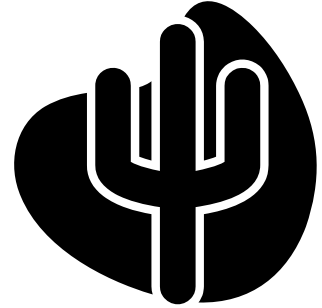


# NEW YORK CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY



## CACTUS COMMENTS / NOVEMBER 2007

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## NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting is on Tuesday November 20, 2007 at 6:00 p.m., at Jan Hus Presbyterian Church, 351 East 74<sup>th</sup> Street, NYC, Room 101 (above Lobby). The meeting will be from 6.00 PM to 7:45 PM.

## PROGRAM

This month's program will feature a topic that may be long overdue and is geared for our newer members as well as the older ones. With the plethora of plant information on the internet, the cactus and succulent grower/collector may lose sight of the basic fundamentals of growing and caring for our plants. Editor George J. Cambourakis will give a presentation on " Back to Fundamentals ", where we will take a step back and recall the basics of growing cacti and succulents, and have a group discussion on some of the most frequently asked questions: What type of soil? How much water? Plastic or clay pots? What plants are best suited for my conditions? What are the cultivation differences between a specialized collection and a varied collection? How do we treat insects and diseases? George will also have some material samples ( soil, pots, tools, etc. ) on hand as aids in our discussion.

## MEMBERSHIP DUES

Quite a few membership dues are still outstanding, so please mail in your dues as soon as possible or bring your dues to the next meeting.

## PLANT TABLE

As always, members are encouraged to bring in some plants for our plant table sale.



FROM "CACTI AND SUCCULENTS"  
BY A. J. HUXLEY, C. 1960  
PRINCIPLES OF CULTIVATION

The best place for succulents is undoubtedly a greenhouse, preferably one with full exposure to sun, and narrow structural members. They can be grown with other plants but most do not like much air humidity. Many will grow happily on a sunny windowsill and enjoy the dry air of rooms, though they will not always flower well indoors. All succulents have a distinct resting period, during which little or no water is needed. Most of them rest during our winter, but there are exceptions, especially among the South African species.

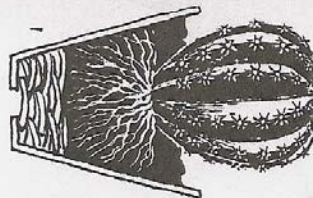
**Watering.** Most cacti and succulents should be freely watered in summer and given very little in winter, especially if kept cool. If in doubt, do not water: too much can lead to root damage and rotting. However, a good soaking by immersion may be desirable at intervals in spring and summer.

**Light.** Apart from the jungle cacti, such as the Eriophyllums, and succulents that grow in scrub, like Stapelias, these plants like full sun and maximum light at all times.

**Temperature.** In winter the temperature should be kept at around 45°F, not dropping below 40°. A few succulents, especially some South Africans, need winter temperatures as high as 60°. Plants in rooms should not, if possible, be grown too warm. In a greenhouse electric heating, thermostat-controlled, is ideal.

**Ventilation.** Give all the fresh air possible, as long as minimum winter temperatures are kept up, and the weather is not damp or misty. In damp winter weather a little extra heat may be needed to keep the air dry and moving. In summer ventilation is essential to prevent mugginess. Draughts must always be avoided.

Many varied shapes are seen even in this tiny section of a succulent collection.



**Soil Mixtures.** Contrary to popular belief succulents do not grow in plain sand. Though a fantastic number of recipes for potting mixtures can be found in different books, modern experience shows that John Innes No. 1 Potting Compost is as good for many succulents as it is for other plants. It is wise to add about 1 part extra gritty material—coarse sand, road grit, small brick or pot chips, or vermiculite—to every four parts J.I. compost. Ready-mixed composts modified in this way can be bought. Avoid composts from doubtful sources or those based on heavy clay loam. Really strong-growing plants such as Aloes, Agaves, Opuntias, Cereus, can go into J.I. No. 2 or No. 3 mixtures, which contain more fertiliser.

South African succulents, such as Lithops, Conophytum etc., need a more sandy mixture: 2 parts loam, 2 parts coarse sand and 1 part peat is recommended. Jungle cacti—Eriophyllums, Zygocactus etc.—like a richer compost: 2 parts loam, 1 part leaf-mould, spent mushroom compost, or peat, and 1 part sand, with 3 oz. hoof and horn meal, 3 oz. superphosphate and 1½ oz. sulphate of potash per bushel.

**Potting.** Many succulents have extensive roots, and the pot should comfortably hold these above a good layer of crocks to ensure drainage (1). Good sharp drainage is especially important with the more difficult South African succulents and a few cacti that need special care. Young plants should be repotted annually, and should then need no extra feeding. Knock the plant out of its pot in the usual way (4), or use rolled news-paper if the plant is too prickly to hold (2); tease away some of the soil from the roots (5), place in the new pot (slightly larger) and trickle soil around the roots (3, 6), firming it as soil is added and giving a final firm to allow at least ½ inch space below the pot rim (7). As plants become older repotting is only needed every two or three years, and with very old plants quite seldom.

