

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

I hope everyone had a good break over Christmas. The timing of the holidays was such that I was able to get a stretch of 12 days off for booking just 5 days of vacation. It was certainly very quiet everywhere on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve so other people may have done the same. The only annoying part of the time off was the grey and dreary days that those two weeks served up. Still, it hasn't been cold so I suppose we shouldn't complain too much.

During the sales, I got myself a Nikon D5100 DSLR camera. Prices of the older DSLR models come down regularly when new models come out, so if you are prepared to look past the latest and greatest, models you can get some very good deals. The manufacturers are also awash with old stock so many of them are offering cash-back deals.

Announcements

Copies of the **Branch Programme** for 2013 are available from the front table.

Your **BCSS December Journal** should have arrived at the end of last year, along with the annual **seed list** and the **membership renewal** form. You can also renew online from the BCSS website, at www.bcsc.org.uk/paypal.php

Those of you who visit **Lidl's** may be aware that they sometimes sell cacti and succulent plants. It looks like they will be offering **succulent plants** from Thursday 10th January, priced at £1.79 or 2 for £3.00. If they are similar to the plants I saw last year, they are likely to be fairly common species in decent sized pots (~ 4").

Last Month's Meeting

As usual, the December meeting was the branch's Annual General Meeting. Geoff Card started off proceedings. His Chairman's report was in the newsletter and he thought the branch had done well in 2012 and had held some successful shows and displays. He thanked the members of the committee and the branch for their support. At the last committee meeting, Geoff had mentioned that the job of Chairman was too much to handle, and he confirmed that he had decided to step down as Chairman. He wished everyone the best for 2013.

Next was our secretary, David Neville. He mentioned it was nice to see everyone, since he had been away for a couple of months, although the cold weather was something else. His writeup was also in the newsletter. Attendance at our meetings is still very encouraging compared to other branches around the country, although he had noted that we have attracted less new members in the last year than in previous years. This was maybe due to us staging less displays or maybe it was a sign of the times. At our meetings, Tony makes sure everyone signs the attendance book, so that we have an idea of how many people do come to the meetings. David thanked everyone for helping to contribute to the friendly atmosphere at our meetings.

He mentioned that he had completed putting together the 2013 programme after he returned from his trip. Apart from the printed copies on the table, an electronic copy had been sent to all members for whom he had an email address. He said there are only a limited number of speakers available across the country, and although there are some good ones in the North of the country, it is difficult for most of them to come to a meeting in the South, but he had managed to put together a good mix. In January, we would have members' talks and in February the speaker would be Cliff Thompson – it's best to have someone local because of the potential for bad weather. In March we would have Hazel Taylor, who is from John Pilbeam's branch. In April, it would be Tony Roberts talking about small growing Opuntias – he last spoke to us two years ago, about propagation. In May we would have the propagation workshop, and in June the speaker will be Chris

Davies, who is one of the organisers of the Mammillaria Society. Derek Tribble will talk about Crassula in July – David wasn't aware of us ever having a talk specifically on this genus before. He saw some wonderful specimens during his trip to South Africa. Colin Walker previously gave us an excellent talk on Agaves and David had persuaded him to come again and talk about Aloes. In September, we would have John Hughes, who is also from John Pilbeam's branch. In October Martin Doorbar is another new speaker on the circuit. He is from Oxford branch and has just returned to the UK after spending a few years in the USA. In November we will have Terry Smale – he's putting together a new talk and he needed the incentive of having to speak somewhere to get the talk prepared. In December we would again hold the AGM.

Next, we had the report from our treasurer, Alice Jankovec – her written report was also in the newsletter. The accounts had not been finalised yet, but her assessment was that we had broken even for the year. We are taking in less money across the board, but we have also been able to keep costs lower, thanks to donations for things like the raffle. The shows were less profitable than previous years and the cost of holding them continues to rise, but it's still important to do them. The cost of speakers also rises as fuel costs go up, but it's good to have a variety of talks each month. During the year, we also bought a new gazebo.

Next was our Shows and Displays manager, Ivor Biddlecombe. He said that all the shows apart from New Forest had made a profit, with Romsey being the best, due to us winning prize money. New Forest Show is a problem due to the high price of extra tickets, but overall, each show was a success. The biggest problem is our monthly table show, with 2012 seeing the worst level of entries ever, with only 5 different people entering the table show over the year. He wasn't sure what the problem was. For new members, he thought it would be especially good to have some different plants to look at in the meetings. He mentioned that people didn't have to enter every month – they could just do so when they had a plant which matched the monthly class. David Neville re-iterated Ivor's comments and asked everyone to make an effort to enter the table show – it's always better to see plants in real life rather than looking at pictures of them in the talks.

Plant sales are handled by Bruce Beckerleg. He mentioned sales were down a little, but sales at meetings were buoyant. It was good that people brought a variety of plants for sale. He reminded the audience that anyone can bring along plants for sale – the branch only charges a 10% commission.

Glenn Finn looks after catering he mentioned everything was fine. He thanked all the kitchen helpers, especially Ivor. With the newsletter, there were no real issues to bring up, although it would be better if more people contributed snippets for inclusion. I also set the questions for the Zone Quiz in November.

David said that very few branches do a newsletter, those that do only have a newssheet. He knows much effort is involved in finding material so he encouraged people to contribute and broaden the range of the content – perhaps if a few people did this, others might get encouraged.

Jim thanked people who helped publicise the Branch. The Echo did well for us and we would also chase the libraries to put up our posters. Radio Solent also mentions us. There was no report from the librarian since Ciprian was not present (in November, he had announced his intention to step down from the committee), but Geoff mentioned that book lending was down compared to previous years. Ciprian did however do well in selling off a lot of our surplus stock of donated books.

Next it was time to elect the committee for 2013. With Geoff standing down, the only nomination to replace him was Dot England and this was accepted, so Dot is our new *Chairperson*. Peter Down gave Geoff a vote of thanks – he had known him for 25 years. Geoff used to run the New Forest branch, which eventually merged with Southampton. Peter had been on trips with Geoff to Europe, and in 2004 they also went to Argentina. Peter ended by wishing him well and presenting him with an orchid.

Ben Turner accepted the post of vice-chairman (replacing Dot). Mark Larter and Sue Wilson had agreed to take on the librarian role, with Sue officially becoming our new librarian. Adrian Bailey also agreed to join the committee as a general member. All the other officers were willing to be re-elected. Our auditors Colin and Lorraine Bielckus were not present so we decided to appoint them in their absence and follow up with them to make sure they were happy to continue in 2013.

David spent a few minutes to discuss the disappointing attendance at the Zone Quiz in November, where only just over a dozen of our own members attended. Perhaps it was an indication that interest in the Quiz had waned. Mike Shaw said he hadn't attended because he was uncertain about what the quiz involved. Glenn said that he felt the Quiz itself went well so it wasn't the organization which was at fault. For the table show, Mike Shaw suggested people could send in photographs – but it

would be difficult to fit these in during the meetings, since not all talks are digital. David ended by reminding everyone that the first meeting of 2013 would be held on January 8th.

Finally it was time to award the trophies for the 2012 table show categories. Alice won the Ladies cup for having accumulated the most points for a female, and Bruce Beckerleg won all the remaining 4 trophies for Open and Intermediate classes, for both Cacti and Succulents.

With the handing out of trophies completed, it was time to attack the vast amount of food that everyone had brought in!

Vinay Shah

Snippets

Desert birds use cactus as home

Paul Maddison provided the following link – which contains some very interesting pictures of birds using cacti for nests (in Arizona). Printouts of some of the pictures are on the front table.

www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2236849/A-place-sun-Desert-birds-use-inside-cactus-home.html

They may look prickly and unwelcome to many mammals, but cacti can actually provide an unlikely abode for thousands of birds.

The Gila Woodpecker in particular is well known for its ability to turn the unwelcoming spiky structure into a homely habitat. The clever desert dwellers use their long beaks to make holes in the saguaro cacti, which provide a safe cool place for them to raise their young.

Daily Mail, November 2012

Next Month's Meeting

The February meeting will consist of a talk from Cliff Thompson (from Portsmouth Branch) who will be talking about Baja California. Baja is a sliver of land around a hundred miles wide, surrounded by sea on both sides. The name might suggest it is in California – but it is actually part of Mexico.

The February Table Show will consist of the **Neoporteria** and **Copiopoa** Groups (cacti) and the **Adromischus** Subgroup (succulents). Please note that you are allowed multiple entries in any of the classes.

The Neoporteria group includes *Neoporteria*, *Austrocactus*, *Chileorebutia*, *Eriosyce*, *Horridocactus*, *Islaya*, *Neochilenia*, *Pyrrhocactus*, *Rodentiophila* and *Thelocephala*. The Copiopoa group includes *Copiopoa* and *Pilocopiopoa*.

The Adromischus subgroup includes *Adromischus*, *Brophyllum*, *Cotyledon*, *Crassula*, *Kalanchoe*, *Kitchingia*, *Rochea*, *Tillaea*, *Tylecodon*, and *Vauanthes*

Forthcoming Events

Sat	12 th	Jan	Isle of Wight	No meeting
Sat	19 th	Jan	Portsmouth	Short Talks and Discussions by branch members
Tue	5 th	Feb	Southampton	"Baja California" – Cliff Thompson
Sat	9 th	Feb	Isle of Wight	Plant Auction and Members' Slides
Sat	16 th	Feb	Portsmouth	"Highlights of Arizona and Utah" – David Neville
Tue	5 th	Mar	Southampton	"Plants & Lemurs of Madagascar" - Hazel Taylor
Sat	9 th	Mar	Isle of Wight	Branch Quiz & Members' Talks
Sat	16 th	Mar	Portsmouth	"Small Opuntiads" - Tony Roberts

Branch website: <http://www.southampton.bcsc.org.uk>