



ON THE DRY SIDE

JANUARY 2026

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

New year, new newsletter design! I hope you like it as much as I do.

Our Winter Banquet and Auction was a fun and delicious event. Check out the photo collage on page 4.

There have been many firsts since I became president of this club. I ran my first board meeting – successfully! I only realized yesterday that I now have to write the message from the president. So many little decisions to make. If you have any ideas about programs or ideas about how to encourage members, please talk to a board member. There is a list of board members and volunteers on the back page.

The big thing we are all excited about is the Spring Show and Sale that will be at the Capitola mall this April. We are joining with the Santa Cruz Bonsai Kai to rent the former Sears building for a combined event. We have put a committee together to organize, publicize and run the event. Some of us toured the venue last week and it is BIG. We will have plenty of room. We will need lots of volunteers for this event.

At the beginning of the year I made goals. One goal is to have a show plant. That is why I am so excited for our presentation at the membership meeting this month. Joseph Hidalgo will be showing us how to stage plants in camouflage so they look like they might in nature. You can see it in this photo. 

To close, I want to welcome our new board members:

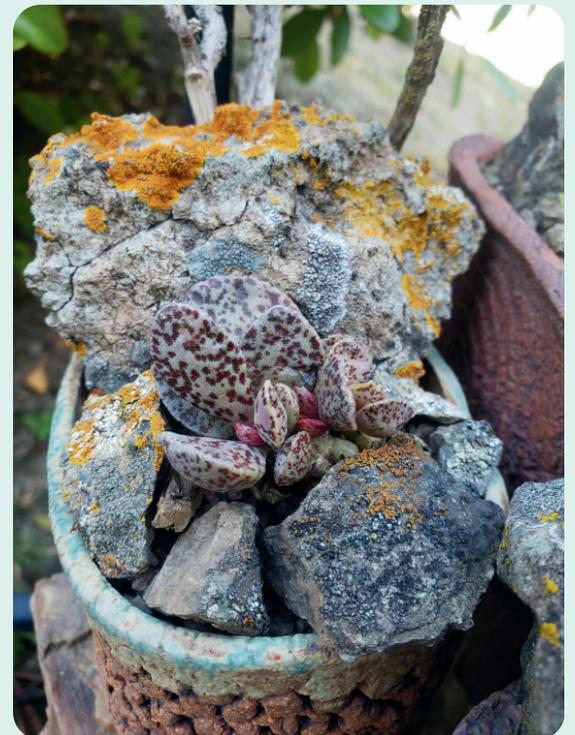
Jon Lubbe **Vice President**
Diane Salewski **Member-at-Large**

Please thank them for stepping up and serving.

Nancy Thomsen
President

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MEETING MINUTES

Call to order: Mary called the meeting to order at 7:01pm and began with Mary taking notes since Meryl was out of town. The group discussed the AI minute keeper, which Lyn noted was not always accurate. Nancy suggested using Mary's notes in conjunction with AI notes.

Minutes from November meeting - were accepted as presented.

Treasurer's Report: Lou reported on the club's financial status, including new memberships and a \$50 contribution, while also addressing a California charity registration issue that has been resolved. --There was a discussion about the Portuguese hall rental situation, due to our cancellation for next April. Lou read the contract and indicated we could be on the hook for the \$2,500 deposit if the facility cannot be re-rented, rather than the full \$5,475 rental fee. Lou will send them a formal letter confirming our cancellation on our letterhead.

-The club's insurance renewal is needed, through the Garden club.

-Membership renewals and RSVPs for the end-of-year party were due by December 10th.

The reported was accepted as presented

End of the Year Party & Auction: The doors to the Corralitos Grange will be open for setup at 10:30 AM, with lunch served at 12:00 PM. Dave will manage the silent auction starting at 1:00 PM, followed by the live auction which will begin once Dave gives the signal after all paperwork is completed. Mary will serve as the liaison with the Grange Hall, and Lou will come early to set up hot food service trays. Nancy will adjust the timing in the newsletter to reflect these changes.

Silent Auction: The team agreed to use paper forms filled out by hand rather than electronic, as this worked better in previous years. Dave will bring a copying machine to create copies of the forms as needed, while Lou will handle the accounting and reimbursement process. Two volunteer assistants will help with registration and tabulation. Attendees can bring up to 5 silent auction plants for sale with a \$5 minimum bid. The team also addressed early checkout concerns, deciding to remind attendees that they cannot leave early without making arrangements for their plants and money.

Live Auction: Peter B. & Jaan will be in charge of the live auction. Attendees can bring up to 3 live larger plants with a \$25 minimum bid. Peter suggested starting bids lower to encourage participation. Those who bring more than 3 plants will not be included in the auction plants should be managed by the donors. Two clerks to assist with the live auction are needed also.

Food: Lyn is catering the whole meal and desserts as well. This will limit their number to prevent waste. Peter B. agreed to bring his vegan cookies. Lynn will manage the food setup, including turkey, ham, stuffing, mashed potatoes, and desserts, using rented chafing pans and creating a setup map. Mary agreed to provide coffee and a case of small water bottles, while others will contribute leftover drinks from previous events.

Plant Exchange: The plant exchange process will be the same as last year, so each plant is assigned a number and participants are called by number rather than choosing plants directly. They agreed to have Meryl, Daisy, and Gloria handle the plant exchange again, as this system worked well in last year and prevented the best plants from being taken first. Nancy will keep the newsletter description simple, instructing members to bring a plant for the exchange.

Decorations: The decorations will include tablecloths, runners, and freebie plants provided by Diane left over from the last sale.

New Business: New Calendar from John Matthews. Contact responsibilities for the Epithelium and Cactus calendar was transferred to Nancy as the new president.

New Business: Election: Mary's term as President is completed after five years of service. The group expressed gratitude for her leadership during and since the pandemic. It was confirmed that the slate of candidates for election was accepted completely with no exceptions including Nancy as our new president, John as our new vice president, and Diane as a new director at large.

- Cheryl Albert requested a replacement as the Sunshine chair.

Meeting adjourned

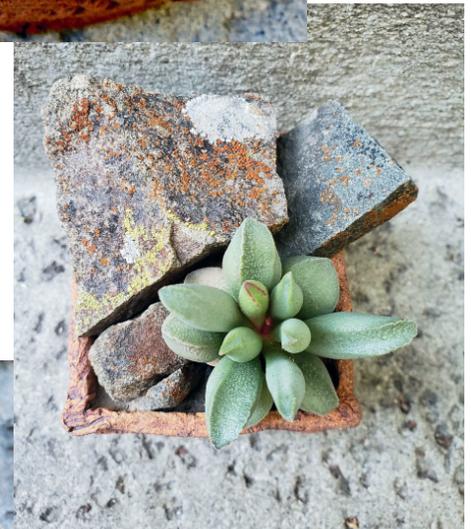
JANUARY SPEAKER

JOSEPH HIDALGO PRESENTS:

Recreating the Wild (Habitat Style Potting) & Plant Show Judging

Join us to explore succulents from two unique perspectives: their native habitats and the judging table. We'll start with "Habitat Style," a method of using specific soils and stones to recreate the natural look of deserts and savannas in your own pots. Joseph Hidalgo will then guide us through the basics of succulent judging, explaining what experts look for in show-quality plants. Whether you are a beginner or a long-time hobbyist, you'll walk away with practical tips on natural styling and plant presentation. We look forward to an informative session that celebrates the diversity and beauty of these plants.

Joseph encourages people to bring show-worthy plants to share with others. He will choose one plant, which he will re-pot habitat style. The person will be able to keep the pot.



2025 HOLIDAY PARTY



BEGINNER'S GUIDE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS For beginner cacti & succulent keepers

WHAT ARE CACTI AND SUCCULENT PLANTS?

The cacti family belongs to a larger group of plants known as succulents. All succulents have specialized anatomy that enables them to survive drought or lack of light.

Succulents can store moisture in fleshy tissue in their stems, leaves or roots, and many have developed features to reduce water loss. In adverse conditions, they can cease growing and remain dormant.

HOW CACTI DIFFER?

Cacti are different from other succulents because they have areoles - padlike buds - from which shoots, spines, and flowers grow. Only species of cacti have areoles, but be careful when using this feature for identification as areoles are not always easy to see.

DO CACTI GROW ONLY IN DESERTS?

Although traditionally associated with arid desert and mountain landscapes, some cacti and other succulents inhabit tropical jungles. There the climate is hot and humid and the plants have to contend with a lack of light rather than the usual lack of water. Some jungle cacti, such as Epiphyllum, have flattened stems with a large surface area to absorb maximum light.

The success of cacti and other succulents partly depends on their ability to inhabit inhospitable jungle and desert areas where there is little competition from other plants.

DO CACTI & SUCCULENTS NEED LESS CARE?

Many believe that because these plants grow in a hostile landscape they require little or no care when cultivated. It is true they can tolerate some neglect and little water but, if forgotten, they will retreat into dormancy. Healthy plants grow and flower annually.

WHEN DO THEY FLOWER?

In arid desert regions, long, dry spells ensure cacti and succulents remain dormant for most of the year. To make up for this, many have developed a short life cycle. Once rain falls, they burst into active growth, producing leaves, flowers, and seeds in less than one month.



BEGINNER'S GUIDE

CAPABLE CONTAINERS

"Growing Cacti and Succulents for the Beginner"

By Roger Brown from January-February 1999 issue of "To The Point"

I am convinced that plant keeping builds character because it creates concern for living things. It is this concern that leads one on a search for capable containers to house our little and big friends. Container grown plants are at the mercy of their caretaker as well as the container into which they spread their roots. 20 years of trial and error leads me to the conclusion that either plastic or clay fired at very high temperatures works best for me. Plastic pots should not be white or semi-transparent which allows light to pass through the pot wall and damage the roots. Some brands of plastic pots are very sensitive to UV light so they become brittle and fall apart easily.

Clay pots should be non-porous clay that has been fired in the kiln to temperatures of 2000 degrees F. This turns the clay into a hard waterproof substance. If porous clays are used, they should be painted on their inside surface with a coating of polyurethane. Kiln-fired ceramic glazing will serve the same purpose.

Plants that spend their summer outdoors will tolerate porous clay pots quite well. Rain leaches out accumulated fertilizer salts and hard water minerals. Wintering these same pots indoors in porous clay will put them at risk because fertilizer and hard water salts will reach toxic levels near inner pot walls. The plants probably won't die, but they won't live as well as they would or should in more capable containers.



Deep pots are safer for plants than shallow ones because gravity causes water to move through a deep pot with greater speed thus creating a healthier environment for plant roots. Soil media within a pot should be uniform. The practice of putting several layers of different types of mix in the same container may kill you plants. Roots will be subject to some areas of mix that are too wet, and some areas that are too dry.

An easy way to add extra drainage holes to plastic pots is to simply use an electric drill and add as many holes as you want. Extra holes can be created in clay or ironstone pots with an electric drill and a diamond tip drill bit.

A myth that is recycled from generation to generation is that using pieces of old clay pots at the bottom of new pots improves drainage. This practice is actually harmful, and rather than improving drainage, it restricts it. All that is needed is a small piece of paper towel or

Kleenex to mechanically prevent new soil mix from spilling out the bottom of the pot. A lattice of roots will grow in to hold soil media in place long before paper disintegrates.

Very few plants are blooming this time of the year, however, there is still much to admire in any plant collection from the beauty of caudex plants to natural sculptures plants make to glossy or variegated leaves and leaf patterns. February can be a wonderful promise of things to come.

Edited by Mary Cross



CLUB NEWS

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Do you want to be featured in a future newsletter? Members can submit photos, personal essays, educational articles and more to be featured in On the Dry Side. It would make a great New Years goal and fun side project for 2026! Some contribution ideas:

- A collection tour showing off photos of your favorites
- A personal story about your journey with plants
- An article about a plant or growing issue you are knowledgeable about

We look forward to publishing more member-submitted content in future newsletters!

2026 MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership Dues for 2026 is payable by January 1, 2026. Single is \$25 /year and Family is \$30 /year. There are several ways you can pay your dues – online through our website [here](#), check by mail, or in person at a meeting.

If you plan to pay at a meeting, especially with cash, please fill out a form and attach your payment. There will be a box to put your payments in. Please bring a check or exact change.

If you have any questions about your membership status, please email Lyn at mbacss.membership@gmail.com. If you did not get a membership renewal email, you are okay.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

January 18, 2026

Speaker: Joseph Hidalgo

Topic: Habitat Style Staging

Mini Show: Show and Tell

February 15, 2026

Speaker: TBA

Topic: TBA

Mini Show: Show and Tell

SHOW & SALE DATES:

Spring 2026

April 25, 26

New venue - Capitola Mall

Fall 2026

Sept 26, 27

LEADERSHIP

2026 OFFICERS

President: Nancy Thomsen
Vice President: Jon Lubbe
Secretary: Meryl Abramson
Treasurer: Lou Falek
Membership: Lyn MacDonald
Affiliate Representative: Jorge Quiñónez
Directors at Large:
David Kurtz
Dave Autore
Diane Salewski
Immediate Past President: Mary Cross
Founding Member:

CHAIRPERSONS

Librarian: David Kurtz
Mini-Show: Tyson Curtis
Newsletter Editor: Nancy Thomsen
Newsletter Designer: Leia Dilley
Photography: Paul Albert
Programs: Jorge Quiñónez
Raffles: Meryl Abramson
Sales Floor Manager: Peter Beiersdorfer
Assistant Floor Manager: Janet Sparks
Sunshine Committee: Cheryl Albert
Webmaster: Diane Salewski
Greeter: Dave Novarina

**See our website for
more information!**

mbsucculent.org

MEMBERSHIP MEETING INFORMATION

There is plenty of parking near the hall and the building is ADA accessible.
Doors open at 11:00am
Bring your own lunch starts at 12:00pm
Meeting starts at 12:30pm

Location:
Corralitos Grange
165 Little Corral Way, Corralitos.