



# Cereusly Speaking

June 2015 • Vol. 8 • Issue 2

Cactus and Succulent Society of Alberta

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## Cactus of the season: Pediocactuses outdoors in Edmonton

Our member Rene Haasdyk grows and experiments with winter-hardy cactuses, sometimes to find out which are hardy.

The two photos here are of Pediocactuses, the one with rounder petals is *P. knowltonii* and that with sharper petals is *P. simpsonii*. Both photos were taken in mid May, outdoors in Edmonton. Beautiful!

Later in June, the *Opuntias* will provide their spectacular blooms, but earlier in the spring, along with early rock-garden plants and crocuses, the *Pediocactus* blooms are welcome.

The *P. knowltonii* originated in San Juan County, in the high, north-western part of New Mexico and was grown from seed by Beaver Creek Nursery, arriving at Rene's garden in the spring of 2009. It has bloomed every year since and from one original head has produced many offsets. Rene has it growing in his warmest cactus bed, without winter protection except for modest natural snow cover, which often disappears at times during the winter.

The *P. simpsonii* originated in the Uintah Basin in high northeastern Utah, also grown from seed by Beaver Creek. Rene has had it since 2008; it has bloomed every year but has not produced any offsets. Rene reports that he has cross-pollinated these two plants both ways and hopes to raise some hybrid seedlings if the fruit sets. 🍷



## Lots of things going on this summer

Here is what is coming up yet this summer. Mark your calendar!

### Sunday, June 21

A trip to the Drumheller area, including East Coulee, to view blooming cacti. Meet in the parking lot of the Royal Tyrell Museum in Drumheller at 11:00 am that day. It's about 1 1/2 hours from Calgary and 3+ hours from Edmonton. Anyone who would like to contribute to a carpool or needs a ride there, or has any other questions, please contact Rene Haasdyk at [mhaasdyk@shaw.ca](mailto:mhaasdyk@shaw.ca) or 780-474-5031.

### Sunday, June 28

A tour of several members' collections. The tour will start at 12:00 noon and end about 6:00 pm. Four collections will be included, with some cold drinks and whatnot along the way, especially at the last one. If you can't go to all, here are the planned times for each:

- a. 12:00 noon at 2428 – 112 St. Edmonton (780-436-3833).
- b. 1:30 pm at 10339 – 50 St. Edmonton (780-465-1477).
- c. 3:00 pm at 12316 – 46 St. Edmonton (780-474-5031).
- d. 4:30 pm at 11620 – 170 Ave. Edmonton (780-472-7112).

### Sunday, July 26

An outing to Devonian Botanic Garden to tour the Garden's show pavilions and the Alice MacKinnon development greenhouse maintained by our members Frank Cheple and Ernest Reinhold, also with time to tour the whole Garden if you wish. Regular Garden admission fee. Meet at the gift shop at 1:00 pm.

### July or August

Jean Wieprecht will be selling her greatly admired collection of winter-hardy and named plants. More details later, probably on June 28.

### Sunday, August 23

The annual general meeting and potluck at Colin Bundred's. A short formal meeting at 2:00 pm to elect the officers and then on to the food, Colin's collection and lots of visiting. Betty Gibbins will be coordinating the potluck and providing any needed directions, so wait for her call or email.

### Monday, August 31

Deadline for submissions to the annual photo contest. See more information later in this newsletter.

### Sunday, September 27

Our annual show and sale at the Muttart Conservatory, Edmonton. All day, starting at 10:00 am. Plants for show and sale are needed, so please go through your collection to see what might be contributed to this Society fundraiser, and plan to help staff the tables and tell the public about our favourite plants. 🌵

We've just had two good meetings on April 26 and May 31.

They featured presentations about the cacti, rock formations and Joshua trees in the Mojave Desert by Bernice van de Voort and Mike Gibbins, re-potting plants by Colin Bundred, and development of a system for identifying cacti by Michael Barton, plus much conversation about our favourite plants and the regular plant show & tell and door prizes.

Some material from these meetings may be in future newsletters.

**The Cactus and Succulent Society of Alberta** was established in 1997 by a group of people sharing an interest in these odd and unusual plants.

We meet at least four times a year—usually on Sundays—to exchange information on how to propagate, grow, and take care of cacti and succulents.

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780-464-4339

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780-436-3833

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## Cereusly Speaking

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*Cereusly Speaking* is published four times a year: at the end of March, June, September and December.

*Cereusly Speaking* is distributed to the members of the Cactus and Succulent Society of Alberta by mail or e-mail.

The electronic version of the newsletter is an exact copy of its printed version.

Readers are encouraged to submit articles and photographs.

The publisher reserves the right to edit any material submitted for publication.

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of Alberta

## Message from the President

For me, one of the pleasures of springtime is my annual trip to Victoria for the Victoria Society's spring sale. Not only do I get to help out with the show, but I also have the chance to view some great collections and talk "cactus" with some very knowledgeable collectors. One of those collectors is Ken Fairhurst. Ken has been growing our favourite plants since he was a young lad in England and as he is now close to 80; you can imagine his wealth of experience. He is renowned in the Victoria club for the quality of his plants and for the meticulous detail he gives to his collection. Specimens are always kept in the same place and orientation to the sun and are watered judiciously throughout the growing season, it's rumoured with the help of an eyedropper! I didn't get the chance to ask Ken how true that was, but if it is, we should all throw our watering cans away now, because the results are absolutely stunning. The most perfectly grown plants you will ever see. Most of the collection has been grown from seed and that includes many of the 40-year-old plants on display. Growing cacti from seed takes a certain amount of patience and diligence and it's quite extraordinary to see trays full of perfectly grown, notoriously difficult and slow-growing plants. It was a wonderful way to spend a couple of hours. A photo of Ken is here; more photos of his collection are in the Photo Gallery.



Ken Fairhurst

Previous to my visit with Ken I was strongly encouraged to take a trip up the Island to Comox, home of Valley Succulents. Now that's almost a 3-hour journey from Victoria, so I was somewhat reluctant but I was told, "Oh you have to go, you won't be disappointed." So I went and I certainly wasn't disappointed. It's very difficult for collectors in Canada to get hold of well-grown, named varieties of cacti and succulents, so it's very gratifying to see someone attempting to change that. Jamey Lauinger is a young man who has turned



Jamey Lauinger

his passion for succulents into a thriving and expanding business. He grows a lot of his plants from seed and consequently has an unusually wide variety of well-grown plants for sale. As a basically one-man operation and a young family man to boot, most of Jamey's time is taken up with the growing side of the business and consequently his web page is a little behind in listing what he has available. So if you're looking for something particular or just wanting to know what he has available, give him a call, he'll be more than happy to help you out. And if you are on the Island make sure you pay him a visit. You won't be disappointed; I wasn't. Valley Succulents - [www.valleysucculents.ca](http://www.valleysucculents.ca); email [info@valleysucculents.ca](mailto:info@valleysucculents.ca); phone 250 465 1338. A photo of Jamey at work in his nursery is here.

All that, and then of course Victoria in the springtime must be the most beautiful city in North America. The flowering trees and shrubs are just breathtaking. 🌿

Colin

## Cacti for connoisseurs

by Colin Bundred

This is another in the occasional series about Colin's favourite plants, this time Rebutias.

Rebutias, although wonderful flowering plants, are not usually considered among the cactus aristocracy. However the three species pictured below should be on everybody's "must have" list. They are all beautifully spined plants, wonderful flowerers and all present some degree of difficulty to raise to fist-sized clump. Get one! Or better still get all three! 🌵



*Sulcorebutia rauschii*



*Rebutia muscula*



*Rebutia heliosa*



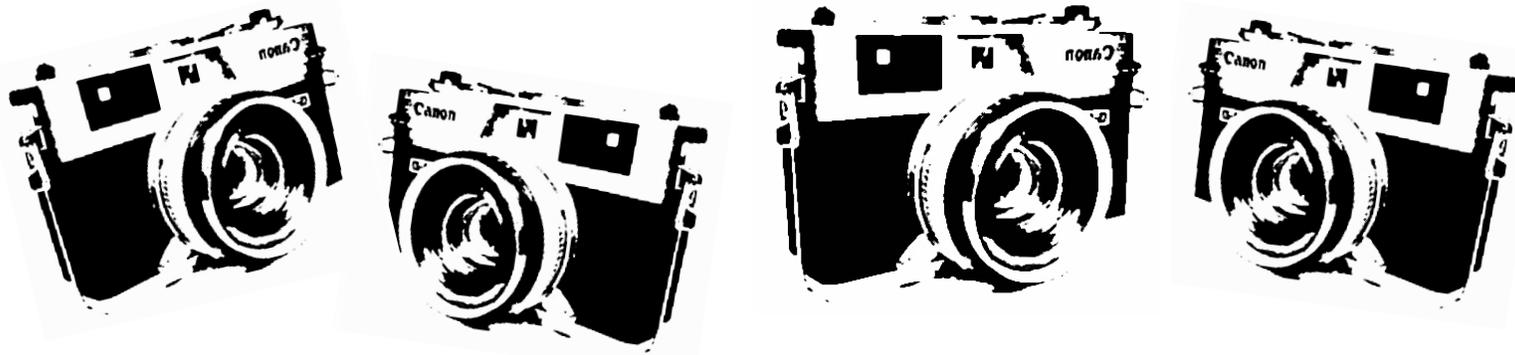
*Rebutia heliosa*

## 2015 executive election

At August's annual general meeting, we will have our biennial election for the officers of the Society, who form the Executive: the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary. It's always a good idea to have new ideas, so please consider standing for any of these offices, or volunteer for unelected positions such as newsletter editor and designer, photo contest manager and annual meeting potluck convener. 🌵

## Membership fees

It's that time of year again! Membership fees for 2015 were due January 1. You can send your fee to Treasurer Rene Haasdyk (12316 – 46 St. NW, Edmonton AB, T5W 5C6, (780) 474-5031, mhaasdyk@shaw.ca) or take it to the next meeting. Fees haven't changed for years: \$15 single, \$20 family, \$0 for young folks. 🌵



## 2015 photo contest

Members of the Society, spouses/partners and prospective members are all welcome to submit photos taken by the person submitting them. If you're not yet a member, you are welcome to participate: just submit your photos along with the \$15 membership fee. The objective is to encourage interest in cacti and succulents, so the emphasis is on the plants rather than the photographic technique.

### Competition categories

All photos except category 6 must feature cacti and/or other succulents in some way. Each may have been taken in Alberta or anywhere else. These categories are not mutually exclusive, so for each photo, you choose the category that you believe best represents your photo.

- 1 **Outdoors: photos of natural settings, landscapes or panoramas.**
- 2 **Outdoors: photos of your or others' gardens, or other displays such as botanical gardens.**
- 3 **Indoors or outdoors: photos of individual or a few flowering cacti, including close-ups.**
- 4 **Indoors or outdoors: photos of individual or a few flowering succulents, including close-ups.**
- 5 **Indoors or outdoors: photos of spination, foliage or other non-flower features.**
- 6 **Other interesting or unusual photos that you took and think would add to the photo contest, probably but not necessarily having something to do with cacti and/or succulents.**

### Details

- Each person may send in up to three photos in each of the six categories, maximum 18 photos per person. Specify each photo's category when you send the photo in.
- Submit a short descriptive sentence with each photo. This sentence will be included with the photo during the October meeting's judging, so please do not identify yourself in the sentence.
- Photos may be submitted electronically, or as printed photos. Photos may have been taken at any time in the past, but any sent to earlier contests are not eligible. Photos used in any prior publications are fine, as long as publication in the newsletter Cereusly Speaking is permitted (please so indicate).
- Any size or resolution is acceptable, but you must do any cropping or other alterations to the photo before sending it in. If you have a printed photo that you want to include only part of, please indicate that part.
- There should be no identification of you on the face of any photo, except in Category 6 if unavoidable.
- Each category will have a first prize (\$30) and a second prize (\$15).
- The winning photo in each category will be chosen by vote of members present at the October members' meeting. All submitted photos will be projected on-screen and a checklist of them and their descriptive sentences will be provided to members to facilitate voting.
- The person who submitted each first or second prize photo will be asked to talk briefly about the story behind the photo: where, how and why it was taken, and anything further that would be interesting.
- Winning photos will be displayed in a special section of Cereusly Speaking. Other photos may appear elsewhere in the newsletter.
- Your photo remains your property, but by submitting it, you grant permission for it to be published in the newsletter Cereusly Speaking. Your permission for any other use will be separately sought from you.

### Submission and Deadline

Submit your photos electronically or by mail by **August 31, 2015** to the Society's Secretary, Mike Gibbins, at melocact@gmail.com or phone 780-436-3833 for a mailing address.

## Evolutionary history of cacti

by Sonia Brock

(Reprinted with permission from the May 2015 Cactus Factus, the newsletter of the Toronto Cactus & Succulent Club.)



There are only a few known fossils of cacti, so geographical distribution gives us some evidence of their evolution. Except for a relatively recent spread of *Rhipsalis baccifera* which grows in Africa and Sri Lanka (see the map's blue areas), cacti are plants of South America and the mainly southern regions of North America (see the map's green areas). This suggests cacti must have evolved after the ancient continent of Gondwana split into South America and Africa. This occurred during the Early Cretaceous period, around 135 million years ago. The volcanic Isthmus of Panama rose up from the sea floor and bridged the formerly separated continents of North and South America. Plants and animals migrated from one continent to the other. This migration peaked dramatically around three million years ago during the Piacenzian age. Cacti are thus native to the Americas, ranging from Patagonia in the south to parts of western Canada in the north. The current species diversity of cacti is thought to have occurred only in the last 5 to 10 million years (from the late Miocene into the Pliocene). There is still controversy as to the precise dates when humans first entered those areas of the New World where cacti are commonly found. An archaeological site in Chile has been dated to around 15,000 years ago, suggesting cacti would have been encountered before then. Early evidence of the use of cacti includes cave paintings in the Serra da Capivara in Brazil, and seeds found in ancient waste dumps in Mexico and Peru, with dates estimated at 9,000 to 12,000 years ago. Other succulent plants, such as the Aizoaceae in South Africa, the Didiereaceae in Madagascar and the genus *Agave* in the Americas, appear to have diversified at the same time, which coincided with a global expan-

sion of arid environments. Cactus plants have an evolutionary edge. They take advantage of the lightest rainfall by having roots close to the soil surface. Water is quickly collected by the roots and stored in thick, expandable stems for the long summer drought. The fleshy stems of barrel cacti are pleated like an accordion and shrink as moisture is used up. These pleats (or ribs) also channel water to the base of the plant during rain showers. Even though cacti have fixed spines and areoles instead of leaves, they can still photosynthesize in the summer when water is no longer available. The green stems produce the plants' food, but lose less water than leaves because of sunken pores and a waxy coating on the surface of the stem. The plants also have a different metabolism to non-succulents — called Crassulacean Acid Metabolism or CAM — and this causes their pores to close during the heat of the day to retain moisture, they then open at night at which time they release oxygen and evaporate a small amount of moisture. Cacti pay a price for these water-saving adaptations — slow growth. Growth may be as little as ¼ inch per year in the barrel cactus, and most young sprouts never reach maturity. In botany, succulents sometimes known as fat plants, are plants having some parts that are more than normally thickened and fleshy, usually to retain water in arid climates or soil conditions. Many cactus species are pollinated by bats. 🌵

# Photo gallery

Thanks to everyone who provided the photos in this gallery! 🌵

**Our member Adele Tait sent along these striking and colourful photos of her collection in Grande Prairie.**



**New member Sandra Ericson in Victoria photographed this gorgeous Mammillaria matudae in her collection.**



**December's issue featured our member George Grozev and photos of some of his collection. Here are a few more.**



Opuntia aurea



Tephrocactus



Turbinicarpus



Turbinicarpus swoboda  
seedlings



Echinopsis aurea  
'Leucomalla'

## Photo gallery

In the U.S. on separate trips, members Bernice & Fred van de Voort and Mike Gibbins noticed an interesting phenomenon: cactus middens. These piles of cactus pads (often even aggressively prickly chollas), sticks and whatnot are built by woodrats (packrats) as burrow protection from coyotes and snakes, and to regulate heat and humidity and even repel rain. Some of the middens are used by multiple generations of the woodrats and the middens can become very large, as these photos show.



*Virgin River Canyon, Arizona  
(by Bernice)*



*Anza-Borrego  
State Park, Cali-  
fornia (by Mike)*



*A midden engineer*

Colin Bundred sent these further photos of Ken Fairhurst's collection in Victoria (see Colin's President's Message earlier):



Betty & Mike Gibbins attended the Cactus & Succulent Society of New Mexico show and sale in Albuquerque in April. It's frustrating not to be able to buy and bring back to Canada more of the plants in U.S. shows, but still fun to admire them!

