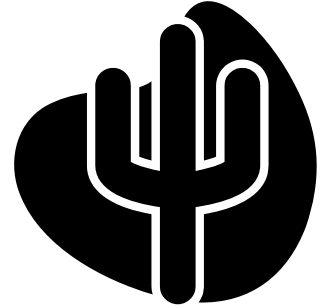




# NEW YORK CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY



## CACTUS COMMENTS / MAY 2008

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## NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting is on Tuesday May 20, 2008 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

Spring has finally sprung, so it's that time of year again: Repotting ! This month's program will consist of our annual repotting presentation by George Cambourakis. Soil mixes, pots, top dressing, tools and tips will all be discussed, with samples of all these items on hand. Members are encouraged to bring in small pot bound plants to be repotted into slightly larger pots (please bring your own pots). This will be a hands-on presentation where you will repot your own plant. If you have a soil mix that has done well for you, please bring some mix and discuss it with the group. This has always been a popular presentation, so please join us for some good, "dirty" fun.

## DIGITAL PRESENTATIONS

Thanks again to Dr. Mark Schlesinger for last month's digital presentation on his beautiful collection. We had a good turnout (although it is hoped that more of you can attend the meetings on a regular basis), and our new digital projector performed admirably. For those of you with digital cameras, how about taking some photos, and giving your own presentation? It's easy to do, and our fellow members enjoy seeing your plants.

## MEMBERS FORUM

Some of you have expressed interest in writing for our newsletter, be it your own observations on cultivation or new developments in our hobby.

Fellow member Carol Smith got the writing bug, and will share her observations on grooming and propagating succulents, shown below. Thanks Carol!

For those of you that are also interested, just email your writings to George at least one week before our meetings which are always on the third Tuesday of each month.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON GROOMING  
AND PROPAGATING SUCCULENTS

By Carol Smith

Many succulents don't need to be pruned, but some of the branching ones benefit from occasional pruning. Pruning in the early growing season (usually spring) stimulates new growth and produces a fuller more compact plant. At the time of pruning also resume feeding. (If the plants start their growing cycle with their blooms then prune at the start of the slow or dormant period and be sure to stop fertilizing, or you will stimulate new growth when the plant should be resting.)

I recently saw a row of *Rhipsalis paradoxa* planted at the top of a wall. The branches dropped straight down like a bunch of green ropes. In nature the wind and animals break the ropes at different heights, causing branching that makes the plant infinitely more interesting. Indoors we have to prune to get that effect.

If you are working with a succulent with stems and leaves you can plan the direction of a new branch by cutting about a half inch above a leaf or leaf node that faces the direction you want your branch to go. The branch will usually grow at this top node.

If you are working with euphorbias, the white latex sap can irritate skin, and will leave paint-like permanent spots on leaves. Water stops the sap from dripping, and cleans up spots if used within a few minutes.

Propagating the pruned branches requires very good light. Cuttings should be about 4 to 6 inches. You can make several cuttings from one branch. Keep the segments right side up. Let cuttings sit about a week to form a callous. Then root them in sand, or soil with rooting hormone. If the growth habit is upright cuttings should be too. If it is trailing they can be pinned with a paper clip, or held with small rocks and covered loosely with saran to hold some humidity at the surface of the soil. Cuttings need more moisture than mature plants. Don't let them go dry. (If the plant has a caudex your cuttings might not. Many plants have to be grown from seed to develop a caudex.)

Don't be afraid to prune. It stimulates new and more compact growth. And by all means prop the cuttings. It's fun to watch them grow and good for the plant sale table