CREATING, GROWING AND MAINTAINING A CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY

Over the past several years the CSSA has received inquiries from individuals wanting to start a cactus and succulent society. This document is to provide address these requests.

There are many ways to start up, organize, and maintain a club. Much of the content in this document was learned from starting the Conejo Cactus and Succulent Society in Thousand Oaks, California in 2018. The Conejo club had an advantage in that all of its co-founders had extensive experience as members of other large clubs. We realize that you may not have this advantage.

This document is designed to provide some considerations and is by no means meant to be a blueprint. Take from this document what may work for you and toss out what does not.

This Document could not have been created without the assistance and support of the following individuals.

Gunnar Eisel, Executive Director, CSSA
Linda Holub, President, Conejo Cactus and Succulent Society
Lisa Gailey, Conejo CSS
Ann Hopkinson, Conejo CSS
Joyce Schumann, President, Los Angeles Cactus and Succulent Society

Members of the CSSA Affiliate Committee:

MA Bjarkman
Judith Goodrode
Mike Hellman

Thank you all,

John Martinez,
Director, CSSA Affiliate Committee
CREATING, GROWING AND MAINTAINING A CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION:

WHY DO PEOPLE JOIN CACTUS CLUBS?:
• To educate themselves on plants and their culture
• To procure plants
• To share their passion in a common interest
• To be part of a community
• To have an impact on the hobby.

THE CLUB ENVIRONMENT:
• Identify your membership’s expectations:
  • Are you filling a need?
  • Social group with a casual interest in xeric plants
  • Serious enthusiasts
  • Somewhere in between

DETERMINE WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE IN YOUR AREA:
• Some areas are rich in resources
  • Many nearby plant societies
  • Many nearby plant shows and sales
  • Many local vendors to possibly provide educational presentations, workshops and plant procurement
  • Many fieldtrip opportunities
• Other parts of the country may have limited local resources, learn what is available in your area
  • Consider alternative resources
  • Internet searches
  • Connect with established clubs
    • Consider combining zoom presentations with other clubs to cut costs
  • Review other society’s newsletters for ideas.
  • Some resource information is available through the CSSA website
    • List of CSSA affiliate clubs nationally and internationally
    • Interactive map showing affiliate club locations geographically
WHERE TO START:

• Have a concept
  - What do you want your club to look like?

• Recruit a development team
  - Creating a team of like-minded people to develop organizational priorities and share the workload will go a long way in reducing time spent and frustration.
  - If possible, including people with previous club experience will have great value.

• Have regular planning meetings

• How will you cover initial expenses?
  - The co-founders of the Conejo CSS all chipped in $50.00 as a start-up fund. These funds were reimbursed when monies became available.
  - The Los Angeles CSS generously donated, to the Conejo CSS, a check for $500.00 as start-up money.

• Initial Considerations:
  - How casual or formal do you want to start out, from a few people meeting in someone’s living room to renting a facility with an open invitation and all the expenses required.
  - Where will you meet, date and time
    - How often will you meet?
    - Meeting criteria:
      - Conflict with other club meetings
      - Availability of facility
      - Traffic considerations
  - Considerations for selecting a meeting facility:
    - Cost of facility
    - Access
    - What is the occupant load
    - Parking availability
    - Outdoor lighting if meeting at night
    - Tables, chairs, setup and take down
    - Kitchen
    - Storage
    - Projection screen
    - Audio visual equipment
    - WiFi (if Zoom is required)
  - Do you want to be a CSSA affiliate society?
CREATING, GROWING AND MAINTAINING A CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY

• Determine and reserve a club name. Naming consideration by the following:
  • Geography/Community (example, North Texas Cactus & Succulent Society)
  • Subject matter (example, Epiphyllum Society of America)
  • Honorary named person (example, Henry Shaw Cactus Society)

• Establish a membership fee structure, consider:
  • General membership
  • Family membership
  • Student membership

• Establish a bank account
• Establish an email address
• Open a post office box
• Establish essential officers’ positions:
  • Elected positions can be assigned until elections can be held
  • Founding members may need to fill multiple positions in the beginning
  • Discuss value of positions filled, may include the following:
    • President: to coordinate and run meetings
    • Vice President/s: responsibilities may include schedule presentations, education, event planning, etc.
    • Secretary: Record keeping
    • Treasurer: Establish bank account, monitor financial transactions.
    • Director/s: For specific tasks as determined by your needs

• Consider an Executive Board (emergency decision makers)
• Non-elected positions may include:
  • Newsletter editor
  • Social media coordinator
  • Refreshment coordinator
  • Web Master
  • Librarian
  • CSSA Affiliate Representative

• Create a mission statement
  • A short statement of why an organization exists, what its overall goal is, and what service it provides. It is an expression made by its leadership of the desires and intent of the organization.

• Create a club logo
• Communicating with the public to inform and increase membership
  • Local newspapers
  • Social Media
    • Webpage
    • Face Book
    • Instagram, etc.
  • Physical mailing addresses
  • Email lists
  • Flyer distribution
• Do you want to establish a membership library
  • Book checkout policy
• Club roster
  • Distribution for members or just Board members
  • Consider some folks may not want their personal information published

FIRST MEETING PREPARATION

• Develop an agenda for first meeting, consider the following
  • Welcome guests and introduce officers
  • Speaker or workshop to create interest
  • Gift plants for first-time visitors
  • Plant display for discussion
  • Plant drawing, don’t forget the tickets
  • Plant freebee table (donated cuttings etc.)
  • Invite local vendors (to sell plants, pots, etc.)
    • Establish vendor selection criteria
  • Procure and print out plant related information (handouts)
• Assign meeting tasks
  • Host
  • Meeting setup and take down, including audio visual and refreshment area
  • Welcoming committee (process memberships)
  • Guest sign-up
  • Information distribution (handouts)
  • Vendor setup area
• Refreshment table
Consider plant show and tell display or Plant of the Month (POM) competition

Press release/advertising
- Announcement in other club newsletters

Create a membership form

Procure and print plant related information (handouts)

Name badge design, establish relationship with a local vendor

Create & distribute Flyers
- Retail shops, senior centers, libraries, plant nurseries, friends and neighbors

Create a guest list to collect email addresses for those interested in possible membership

Consider options for receiving payments for memberships, donations, plant sales i.e. cash, check, Pay Pal, Venmo, etc.

DIGGING DEEPER, CONSIDER: (Depending on club size and type of activities)

Establishing Bi-Laws:
- Definition: Governing rules by which a corporation operates
- Established by the board of directors when the corporation is formed
- Articles of incorporation are different from bylaws, they are filed to form a corporation
- A legally binding document that serves as an operating manual
- Corporations are state regulated and may differ by state

Corporate Structure:
- Check your State requirements
- Consider obtaining legal advice
- Consider a Registered Agent

Insurance considerations:
- Liability Insurance
- Board of Directors Insurance

EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL EXPENDITURES:
- Facility Rental
- Speaker honorarium
  Some speakers will do their presentation for free in the first year
- Post office box
- Website & domain fees
- Insurance
- Audio visual equipment
- Membership card printing
- Storage containers
- Refreshment supplies
- Office supplies
- Printing costs
- Gift plants
CREATING, GROWING AND MAINTAINING A CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY

• Holiday party supplies
• CSSA affiliate membership fees

INCOME GENERATORS:
• Membership fees
• Plant sales
• Plant auctions
• Plant drawings
• Donations

GROWING AND MAINTAINING A CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY

• Create a welcoming and friendly environment
  • Encourage membership involvement
    • Identify potential volunteers
    • Solicit volunteers for tasks equal to their skills
  • Rotate volunteer responsibilities
    • Don’t over burden volunteers
  • A few examples of volunteer tasks
    • Refreshments (acquisition and set-up)
    • Plant procurement
    • Plant drawings
    • Meeting setup and teardown
    • Plant of the Month judging
• Provide educational meetings, may include:
  • Interesting speakers
    • Live or Zoom
  • Workshop ideas (always popular)
    • Basic succulent plant culture
    • Seed sowing
    • Vegetitive propagation
    • Repotting and staging
    • Problem plants and pest control
    • Plant exchange
    • In-house photo contest
    • Succulent Bonsai
    • Grafting
    • Show preparation
CREATING, GROWING AND MAINTAINING A CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY

• Field Trips
• Botanical gardens
• Nursery visits
• Local nature areas
• Club member’s garden tours
• Overnight outings

This document is not intended to be a complete list as there are so many variables depending on your individual needs. Please feel free to contact the CSSA with any questions you may have regarding this document, and you will be directed to someone that will try to address any concerns you may have.