



ON THE DRY SIDE

JULY 2026

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We are in full summer now. Some of us are about to be in a heat wave. Some of us are about to endure the upper 70's. There are so many micro climates on the central coast. Hot inland and mild near the coast. I live in the mild region and I still have to water my plants, but not as often as those in the interior of the state. Instead of taking the dog for a walk this morning, we watered the plants because it could be 80 today. My dog loves watering the plants.

I have been busy lately. It seems all my volunteer jobs happen at the same time. It is rodeo week in Salinas and that is a very busy 5 days for me as a volunteer and a business owner. For that reason I will not be at the membership meeting this week, but you will be in good hands because VP Jon will take over for me. Our speaker will be Szymon Szary with a presentation on Cacti of the Atacama (Chili). I am sorry to miss this fascinating talk. The mini show category is **Echeveria** and there will be a plant raffle as usual.

If you are new to the club, you may not know we have an extensive library of books on all aspects of cacti and succulents. You can peruse the library at every meeting and check out books from our librarians. This is a great resource for our members, so check it out.

The meeting is this Sunday, July, 19. At noon we have lunch if you bring your lunch and time to chat with members and buy raffle tickets. At about 12:30 the meeting starts with some club news, the mini show, and then we turn it over to our speaker.

Have a great meeting.

Nancy Thomsen
President/Editor

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MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order: Nancy Thomsen

Members present: Nancy Thomsen, Jon Lubbe, Mary Cross, Lyn MacDonald, Lou Falek, Jorge Quiñonez, Diane Salewski, Dave Autore, Mary Edmund (invited), Meryl Abramson.

Minutes of 5/3/2026: Approved.

Treasurer's report: Lou. Accepted as presented. A big thank-you again to Diane S. for donating May's raffle plants (and pizza!) Lou paid for our domain name, CGI dues, taxes, and added funds to our CD (now 3.25% at 7 months as best rate).

The Board thanked Lou for his time spent providing documentation of Club's non-profit status to one of the several State Boards that oversee this. Our accountant told Lou to fill out and send a form, and this turned into huge amounts of work. We are already registered with the Secretary of State and other boards.

Discussed Wells Fargo as Club's bank and continuing for now.

ISTW is refunding our entire rental for September as they have re-rented the hall for those dates.

Membership Report: Lyn. We are pleased to have a former member renew, plus 2 new members this month.

Next General Meeting (June): Jorge. Andrew Hazlett will be speaking on "Rare Mutations, Collector Cacti, and the Modern Cactus Market". Andrew is CSSJ President and nursery owner.

Problems getting into the Grange were discussed (we were again locked out, again, for May's General Meeting).

New Business: All. A Director-at-Large position is open. Mary Edmund agreed to serve, and the Board voted unanimously to appoint her.

Board discussed Instagram and Facebook. The more members post, the higher our rankings.

Mary Cross has a friend who owns a large property in Royal Oaks, and he has a lot of succulents he would like to give to the Club.

There has been a group text about Succulent Bingo. Diane S. has agreed to produce the bingo cards; it should be loud and fun to play at the October meeting, with or without an ice cream social. Discussion about Show & Tell or a Mini-Show with a genus focus, but more common plants than we tried before. We will try this for the June meeting, with a focus on Euphorbia.

Old Business: All. We still need one or two Librarians; this is a great position for new members who would like to meet other members and get involved with the Club.

Member perks not discussed due to time constraints, noted here as a holder.

Dave A. will continue to take pictures.

We may arrange a field trip as our Sept. meeting.

Griggs Family Nursery (griggsnursery.com) in Watsonville is going out of business and prices are 80% off.

Lyn was contacted requesting a contact for a certain kind of cactus.

The San Jose club gets a discount from CSSA, great for purchasing seeds and rare plants.

Adjournment: Nancy. Respectfully submitted by Meryl Abramson

Cacti OF THE ATACAMA

BY SZYMON SZARY

This presentation chronicles a cactus-focused exploratory trip through central and northern Chile, spanning the diverse landscapes of the coastal and interior Atacama Desert to the high elevations of the Andean Mountains. The objective of this journey was to find as many iconic Atacama and Andean cactus species as possible to observe and document them in their natural habitat.

Szymon's interest in cacti began in middle school after visiting his cousin's collection. Upon relocating to California in 2015, he discovered an opportunity to combine several longstanding passions — backpacking, hiking, photography, and botany — through desert exploration. His experience in the backcountry proved invaluable for reaching remote and ecologically significant sites, while his photography skills allowed him to carefully document the specific conditions under which various cactus species thrive — essential for understanding how and why these plants succeed in such extreme environments.

The following presentation offers insight into the unique cactus flora of Chile, shaped by some of the driest and most rugged regions on Earth.



ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Szymon's interest in cacti began in middle school after visiting his cousin's collection. Upon relocating to California in 2015, he discovered an opportunity to combine several longstanding passions — backpacking, hiking, photography, and botany — through desert exploration. His experience in the backcountry proved invaluable for reaching remote and ecologically significant sites, while his photography skills allowed him to carefully document the specific conditions under which various cactus species thrive — essential for understanding how and why these plants succeed in such extreme environments

BEGINNER'S GUIDE

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO HOOKED SPINED MAMMILLARIA

By Tom Glavich from March-April 2005 Issue of "To The Point"

Cacti in general, and Mammillaria in particular, are often the plants a succulent plant collector starts with. This can be credited to the toughness of these plants in that many survive for years in spite of all sorts of abuse and neglect. As people become more advanced growers, they often migrate more to the 'other succulents,' but a surprising number eventually come back to infinitely variable geometry and the interesting growth challenges that many Mammillaria cacti provide.

Mammillaria is one of the larger genera in the Cactus family, and easily the most variable, with some members remaining as solitary columns for their entire lives, some remaining as fingernail size solitary spheres, some straight spined, and some clumped and heavily spined with hooks. Although the hooked spined species give the genus one of its common names, "fish-hook cactus," they are not as often grown as the straight spined species. They are not as friendly either, with the hooks catching on skin and clothes and pieces of stem coming off, when least expected or needed.

In general, all of the species exhibit winter dormancy, with watering tapering off as the weather gets cooler and the days shorter. They can be kept entirely dry during December, January, and February with the first light waterings starting when the night temperatures are reliably above 50 F. Even though the plants are dormant, a light misting once a month will help keep the plants clean, and provide a good opportunity for inspection for mealy bugs and spider mites.

The secrets to good growth are a continued and uniform supply of fertilizer and water during the growing season, strong light, and maintenance of a clean and insect free growing environment. The appearance of white mealy bug egg cases (Mammillaria's worst enemy) on the tips of the spines or the appearance of ants means that mealy bugs are sucking the sap and life out of the plants. One less toxic solution is to soak the entire plant in soapy (dish detergent is great) water overnight. Insect pests should be removed even if the plant is completely dormant. The danger to the plant from the insects far outweighs the danger of disturbing roots and watering a dormant plant.

Propagation of hooked spined Mammillaria is easy. Cuttings can be taken at any time during the growing season (April to early November), and left to dry for a few days and replanted in a clean potting mix. Rooting is rapid, with short white roots generally appearing after a couple of weeks.

Mammillaria are one of the easiest species to grow from seed. The seeds are simply place on top of a damp potting mix, cover with a light coating of fine gravel, place in a plastic bag in bright light but out of direct sun to germinate. It usually occurs in a week or so. The seedlings can stay in the plastic bag for several weeks until they get large enough to survive unprotected, and should then be removed to a still shaded, but brighter and drier environment where most will survive and grow quickly.

It is worthwhile looking a plant up either on the internet or in one of the many excellent references available on this genus. Just knowing whether a plant is native to a tropical or a colder wetter climate will be a great guide to proper growth.

Edited by Mary Cross

CLUB NEWS

Photos from Kathy Wittpenn on the progression of her Boophone Disticha blossom or Fluorescence in growth stages.



UPCOMING MEETINGS:

July 19, 2026

Speaker: Szymon Szary

Topic: Cacti of the Atacama

Mini Show: Echeveria

August 16, 2026

Speaker: Jaan Lepson

Topic: Plant photography

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:

Dave Autore

Diane Salewski

Mary Edmund

Immediate Past President: Mary Cross

CHAIRPERSONS

Librarian:

Newsletter Editor: Nancy Thomsen

Newsletter Designer: Leia Dilley

Photography: Paul Albert & Dave Autore

Programs: Jorge Quiñónez

Raffles: Meryl Abramson

Sales Floor Manager: Peter Beiersdorfer

Assistant Floor Manager: Janet Sparks

Sunshine Committee: Paul 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 11:30am

Bring your own lunch starts at 12:00pm

Meeting starts at 12:30pm

Location:

Corralitos Grange

165 Little Corral Way, Corralitos.