

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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## Editorial

It's nice to think that the shortest day is already two weeks behind us, and that the days are starting to lengthen. We've had a few nights of frost but several things in the garden appear to still be growing. Indeed, in December, I saw an open flower on a rose bush, and also plenty of flowers on summer bedding plants such as *osteospermum*. The evidence that global warming is a real phenomenon seems to be increasing each year.

Talking about temperatures, the gas valve in my central heating boiler failed in the middle of December, so I ended up without any heating or hot water for about a week. During this time, I found that if it was a sunny day, the conservatory was several degrees warmer than the house - instead of leaving the door from the kitchen to the conservatory closed, I should have left it open during the day!

In terms of flowers, *Crassula tecta* and mesembs such as *Aloinopsis schooneesii* and *Fenestraria rhopalophylla* have been in bloom through December. Looking through the plants in general, several *Haworthias* are looking nice at this time of the year. In strong sun, some colour up nicely, but there are a few species which look better when some of the green colour is restored in the winter months.

## Announcements

Copies of the **Branch Programme** for 2004 are available from the front desk. This gives details and dates of all our talks and events for the coming year. Also available is the **Zone 11**

**Programme**, which contains details of all the local branch meetings and events.

As you may be aware, there was a delay with the publication of the September issue of the BCSS Journal, but I received my copy in the middle of December. The December issue will follow shortly, and should include the BCSS **subscription** renewal form. The subscription for 2004 remains at last year's rate, i.e. £15 (discounted to £12 for those aged under 18 or over 65). If you have a credit card and want to pay immediately rather than waiting for the renewal forms to arrive, then you can do so via the Society website (see Page 4 of this newsletter for details of the BCSS website).

## Last Month's Meeting

Last month's meeting consisted of the Annual General Meeting, followed by an American Supper. Here's a brief summary of the business part of the meeting.

### AGM Report

**Peter Down** started proceedings by saying that this was the most successful year (financially) in the history of the branch. This was due in large part to our association with the shows held at Broadlands, Romsey. In addition, coming to St Marks for our monthly meetings had been a good move.

Peter went on to state that the success was due to the hard work of the committee. Ivor Biddlecombe was not present at the AGM because of illness, but Peter mentioned that there was a tremendous amount of work in organising each show, and also in setting up the stands and display areas prior to the start of the show.

Peter mentioned that the branch was sorry that Richard White was moving to Cardiff. We can't find one person to do the job of secretary, so the tasks will have to be shared out amongst others. Nevertheless, we wish Richard the best of luck.

**Richard** was then invited to say a few words in his last meeting as branch secretary. He thanked everyone who had helped with the running of the branch over the last 10 years. Although we sometimes grumble about this or that, our branch was really very successful. People help in many ways. Even just coming to a meeting helps. He thanked Margaret for taking on more and more work each year, and also David Neville, “who does amazing things for the branch despite not being retired”. He also thanked everyone else and hoped that their plants would “prosper and propagate”.

Copies of the branch’s financial reports were handed out to everyone. **Margaret Corina** mentioned that at the bottom of page 2 was the all-important figure of how well we had done this year - a surplus of £763. Before people got too excited, she mentioned that we will probably spend quite a bit of this towards staging the Anniversary Convention next March. Margaret estimated that we would need 80 attendees to break even.

The profits for 2003 came mainly thanks to RVT Events, who organise the shows at Broadlands. Next year we shall not be doing the August show (its timing clashes with the BCSS National Show), so our income will be lower. During the year, we have bought books for the library and also a A3 laminator. Margaret went on to mention that the branch’s finances had been helped by many people during the course of the year. Ivor’s work with packeting seeds (some of which were donated by members) for sale at shows had raised an amazing £160 towards branch funds. David Neville and Geoff Card had donated pots for the Prickly Potting corner, and Marge Puckett donated her late husband’s books to the Branch.

Thanks were expressed to Colin and Lorraine Bielckus for their work in preparing our accounts to a professional standard. Even the Society’s national treasurer was suitably impressed.

Peter then asked members to nominate a new chairmen. The word "new" was immediately questioned by worried members and Peter quickly found himself being nominated and seconded. He mentioned that he had been on the committee in one capacity or another for almost 45 years! Peter described how at the start, he even had to put his hand in his own pocket to fund the branch from one month to the next. It was only when Ivor, Jeff Jakins and David Neville went to Freshacres to

buy plants to sell at meetings that our branch’s finances began to turn around.

As with previous years, we had been underwhelmed with nominations for the committee, but everyone was willing to stand stand again (except Richard). After a brief discussion, it was agreed that Margaret and David Corina, together with David Neville would take over the branch secretary’s responsibilities. Margaret and David Corina would be named as the new joint secretaries, but David Neville would act as a point of contact, and handle e-mail communication.

Peter mentioned that the unhealthy thing about all this is that the committee is not getting any new blood and has essentially remained unchanged for several years. We do need new and younger members to join, not least because some of the committee are “knocking on a bit”!

Richard suggested there must be people in the Bournemouth area who don’t have any local branch to visit but who might find it relatively easy to drive up the M27. Derek Prior mentioned that the now extinct Bournemouth branch once had 82 members, of whom 40 used to turn up at meetings. For 2004, we are considering taking part in the New Forest Show (in July) and this might bring us to the attention of people in that area.

Margaret mentioned that during the year, we gave out around 2500 of the yellow leaflets advertising our branch. It is disappointing that despite this effort, which is far more than most other branches can manage, we very rarely gain new members.

Peter then went on to thank each of the remaining committee members for their work during the year. Ivor Biddlecombe has been show manager for 30 years and does a smashing job. My efforts on the newsletter were appreciated, but Peter repeated the request for newsletter articles. David Neville said many branches don’t even have a monthly newsletter, and we need more support from our members to ensure that the newsletter continues into the future.

Jim Roskilly will be trying to ensure maximum publicity for our up and coming convention. Hopefully some of the local papers will publicise the event for us. Philip Clemow was concerned about the lack of use of the library in recent months. Only one or two books are borrowed each month, and this is disappointing, given the

effort in carrying books to and from each meeting. We will continue to buy the latest books but it would be nice to get more support.

David Corina is the branch Vice-Chairman and he also looks after the supplies of pots and sundries, which are on sale at most monthly meetings.

David Neville is a committee member without portfolio, but we are thankful for his work for the branch and also the society. A lot of his time is taken up with catering at meetings and shows, and we could really do with someone else in the branch helping out on a regular basis, especially since David has to work shifts.

Geoff Card helps to represent the New Forest area of our Zone. He was formerly chairman, secretary and treasurer of the New Forest branch and is also the chairman of the Zone 11 committee. Glenn Finn sometimes finds it difficult to get to the monthly meetings since he is working away a lot, but he has helped out and supported all the shows. His efforts at the Prickly Potting corner at Romsey were much appreciated. Bruce Beckerleg handles plant sales. Given how many plants we've sold at the various shows, there's been a lot of money to handle this year!

Peter also thanked June Purseglove for organising the raffle at each meeting. The prizes are donated by members but June looks after everything very well. David Corina's mum May was also thanked for helping out in the kitchen at each of the meetings.

Looking forward to next year, Peter mentioned that we will need a good turnout at the Convention. We would appreciate help on the morning of the event, from 8am onwards, since there will be plenty of things to arrange on the day. We have some brilliant speakers lined up and there should also be a good selection of plants to buy. As for catering, we will get someone from outside the branch to do sandwiches and rolls.

Finally, Peter discussed the 2003 Table Show results. Ivor Biddlecombe and Bruce Beckerleg shared the trophies between them, much as in the preceding year. Peter mentioned that there were very few names on the list of participants, and Ivor would like some more support for the shows because at present, with only three or four people entering each month, it is hardly worth doing.

Richard White mentioned that the *Plants of Interest* table seems to rotate around different

members of the committee, but he reminded all branch members that anyone is welcome to bring plants for discussion along to the meetings.

Peter ended the AGM by wishing everyone all the best for Christmas and for 2004. After this, we were finally allowed to tuck into the assortment of food that had been laid on the tables at the side of the hall.

*Vinay Shah*

## Cacti & Succulents on the Internet

With more and more people having internet access these days, I thought this was an opportune moment to document some of the websites which cover our hobby. If you don't have a PC with internet access, don't despair - you might find that your local library is equipped with workstations which permit internet access. They may also be able to provide a few minutes of education.

### 1) <http://www.cactus-mall.com>

One of the best Cactus resources on the entire internet is the Cactus and Succulent plant mall, which is maintained by Tony and Suzanne Mace. According to Jaring Internet Magazine, "This is the ultimate portal for all things related to the Prickly One. The Cactus and Succulent Plant Mall a.k.a. CSPM is one of the best Internet resources for all things related to cactus. The information is regularly updated. If you feel tempted, you can also contact the multitude of suppliers for cactus plants, seeds and literature on cacti and succulents."

### 2) <http://www.bcsc.org.uk>

Then there's the British Cactus and Succulent Society's website. Below is a list of features taken straight from the website. Note that if you have a credit card, you can renew your membership subscription via the website.

- Information about the benefits of membership
- Latest News about the BCSS (November 2003)
- Information on our quarterly Journal including contents of recent issues, sample articles, a specimen issue and information for advertisers and authors. Also included are downloadable indices for the NCSS and CSSGB and a list of these journals available for purchase.
- Information BCSS yearbook *Bradleya* including contents of all 21 volumes and information for authors.
- The BCSS Events calendar.
- Information on other BCSS Publications.
- 2003 membership Fees.
- An secure on-line subscription form for subscribing with MasterCard/Visa.
- The BCSS shop where you can buy BCSS publications
- The BCSS forum where you can get your questions answered by experts
- A request form to be sent an information leaflet by mail.
- Applications for Grants from the BCSS Research Fund
- Contact Information for BCSS officials
- Complete listing of all the fellowships awarded by the BCSS and NCSS
- Cultivation Advice for Growers of Cacti and Succulents New to the Hobby and information on how to grow cacti and succulents from seed.
- A list of UK based Cactus and Succulent Nurseries that advertise in the BCSS Journal.
- The geographical zonal groups of the BCSS branches.
- List of Periodicals Devoted to Succulent Plants. (Compiled from *Bradleya* articles)
- Organising Shows and Exhibitions (A zipped Word version of this document is available for download.)
- A list of Horticultural and Other Shows at which there will be a BCSS presence where you can come and talk to us, ask questions and get advice.

### 3) [http://www2.labs.agilent.com/bot/cactus\\_home](http://www2.labs.agilent.com/bot/cactus_home)

Next, a link to Cactus newsgroups. On the Internet, newsgroups are forums and discussion groups are organised into categories, and enthusiasts can ask questions to other like-minded individuals about almost any subject. Someone who reads your question and knows the answer may eventually post a reply.

**4) <http://www.cssainc.org/index.html>**

Next, the website of the American equivalent of the BCSS. The Cactus & Succulent Society of America is “an international organization dedicated to education, protection and preservation of some of nature's most unique creations. The CSSA was founded in 1929 by a small group of people who got together in Pasadena, California, and organized the society. The CSSA has now grown to become an international organization with about 100 affiliates.”

**5) <http://www.desert-tropicals.com>  
[http://www.desert-tropicals.com/Plants/sci\\_names.html](http://www.desert-tropicals.com/Plants/sci_names.html)  
<http://www.desert-tropicals.com/Plants/succulents.htm>**

“Desert Tropicals” is a web site which Richard White mentioned in one of his reports earlier in the year. It features pictures and information on thousands of plants. Other than cacti and succulents, and they also have lists of Palmtrees, Fruit Trees and Plants and Medicinal Plants and Herbs. They produce a CD-ROM encyclopedia of cacti which can be purchased from Mike Whitlock along with his cactusbase (database) software, which was reviewed in our Journal a couple of years ago. I often use the site when checking the spelling of plant names.

**6) <http://public.srce.hr/botanic/cisb/doc/flora/botany.html>**

The Internet Directory for Botany is a vast alphabetically-sorted list of links to all things botanical. There are literally thousands of references which would probably take years to investigate.

**7) <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/pages/listcactusal.html>**

Next, a website which I found at random, written by Alley Bartholomew of Marymount High School in California. Her article is titled “An Internet Hotlist on The Curious World of Cactus” and it contains information which might be useful to beginners.

**8) <http://www.ext.nodak.edu/extnews/hortiscope/houseplants/cactus.htm>**

This is a reference to another individual's web site (Ron Smith, a horticulturist). He seems to list quite a few tips on cultivating Christmas cacti. One of his answers, on another topic, was as follows.

“This is in response to the inquirer who asked about the saguaro cacti. Here is some information I recently discovered while in Arizona. A saguaro growing from a seed will grow only 4 inches in the first 10 years. It takes 50 years for a cactus to reach 10 feet. After 18 feet--and 60 years--it will begin to grow an arm. So the reader will not see much change from year to year in the saguaro cactus”

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Finally, it's worth noting that there's little regulation on the Internet to control what information websites provide. There are some annoying companies out there who set up websites with interesting names in an attempt to lure unsuspecting visitors. Someone has done this with the following cactus-related names. If you visit any of the following sites, you'll find little information related to cacti or succulents, but will be shown links to all sorts of other products. You'll also find yourself bombarded by pop up windows all over your computer screen, advertising the things they're really trying to sell!

<http://www.cactus-plants.com>  
<http://www.cactus-gardens.com>  
<http://www.cactus-flowers.com>

*Vinay Shah*

## Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on February 3<sup>rd</sup> and will feature a talk by Paul Klaassen titled "Copiapoathon 2003". Presumably this will discuss the genus Copiapoa, which grow in the deserts and coastal regions of Chile.

The February table Show will feature the *Echinocactus* Group (cacti) and the *Agave* group (succulents).

The Echinocactus group includes *Echinocactus*, *Ferocactus*, *Homalocephala* and *Leuchtenbergia*.

The Agave group contains 12 genera including: *Agave*, *Beaucarnea*, *Calibanus*, *Dasylyrion*, *Dracaena*, *Nolina*, and *Yucca*.

## Forthcoming Events

Fri 16 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Isle of Wight	Plant Auction & Member's Slides
Sat 17 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Portsmouth	"Brazil 2003" – David Neville
Mon 19 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Southampton	Committee Meeting (@ 79 Shirley Avenue)
Tue 3 <sup>rd</sup> Feb	Southampton	"Copiapoathon 2003" – Paul Klaassen
Fri 20 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Isle of Wight	Branch Quiz
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup> Feb	Portsmouth	"A Trilogy of Films about the Chihuahuan Desert" – David Minnion
Mon 23 <sup>rd</sup> Feb	Southampton	Committee Meeting
Tue 2 <sup>nd</sup> Mar	Southampton	"Halfmens and Others – A South African Miscellany" – Anthony Mitchell
Sun 7 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Southampton	<b>50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convention and Plant Mini-Mart</b> Nursling and Rownhams Village Hall, Nursling, Southampton
Fri 19 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Isle of Wight	"An Introduction to Succulent Plants" – Ray Jeffs
Sat 20 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Portsmouth	"Arizona in Flower" – Richard Hodgkiss