

# The Hooked Spine

Newsletter of CoronaCactus Nursery LLC.

Volume 1, Issue 02

March 2010

## Desert Forum

Huntington Botanical Gardens  
January 16, 2010  
By: Darryl Craig

Each year the HBG puts on a Desert Forum in January. In association with the CSSA and local affiliate clubs, the HBG opens its doors free of charge to club members.

They offer guided tours of the desert garden, small workshops and open up greenhouses that are not normally open to the public.

At this time of year, the Aloe's are in full bloom and spread their brilliant colors about the gardens. An area is setup for brownbag lunch and there is also a food shop on the grounds.

They also open a small section of the sales area to browse. New and past ISI plants can be found, as well as many other little treasures.

A good time was had by all! ❖

A few select photos can be found on page 7. The full [Desert Forum 2010](#) photo gallery can be seen on our website.

## The Hooked Spine

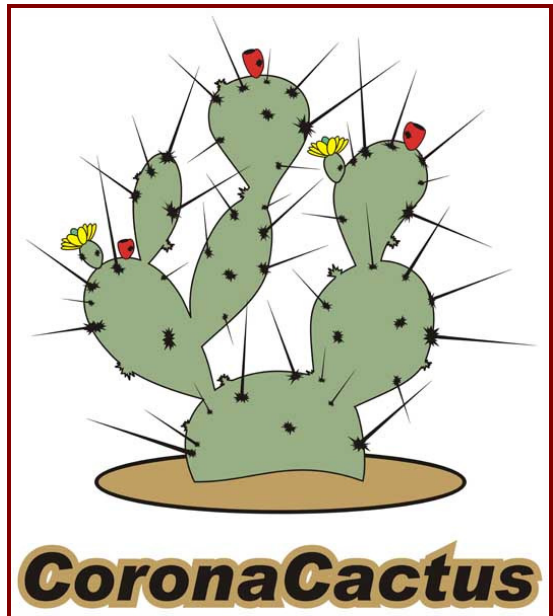
Spring Edition  
March/April 2010  
Vol. 1, Issue 02

I'm sure a lot of you are glad winter is over as we now enter into spring. At least I hope winter is over for you! Our winter here in SoCal seemed a little more mild than years past but we got plenty of rain...usually all at once in just a few days!

In this issue of *The Hooked Spine* you'll find articles related to this time of year. A small intro about *Growing from Seed* and *Repotting Succulents*. The complete articles will be available on our website in the *Cultivation Articles* section.

A short article about the Desert Forum held at the Huntington Botanical Gardens on Jan. 16, 2010. As well as highlights from the San Diego winter show and sale.

Our travels in part 2 of South Africa 2009 continue, along with some new photos. ❖



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## San Diego Winter Show & Sale

Balboa Park February 13, 2010  
By: Darryl Craig

The annual San Diego winter show and sale took place this past Feb. 13, 2010 at the beautiful Balboa Park.

*CoronaCactus* has been a vendor for the past 2 years and we always have a good time. Both the show and the sale are indoors for this winter sale. The room is plenty big enough, although the first few hours do get rather crowded with bustling shoppers. Get there early!

After you're done shopping and looking at all the great show plants, there's also the park gardens! A beautiful drought tolerant garden worthy of a tour. And if all that has not filled your day, Balboa Park has many other features to offer. ❖

Photos of the event can be seen on page 7. The full [San Diego Feb 2010](#) photo gallery can be seen on our website.

## Plant of the Month

March 2010  
*Cochemiea poselgeri*



*Cochemiea poselgeri*

Visit: [www.coronacactus.com/PotM.htm](http://www.coronacactus.com/PotM.htm)

## South Africa 2009

Part 2 – Calizdorp, Little Karoo  
By: Jennifer Craig

5 days of our trip in South Africa were situated around the Calizdorp area. Calizdorp is East of Cape Town, in the Little Karoo. You can get there by car from Cape Town in about 4 hours. We stayed in Calizdorp at Spekboom hotel and traveled daily with local plant enthusiasts out to surrounding areas. It was an amazing area. Due to Buck and Yvonne (my travel companions) staying there on their last trip, they sure knew the right people who lived there locally to show us around. Every single day we had a different tour guide (well the 'tour guide' was really a local who was somehow involved with succulents and loved the plants-each person was a different level of enthusiast so we had a wide spectrum of knowledge given) who took us around to various locations to show us where the great plants were. Or at least were supposed to be. Some maps we had with plant locations were a little unclear, so we did miss a few, but what we did see made up for that.

The Calizdorp area is dry and desert like (for the 5 days I was there, I would compare it to Corona, CA but I am not a geologist so this is just my guess) so we saw lots of succulents. We also didn't have to combat the rain there that Cape Town was getting at the time. September is the beginning of spring in South Africa, so due to recent rains, the plants were in great shape. Many people go to SA just to see the wildflowers in bloom and for succulent lovers September is a great time to go. There are just enough wildflowers left still blooming to get an eyeful for how beautiful they are, but there are not so many that they are hiding all the great succulents!



I am going to focus on our last day in Calizdorp. Every single day we saw so many different plants and different places, that there is no way to combine it all in one article. September 12, 2009 we loaded up 2 SUV's and 1 car full of people and headed over to Triangle Farm. We had a pretty large group that included: Buck and Yvonne Hemenway, myself, Woody Munnich, Doug Dawson, Jan Emming, Karl Du Toit (their guide from Springbok), and two locals Frans Noltee and George the Butcher. The farm was owned by a lovely couple Cesar and Miriam, who were more than happy showing us around. I believe Cesar inherited the farm from his father and at one time it was an Ostrich farm. There were old pens that were not being used by the front gate. One thing I cannot believe is how large these "farms" are. They go on and on and I have no idea how far we travelled around their land.

*Continued on page 4*

# Plant Specials

Subscribers can take early advantage of these newsletter only specials. Available until the June/July issue release or as quantities last.



CactiGuide.com is quickly becoming the authoritative website on the net for the positive identification of the Cactus Family. With the vast number of plants out there, they are always looking for photos of plants to display in the guide. Due credit will be given to the collection, the plant and the photographer.

So if you see a missing photo on the guide and you have that plant in your collection (and it's been positively identified) please contact Daiv at, [daiv@cactiguide.com](mailto:daiv@cactiguide.com)

<p><b>Mammillaria senilis</b>  <b>Item# Mamm-c24</b>          (Mamillopsis senilis)          Pot Size: 4"          Price: <del>\$5.50</del> <b>\$4.50</b></p>	
<p><b>Eriosyce senilis 'multicolor'</b>  <b>Item# Erio-c09</b>          (Neoporteria multicolor )          (Neoporteria nidus v. senilis)          Pot Size: 4"          Price: <del>\$6.00</del> <b>\$5.00</b></p>	 <p>N. multicolor – black spines</p>
<p><b>Eriosyce senilis 'multicolor'</b>  <b>Item# Erio-c09</b>          (Neoporteria multicolor )          (Neoporteria nidus v. senilis)          Pot Size: 4"          Price: <del>\$6.00</del> <b>\$5.00</b></p>	 <p>N. nidus senilis – white spines</p>
<p><b>Weberbauerocereus rauhii</b>  <b>Item# Web-c01</b>          Pot Size: 3"          Price: <del>\$6.00</del> <b>\$5.00</b></p>	
<p><b>Echinocereus rusanthus</b>  <b>Item# Ecer-c28</b>          Pot Size: 4"          Price: <del>\$5.50</del> <b>\$4.50</b></p>	

## Breaking News... CoronaCactus is expanding!

We've acquired another 1/2 acre of land and are in the process of building a new 20' x 40' greenhouse and a few outdoor beds. It's all being built from scratch, as I like to work with my hands and it will give me the opportunity to customize it all to our exact needs. Long work days are ahead...!

We are very excited to be expanding our growing area and to be able to offer our great customers even more great plants.

Lots of seed grown plants as well as cutting propagations will soon be filling this greenhouse.



## Spring Habitat Travels

We have a few small expeditions planned for this month and next. We'll be visiting Joshua Tree National Park, The Living Desert and a small tour of eastern California in the Mojave Preserve and into northwest and central Arizona. (Kingman/Flagstaff/Phoenix areas)

Of course, photo galleries will be made and uploaded along with articles about each place.

Our memory cards are empty, our batteries fully charged, a cooler full of water and a tank full of gas in the truck...we're ready for the road!



## We're now on Facebook

We've recently gotten on the Facebook bus and set up an account. Come join us!

Send a friend request to:  
**CoronaCactus Nursery**



An archive page has been created on our website for viewing past Newsletters. Current Newsletters will be available a few weeks after release.

[www.coronacactus.com/newsletter.htm](http://www.coronacactus.com/newsletter.htm)

## South Africa 2009

Part 2 - continued  
By: Jennifer Craig

We stopped not far from the front gate and got out onto pretty flat ground and started looking for plants. *Glottiphyllum regium* was the first obvious plants we saw. There were quite large clumps growing out in full sun and most had yellow flowers open. Next we spotted *Aloe longistyla*. It was in full sun and pretty rough looking but thriving. One reason we came here was that this is the area where *Haworthia truncata* and *Haworthia maughanii* meet to create a natural hybrid in habitat. We found those all over, usually growing under a bush or under another succulent for protection. We saw many different plants there. We found lots of plants which included: *Avonia papyracea*, *Crassula pyramidalis*, *Crassula columnaris*, *Conophytum sp.*, *Euphorbia tridentata*, small *Tylecodon sp.* seedlings, and my favorite of the day *Pachypodium bispinosum* with buds forming!



*Crassula columnaris*



*Pachypodium bispinosum* + Me

As I was talking to Miriam and telling her how wonderful it all was, she commented that they had other "great plants" farther out on some hills and suggested that we go down the way to find them. Getting a large group like this moving to another location, away from wonderful plants to take great pictures of is quite a challenge, but we finally all made our way back to our cars. I will tell you, it was a slow moving ride on a very bumpy dirt road that you could not do without some type of 4 wheel drive or at the minimum, a truck. We slowly made our way to the back hill and finally we stopped at a spot that had some beautiful *QuaQua sp.* that even had seed horns! We had other things planned for that day, and we should of got out, snapped some pictures and turned around, but as we walked towards a hill, it was such an amazing stop that we could not leave. *Gibbaeum cryptopodium* and *G. heathi* littered the whole hillside...and they were blooming! We saw many of the same species that I listed from the first stop, but we also found some *Anacampseros sp.* along the climb up. Towards the top we saw *Haworthia blackbergia* in bloom, *Euphorbia heptagona* and *Euphorbia heptagona v. enopela*. A huge treat was the large *Fockea crispa* sitting on the top of the hill. As we walked down the other side, we found *Hoodia gordonii* with seed horns.



*Gibbaeum heathi*



*Hoodia gordonii*

Finally after we left the hill, we went back to the truck and Miriam brought out the hugest loaf of homemade bread and started slicing it for us. I commented I had never seen such a big loaf of bread before and she said all her pans were that size! On the way back to the farms entrance, our two SUVs took a quick roadside stop to check out some *Haworthia viscosa* as Cesar and Miriam headed home. ❖



*Avonia papyracea*



*Haworthia truncata v. maughanii*



*Conophytum sp.*



*Fockea crispa*

**For more information, Plant Sales Lists, Cultivation Articles and more, please visit our website:**

[www.coronacactus.com](http://www.coronacactus.com)

**Check us out on eBay!**

**CoronaCactusNursery**

Our listings generally start on Tuesday and end on Sunday.

We offer lower than listed starting prices to give you a chance at some really great deals!



## An Introduction to Growing from Seed

Part 1 – Getting started  
By: Darryl Craig

Growing cactus from seed can be a very rewarding experience, but one must have patience as these plants tend to grow quite slowly. Succulents do generally grow faster than cacti, so you may want to start with something that will grow into a nice plant in just a few years. Or go in for the long haul with some cacti that can get to flowering size in about 3-5 years.

This short article will get you started growing cacti and succulents from seed. There are many, many factors involved and just as many methods used. We'll show you how we do it so you can form your own methods that work for you and your growing conditions.

You may have heard the term "The Baggie Method" when referring to growing from seed. This is but one method used and is just as it sounds. The pots of seeds are placed in ziplock baggies. This is the method we use the most, however we also use and will discuss "The Dome Method" which is very similar to the baggies, but has a few extra care steps involved.

Ok, first things first, the seeds! Where do you get them? There are many reputable online vendors to buy seeds from, as well as the CSSA seed bank. Or you can create your own seed. (See *CoronaCactus* Articles: [Cactus Pollination](#) and [Collecting Seeds](#)) We'd suggest starting with some of the easier types. (ie. *Astrophytum*, *Ferocactus*, *Huernia*, *Stapelia*...)

By creating your own seed, you are guaranteed fresh seed and know exactly what plant(s) they came from. Although creating your own seed does come with some responsibility. Keeping good notes and passing along all data about your seed is important.

With seeds ready, it's time to prepare our seedling soil mix. We use a 3 part mix consisting of 1 part Jiffy Seed Mix, 2 parts coarse sand and 2 parts Diatomaceous Earth in small 2-4mm granules. Mix all ingredients thoroughly in a mixing bin. Make sure to mix enough for all pots you plan to sow seeds in.

This next step is crucial. **Sterilization of the soil.** This eliminates the potential for disaster with fungus gnats, algae and other non-friendlies. This can be done very easily in a conventional oven or microwave. I'd suggest finding a used microwave at a garage sale or something as the soil can smell rather horrible, especially when using a conventional oven. Your wife is not going to like to see (or smell) soil in her microwave or oven!

We use a ceramic pot and fill it with our seedling mix, as we fill it we spray mist the soil to moisten it. Placing dry soil in the oven will not sterilize it. It must be moist, as it's the steam that kills off the fungus spores, algae and bacterias.

Remove the sterilized soil from the oven and allow it to cool down. In the meantime, you can write out all your pot labels and prepare a tub of boiled water. Then fill each pot with the

seedling mix. Tamp down slightly and place each pot in the tub of boiled water to soak. Let soak until the top surface of the soil is wet. Should only take a few minutes to soak up all the way through.

Remove the pots from the soaking tub and allow to drain for a few minutes. Now it's time to actually sow the seeds. Scatter 10-20 seeds per 2.5" pot on the surface and then gently push them flush with a flat utensil, making sure none of the seeds have stuck to it before moving on to the next pot. Adding a very small layer of sand or grit will help the seedlings to stand up once germinated. More can be added when the seeds have all germinated.

Once all pots are full with seeds and labeled, place 2 pots per ziplock baggie (1qt size) and place them in a propagator, greenhouse or outside in a shaded area where they won't get any direct sun, but will still be warm enough to germinate. (See *CoronaCactus* Article: [Propagators](#)) Covering the pots with newspaper, tissue paper or shadecloth will keep them from burning up or getting cooked.

Next time we'll discuss the reasons for using the baggies and their benefits, as well as using the dome method. ❖

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS: SPRING 2010

### MARCH 6-7

SouthCoast C&SS Show & Sale  
SouthCoast Botanical Gardens  
263 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes, CA

### APRIL 17-18

Green Scene Plant Sale  
Fullerton Arboretum  
1900 Associated Rd. Fullerton, CA

### MAY 1-2

Sunset C&SS Show & Sale  
Veteran's Memorial Center Garden Room  
4117 Overland Ave., Culver City, CA

### MAY 2

South Bay Epiphyllum Society Show & Sale  
SouthCoast Botanical Gardens  
263 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes, CA

### MAY 8

Gates C&SS Show & Sale  
Jurupa Mountains Cultural Center  
7621 Granite Hill Dr., Glen Avon, CA

### MAY 16

HBG Plant Sale  
Huntington Botanical Gardens  
1151 Oxford Rd. San Marino, CA

### MAY 16

Epiphyllum Society Show & Sale  
Los Angeles Arboretum  
Acadia, CA

## Repotting Cacti & Succulents

By: Jennifer Craig

### Tools you might need:

Gloves, New pot, Your preferred soil mix (medium)  
Tongs, Tweezers, Window screen  
Wooden dowel(s), Hand shovel, Top dressing  
(See *CoronaCactus* Article: [Tools of the Trade](#))

A very good friend and mentor has told me countless times that every plant should be repotted every 3 years. He has been so successful in the Cactus and Succulent community, that I don't question his logic and just follow his advice. I write this article in honor of Harvey.

There are many reasons to re pot plants. Some of the common ones are: upgrading to a nicer pot, upgrading to a bigger pot, dealing with disease/pests, diagnosing a sick or unhealthy looking plant, or you just prefer to grow your own plants in your own soil mix (medium). This article will walk you through the basic steps of transplanting.

Once you have decided which plant you want to repot, it is important that you have the proper tools to get the job done and an adequate work space.

I find it easiest to repot plants when the soil is dry. That way, you are less likely to tear the roots apart. If the plant is in a plastic pot, I squeeze the pot from side to side to loosen the soil. If the plant is in a ceramic pot, then I use a wooden dowel or thin stick to gently loosen up the soil. Depending on the type of plant (spineless vs. spined) I grab the plant by the base and gently lift it out of the pot. Pulling too hard can cause severe root damage. I grip the plant carefully around the base with tongs, tweezers or my hands depending on how much the plant can hurt me.

Over a trash bin, I carefully remove whatever soil off the roots that I can with my fingers. I always try to remove as much of the old "unknown" soil as possible. I even recommend this when re potting a plant from your own soil mix because you never know when pests can intrude. I recommend you throw out the used soil. There are many reasons why I recommend this. First, the soil could just be old and in no benefit to your plants health. Second, there could be disease/fungus/pests living in the soil that you are or are not aware of. Third, there could be granule fertilizers that you are not aware of. And finally, the most important reason (in my opinion), is that we all grow our plants in different climates and conditions and therefore should be adjusting our soil mixes to reflect those.

Once you have the soil thrown away and removed as best as you can from the plant, this is the time to inspect it and see how healthy your plant is. I look at the roots to see if there are root mealy bugs clinging to them or any types of fungus on them. I also like to check the base of the plant to see if any of it is soft or discolored which would suggest possible rot. You can also learn a lot about your plants this way. For instance, some plants in dormancy lose a lot of their feeder roots at this time, so if this is the case, then you need to be careful when you do water to not cause rot. Many, many times when I have had a plant that's health was degrading, by repotting it and inspecting the plant I was able to distinguish the problem with the plant.

Now that your plant is clean and ready for repotting, it's time to grab your new pot. When picking the right size pot, you want to upgrade one size or pick a pot that has a finger or two widths around the plant. Potting cacti and succulents in too big of a pot can cause many problems in the future. If there is a large hole in the bottom, I recommend a small square of screen to put over it so that when watering, the soil doesn't run out the bottom. When I re-use a pot, I always soak/dip it in a mild sterilizing solution to kill any pests/fungus that could be on the pot.

It's important when putting the plant in the pot that the roots hang straight down. You don't want to ball them up on a mound of soil or arrange them so they are pointing up. I hold the plant in the center of the pot with one hand and start adding the soil with the other. If the plant has spines, then I hold it in place with tongs and if it is a real big plant or hard to handle (ex. Ferocactus) then I use 2 dowels (one on either side of the plant) and lay them on top of the pot like a bridge to support the plant. Then as I add the soil, I can adjust the plant as needed. I lightly pack the soil around the plant removing the air pockets using either my fingers or the wooden dowel.

Whether or not you use a top dressing is up to you. Top dressing can help hold the plant in place until it gets established in its new pot. Top dressing also helps retain moisture in the soil. This can be good or bad depending on your individual situation. Top dressing also is the finishing touch to stage a plant. There are many different types of top dressing that have positives and negatives to using them. I advise you talk to your local growers to find out what works best for your particular succulent.

The last step is watering--or in our case, the lack of watering. Usually, it is best to wait a week or two before watering so that any roots that you have disturbed/torn during this process can heal before they are subjected to water. Again, this is a general rule and you should ask questions if you are unsure about your particular plant. ❖

## Website Updates

We've updated our website with some new content. First up is a brief intro on how to navigate our website. We hope this helps make it easier.

Our Plant Lists have been updated for Spring. Introducing new plants and others will be available very soon!

We've also updated and added our lists for purchasing non-plant products. This includes tools, pots, labels, potting mix and top dressings. The list is accessible from the [Buy Plants](#) page.

New photo galleries have been added and more will be added as the season gets going. Current new galleries are:

- [Huntington Botanical Gardens Desert Forum Jan 2010](#)
- [Arizona Habitat Jan 2010](#)
- [San Diego Show Feb 2010](#)

Another new section is the [Photo Contest Page](#). *CoronaCactus* sponsors the photo contests over at [CactiGuide.com](#) and we'll display the winning photos from each month and a link to view all the submissions.

Our seedling specials are going fast! Get them while they're hot. A new batch will be listed very soon.

# Gallery Photos



*Ferocactus glaucescens*  
In the Huntington Gardens



*Stenocereus beneckeii*  
In the Huntington Gardens



*Echinocereus engelmannii*  
Near Quartzsite, AZ



*Opuntia phaeacantha* var. *major*  
Near Wickenburg, AZ



San Diego Show



San Diego Show

# South Africa 2009 – Part 2

Triangle Farm, Calizdorp



*Gibbaeum heathi* and *G. cryptopodium*



*Haworthia truncata* v. *maughanii*



*Euphorbia tridentata*



*Pachypodium bispinosum*



*Aloe longistyla*



*Miriam's homemade bread*