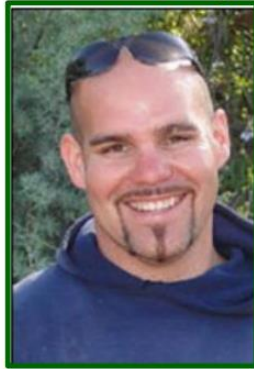
**We are badly in need of  
someone to take over  
audio/visual services at our  
monthly meetings!!**

**Russel will no longer be able to  
do that essential job, but he will  
train his replacement at the next  
couple of meetings.**

**You don't have to have any prior  
experience or knowledge of the  
equipment, just a willingness to  
learn.**

**Please text or phone your offer of help  
to: Joe Cobb 858-967-8801**

## This Month's Speaker: Antonio Rangel Topic: The Gardens at Palomar College – Landscaping for Education and Conservation.

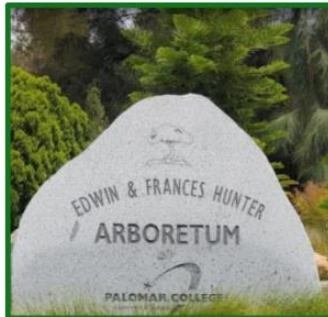


Antonio Rangel, president of the Palomar College Arboreum, is an ISA certified arborist and has been working with plants for over 16 years (something that started as a hobby). Although his background is in marine biology, and he worked for Hubbs Sea World Research Institute from 1998 to 2003, his passion for nature has helped to define him since he

was a child.

Tropical and subtropical plants are his passion, but all plants, particularly trees and the strange and intriguing, tend to captivate him most. He has been a groundskeeper at Palomar College Since 2005 and a certified arborist since 2009.

He was instrumental in establishing a plant propagation program at the college and has established working relationships with local zoos and botanical gardens to cultivate an interest in the public about the plight of some of the world's rarest and most unique plants that are suitable for growing in California's mild climate. He has been deeply involved with the Friends of The Palomar College Arboretum since 2005 as Vice President and then in 2009 was elected President.



**Debra Lee Baldwin will Present (Open to the Public)**  
**WHEN: Tues., June 23, 10:30 (Arrive 10:15 for seating.)**  
**WHAT: "Smart Gardening with Succulents: Wise Choices and Mistakes to Avoid"**  
**WHERE: SAN DIEGO MASTER GARDENERS meeting, Casa del Prado, 1650 El Prado, Room 101, Balboa Park, San Diego**

# Picnic Fun!

PCSS owes a huge debt of gratitude to Kevin Smith for all he did to make our annual picnic a delightful success!

Kevin reserved the Palomar College Garden site, provided beautiful gift plants for all members, drove his truck repeatedly up and down the access road to carry members' chairs, tables, and food to and from the picnic site, and lead a wonderfully informative tour of the garden. He also gave of his time to provide information on many of the photos for this newsletter.

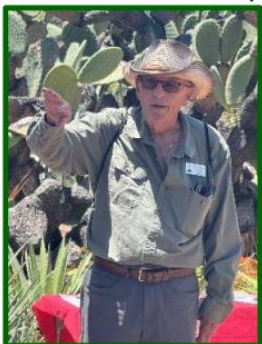
**Thank you, Kevin!**

We are also grateful to Brita for organizing the event and bringing several large tubs of picnic supplies plus the member table with sign-in sheet. Brita was instrumental in setting up the table with food and supplies. Thank you, Brita!

Thank you to all members who brought **MANY DELICIOUS** picnic dishes to share. What a fine feast we had! Thank you, everyone!



It was a perfect day with a gorgeous, shady setting, good friends, and yummy food!



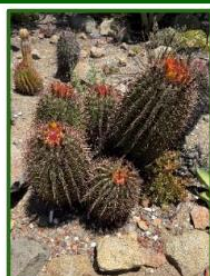
What a perfect spot to hold a meeting!  
Right, Joe?



Everyone gathered around as Kevin prepared to lead a tour.



Everywhere we looked there were plants abloom!



These are some of the many plants Kevin pointed out on his tour. He also provided the plant names and info for this newsletter.



*Araucaria cunninghamii*  
Ancient tree going back in time to the era of dinosaurs (200+ million years ago).



*Cylindropuntia/Cholla*



*Euphorbia enterophora*



Mesquite tree, Echinocactus, *Trichocereus spachiana* (Golden Torch Cactus).



*Myrtillocactus geometrizans*



*Agave palona* and a tropical type of cactus, not identified



: *Yucca faxoniana*



*Dracaena draco* tree

Foreground-  
Echinocactus and  
*Agave sissilana*. Left  
middle- *Puya chilensis*.  
Right middle-  
*Weberauerocereus johnsonii*/tall cactus.  
Background-  
Dasyleron/bush.



Right, *Pachycereus pringlei* (large cactus), Center, *Dracaena draco* (Dragon Tree), Left, *Trichocereus pachinoi* (San Pedro Cactus).  
←



# HOME GARDEN BRAG

by Joan Herskowitz

Share an especially nice section of your garden, a plant that is in the ground, a plant that bloomed 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 a maximum of two photos. Send submissions to: [jmherskowitz@yahoo.com](mailto:jmherskowitz@yahoo.com) . SUBMISSION DATES IN 2026: 1st day of each month.



**Echinopsis 'Los Angeles'**  
Norb Roden



**Mammillaria candida**  
Norb Roden



**Aloe arborescens**  
**'Variegata'**  
Tom McCarter



**Aloe cameronii**  
Tom McCarter



**Dasylirion longissimum**  
Lorie Johansen



**Disocactus**  
**flagelliformis**  
Jan Maiden



**Agave angustifolia**  
Stacy Day



**Selenicereus grandiflorus**  
Jan Maiden



**Aeonium 'Blushing Beauty'**  
Stacy Day



**Notocactus scopa**  
Chet Reed



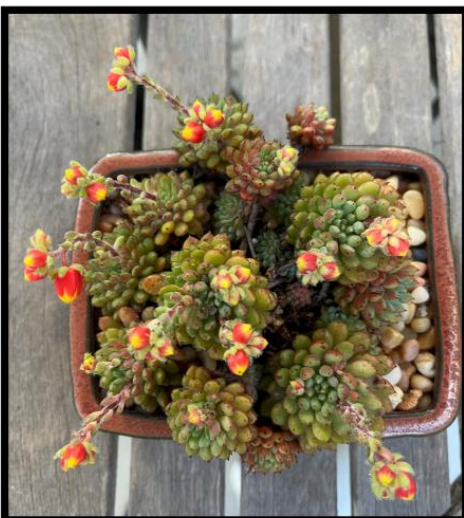
**Notocactus leninghausii**  
Chet Reed



**Epiphyllum hybrid**  
Kristie DeTar



**Mammillaria spinosissima**  
Kristie DeTar



**Echeveria setosa**  
Joan Herskowitz



**Epiphyllum hybrid**  
Joan Herskowitz



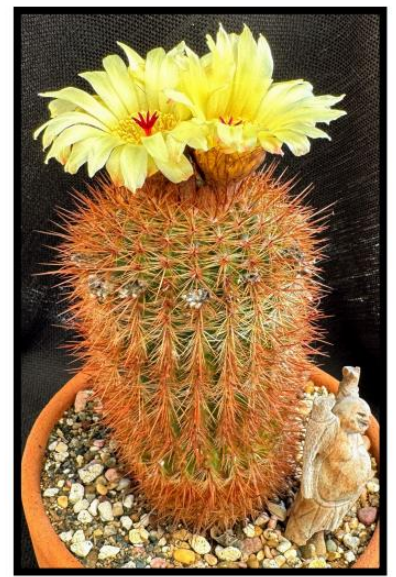
**Adenium obesum**  
Tina Zucker



**Euphorbia ingens**  
Tina Zucker



Garden Vignette with Aeoniums  
Sherman Blench



**Notocactus schlosseri**  
Lorie Johansen



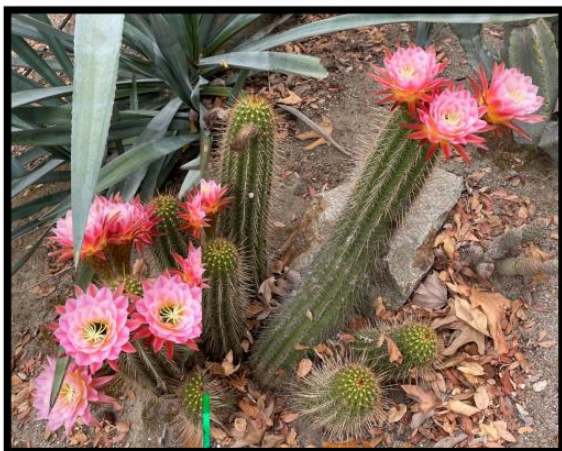
**Echinopsis hybrid**  
Deborah Pearson



**Echinopsis hybrid**  
Deborah Pearson



**Opuntia violacea**  
Suzi Harris



**Trichocereus 'First Light'**  
Mike Peters



Echeveria & Cactus Dish Garden  
Trio  
Martina Reed



**Echinopsis grandiflora**  
Suzi Harris



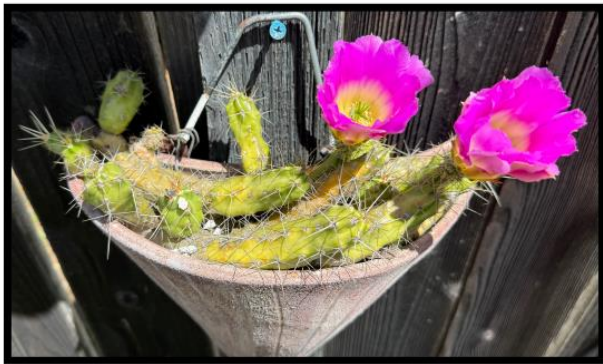
**Gymnocalicium saglione**  
Kathy McNair



**Pachypodium lamerei**  
Kathy McNair



**Echinopsis grandiflora**  
Jeff McNair



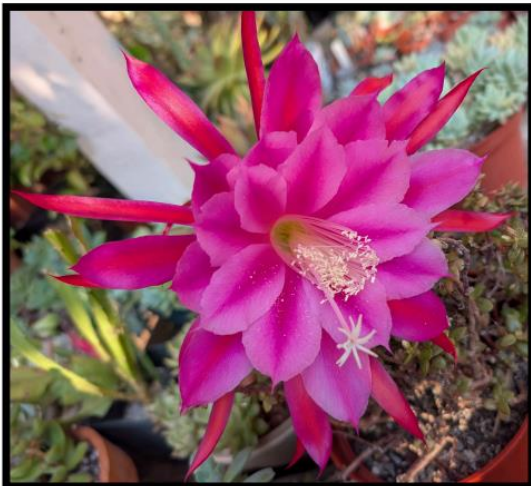
**Echinocereus pantalophies**  
Jeff McNair



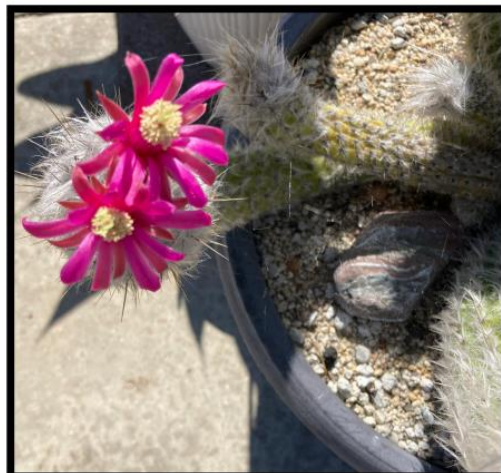
**Portulacaria afra**  
Sherry Hunga-Moore



**Echeveria 'Crinoline Ruffles'**  
Sherry Hunga-Moore



**Epiphyllum hybrid**  
Lois Walag



**Cleistocactus sp.**  
Lynn Cahill



**Echinopsis sp.**  
Lynn Cahill

# PLANT OF THE MONTH

## Opuntia

by Russel Ray



*Opuntia*, commonly called the prickly pear cactus, is native only to the Americas. They are well adapted to arid climates but also are the most cold-tolerant of the lowland cacti. Prickly pears typically grow with flat, rounded pads (cladodes) that contain large, fixed spines and small, hairlike prickles (glochids) that readily adhere to skin. The fruit and stems are edible, and the flowers often are large and quite showy. Through human action, they have since been introduced to many other areas of the world.



In places where they have been introduced outside their native range — such as Australia, Ethiopia, South Africa, and Hawaii — some *Opuntia* species behave as aggressive invasive species. In South Africa, many species of *Opuntia* are classified as Category 1 invaders and are targeted for national eradication. In the dry interior climate west of the Great Dividing Range in New South Wales and



Queensland, *Opuntia* converted 101,000 square miles of farmland into an impenetrable green jungle of prickly pears. Many farmers were driven off their land by what they called the “green hell,” and their abandoned homes were crushed under the cactus growth, which advanced at a rate of 1 million acres per year.



*Opuntia* are pollinated primarily by bees, including some bee genera that contain specialist pollinators that exclusively visit *Opuntia*. A few *Opuntia* are pollinated by hummingbirds.

The fruit (tuna) can be red, wine-red, green, or yellow-orange and are relished by many arid-land animals, including antelopes, nonhuman primates, elephants, birds, and humans. Animals that eat *Opuntia* also include the prickly pear island snail and *Cyclura* rock iguanas, and prickly pears are a prime source of food for the giant tortoises in the Galápagos Islands.

Tuna is commonly eaten in Mexico and in the Mediterranean region, but it must be peeled carefully to remove the small spines on the outer skin. If the outer layer is not properly removed, glochids can be ingested, causing discomfort of the throat, lips, and tongue, as the small spines are easily lodged in the skin.

In Mexico, prickly pears are used to make appetizers, soups, salads, entrées, vegetable dishes, breads, desserts, beverages, candy, jelly, and drinks. The pads (nopales) are edible in most species of *Opuntia*. In 2009, nopales were introduced as a cheaper alternative to corn for the production of tortillas and other corn products. They also can be pickled, and the thick skin can be harvested as an environmentally-friendly leather replacement. On the islands of Malta, prickly pear is used to make the popular liqueur known as bajtra.

*Dactylopius coccus*, a scale insect native to tropical and subtropical South America and Mexico, lives on *Opuntia*, feeding on moisture and nutrients in the cactus sap. The insect produces carminic acid, which deters predation by other insects, and the carminic acid can be extracted from the insect's body and eggs to make the red dye food coloring and for cosmetics. Cochineal became Mexico's second-most valued export after silver.



# El Cajon Library Plant of the Month

Sponsored by Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society

## Opuntia pycnantha

by Russel Ray



*Opuntia pycnantha* (picture at left of plant loaned by Russel Ray) is a species native to the Magdalena Plain in Baja California Sur in Mexico. Opuntias are known as Prickly Pears, and one of *Opuntia pycnantha*'s common names is Magdalena Prickly Pear.

The thick and fleshy pads (cladodes) typically are a bright green but can take on a purple or red hue when exposed to cold or intense sun.

The needle-like spines are extremely dense and range in color from golden-yellow to a deep, rusty brown. The spines can grow so closely together that they almost hide the green surface of the pad.

Large, waxy flowers usually are a brilliant lemon-yellow, sometimes featuring a subtle greenish tint at the base of the petals. *Opuntia pycnantha* typically blooms between May and July, depending on the



climate. The plant requires warm temperatures for optimal blooming, and adequate sunlight is essential for good flowering. Watering should be moderate since overwatering can hinder blooming. Fertilizing with a balanced cactus fertilizer can promote healthy blooms.

*Opuntia pycnantha* requires "hard" light to maintain its compact shape and vibrant spine color. If grown in too much shade, the pads will stretch out and lose their iconic golden glow. My plant normally is grown in a location where it gets about eight hours of sunlight a day in the winter and about fourteen hours a day in the summer. However, my property is next to an Open Space Preserve, and as I was choosing which plant to bring to the El Cajon Library for this month, I noticed that the trees at the fence line between my property and the Open Space Preserve have grown too large and are now shading some of my plants, such as this *Opuntia pycnantha*, which is why the pads look a little elongated.

As a plant that is native to the sandy Magdalena Plain, *Opuntia pycnantha* has a very sensitive root system. It is best grown in a gritty, mineral-heavy cactus mix; it prefers to "starve" for water rather than sit in damp soil, which can lead to rapid root and base rot. Because it stays relatively low and clumping, it is a perfect candidate for terracotta pots. The porous clay helps the soil dry out faster, mimicking its natural desert home.

If grown outside, be sure it gets a good amount of sun to keep it compact and colorful. If grown inside, a south or west window should provide enough direct sun.

# Coffee in the Garden

Residence of Rick Bjorklund & Kevin Hosmer  
4728 Allied Road, San Diego, 619-417-5008

June 21, 2026 (Sunday, Fathers' Day)

Arrive between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.



We are frequently asked: "When will you next host a 'Coffee in the Garden'?" Considering personal schedules, anticipated weather, our lack of storage area, etc. ... we decided later this month! **SHORT NOTICE!**

For those who have visited previously, you already know Rick cannot resist purchasing anything with leaves or roots; Kevin cannot resist planting seeds. Rick maintains a constant state of garden remodeling and Kevin always is trying to consolidate and eliminate chaos. This is a small

property, so we have serious (space) issues. There are plants everywhere – perhaps more than ever!

For those gardening enthusiasts we've not met before ... come see what works for us and perhaps what doesn't. Our garden is mostly succulent plants. Anticipating future reduced mobility, we removed an in-ground swimming pool and installed raised beds ten years ago. It gave us the opportunity to study our smaller plants. Some plants are good neighbors and some don't play nice with others.

We both love rocks. Plants + Rocks = Garden.

Lichens are NOT plants they are a symbiotic relationship between a fungi and algae. There are 6100 species of lichens documented in North America. Some lichens grow in the desert. We have a single species growing in the raised beds! Plants + Rocks + Lichens = Garden.

Anticipate home-baked goodies, non-alcoholic refreshments, and freebies. We have an *Agave nicholsiae* piñata, which we will break open and send home with visitors. There will be excess plants (*Strelitzia juncea* if I can remove some divisions!) and gardening paraphernalia and **POTS** for sale. Or as Rick wails, "You want to sell all my stuff." Cash only.

We hope you drop by to chat about gardening and plants.



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## Two Important Items



The May newsletter inadvertently omitted the species name of Pauline Wong's *Aeonium leucoblepharum*. We regret the error.



This raincoat was left behind at Spring Festival. If it's yours, contact Brita Miller [BritaMiller1@gmail.com](mailto:BritaMiller1@gmail.com) 858-776-7216

# It's **CHOCOLATE** in the Garden time at Succulent Gardening by Tina

**DATE and TIME:** June 20<sup>th</sup> 10:30am -2:30pm

**ADDRESS:** 552 Seabright Lane, Solana Beach,  
Less than ½ MILE from the Amtrak station and less than a mile to the beach.

**PARKING:** Lots of parking on the street.

**CASH:** Probably best to bring CASH as not everyone accepts credit cards. Some of you are new to the SDCSS club and you may not know me but I would be happy to meet you and show you around.

**You can walk around our property** front to back and see all in ground and potted plants. I will have small and large plants for sale. In addition, I am selling some larger SPECIMENS that I have been growing for years. You can walk through my 3 greenhouses where I grow my personal plants. I will have garden ornaments for sale also. We recently planted many varieties in ground because they got too big for pots. They are looking great.

**Club President Kelly Griffin always brings wonderful plants for us to buy.....**



**Long time Member Jerry Garner always has new & beautiful pots for us to see and of course to purchase**

**DR CACTUS aka Doctor Cactus = DAVID & ROCIO CARRASCO:**

David began over 20 years ago working for a nursery in Vista. In about 2017, he & Rocio started their own nursery. Rocio has become a terrific propagator. They are fabulous growers who other growers go to for their plants. We will have their cactus & succulents for purchase.

***We may have a surprise guest grower. You never know!***

## 2026 MEETING DATES, PLANT OF THE MONTH, SPEAKERS & TOPICS

Dates	Plant of the Month*	Speakers & Topics
Jan 24	Echinopsis 	Diana Lindsay, Plants in Anza Borrego used by native peoples
Feb 28	Hoya 	Marie Sinovich, Desert animals of Anza Borrego
Mar 28	Aloe 	Jeff Moore, Succulent road trip — Gardens from San Francisco to San Diego
Apr 25	None	Spring Festival/Sale
May 23	None	Picnic at Palomar College
Jun 27	Opuntia 	Antonio Rangel, The gardens at Palomar College — Landscaping for education and conservation
Jul 25	String succulents 	Nan Sterman, California-Dreamin' — Gardening in a Mediterranean climate
Aug 22	Euphorbia 	Woody Minnich, Pachypodiums
Sep 26	Astrophytum 	Dylan Zoller, Jewels of the Brazilian highlands
Oct 24	None	Fall Festival/Sale
Nov 21	Schlumbergera 	Cristy Brenner, Cactus adventure in Argentina and Chile
Dec 19	None	Holiday Party 

**\*We are doing something different this year in that the plant of the month has been chosen from lists of birth plants (similar to birth stones).**



# PALOMAR CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

## Board Members & Officers

President - Joe Cobb [president@palomarcactus.org](mailto:president@palomarcactus.org)  
Vice President - Sherman Blench  
Treasurer - Teri Shusterman [treasurer@palomarcactus.org](mailto:treasurer@palomarcactus.org)  
Secretary - Moni Waiblinger  
Director at Large, Assistant to the Treasurer - Liz Rozycki  
Director at Large - Julian Duval  
Director at Large - Martina Reed  
Director at Large & SDCSS Liaison - Brita Miller



## Other Volunteers

Event Coordinators - Charlyne Barad, Brita Miller [eventcoordinator@palomarcactus.org](mailto:eventcoordinator@palomarcactus.org)  
Spring & Fall Festivals Chair - Brita Miller  
Show Chair - Charlyne Barad Plant Donations - Lorie Johansen Sales - Brita  
Membership - Richard Miller [membership@palomarcactus.org](mailto:membership@palomarcactus.org)  
Publicity (print) - Tom McCarter (online) - Lou Harris SDCSS Liaison - Brita Miller  
Website & Club Email Management - Annie Morgan, Russel Ray  
[www.palomarcactus.org](http://www.palomarcactus.org), [info@palomarcactus.org](mailto:info@palomarcactus.org)

## Monthly Meetings:

Monthly Meeting Set Up - Brita Miller, Lorie Johansen, Charlyne Barad  
Monthly Meeting Clean Up - Brita Miller, Liz Rozycki, Moni Waiblinger, Gracelia Conde  
Brag Table Set Up - Libbi Salvo, Jamie Straub, Barbara Raab  
Brag Table Judging Team - Mike Nelson, Wanda Mallen, Debra Lee Baldwin, Annie Morgan  
Brag Table Photographer - Charlyne Barad, Libbi Salvo  
Brag Table Point Tally - David Buffington Garden Brag Point Tally - Annie Morgan  
Refreshments - Sandy Wetzel-Smith, Bruce Barry  
Program Coordinator, Plant Auction - Robert Kopfstein  
Meetings Sales Cashiers - Teri Shusterman, Liz Rosycki  
Meeting A/V - Russel Ray  
Exchange Table - Brian Magone Benefit Drawing - Martina Reed  
Visitor & New Member Ambassadors - Lorie Johansen, Brita Miller  
Name Badge Drawing - Julie Kort  
Additional Meeting Volunteers - Gracelia Conde, Stacy Day, Sherry Hunga-Moore

## Newsletter Team:

Annie Morgan - Co-Coordinator, Charlyne Barad - Co-Coordinator  
Russel Ray - Plant of the Month, Library Plant of the Month, Collator & Distributor  
Joan Herskowitz - Garden Brag Page  
Brita Miller - Spring & Fall Festivals and Holiday Party Recaps, misc.  
Winston Chan - Miscellaneous Pages  
Wanda Mallen - Proofreader