

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial	1
Announcements	1
Last Month's Meeting.....	1
2017 AGM.....	1
Rooting Haworthias	3
Forthcoming Events.....	4
Next Month's Meeting	4

Editorial

December flew by quite quickly and here we are, already in 2018. *Happy New Year* to everyone! It's encouraging to think that the days are already starting to grow longer and in 2-3 months we can look forward to seeing new growth on some of our plants. We've had a few nights for sharp frosts, but thankfully, no sustained period of cold as yet.

There isn't much in flower right now – just some Haworthias and Aloes. I did find some Christmas cacti in bud in Lidl's last week – they were in 4 inch pots and there seemed to be three different flower colours (white, pink, red) and the plants were only £1.49. The buds are continuing to develop and I expect to see the flowers start to opening from next week onwards. If the buds are leaning to one side then it's best to have the light hitting the plant on that side, since the buds are liable to fall off if they are forced to change direction.

Announcements

Copies of the Branch Programme for 2018 are available from the front table. Our branch website has also been updated to show the 2018 programme.

Don't forget to renew your BCSS membership – this can be done using the form included with the CactusWorld Journals which were sent out to members in December. You can also renew using a Paypal or credit card payment from the BCSS website, at:

<http://society.bcsc.org.uk/index.php/subscriptions.html>
(when renewing online you'll need to know your BCSS membership number, this is written on the address label of your Journal – David and I also have a list of membership numbers for current members)

Last Month's Meeting

2017 AGM

David started off the meeting by saying that there were several apologies for absence and these were for a variety of reasons. Our chairperson Dot England didn't have transport to get to the meeting, and treasurer Alice Jankovec's children were unwell. Geoff Card was also unwell and Paul Maddison had a cold. Paul Klaassen and Angie were in Germany, Geoff Penrose was on a cruise, and a few other members were also unable to come.

Our vice-chairman Adrian stood in for Dot as we reviewed the various Branch Officers reports which were included in the December newsletter. Our president Peter Down thanked the members and especially the committee for supporting the branch and the various meetings and events. In his view this was one of the best branches in the country, and he hoped we would keep up the good work.

Adrian commented on Dot's report, where she had thanked various members for their work during the year. She had spent 10 years on the committee and 5 years as the chairperson, but had now decided to step down from the committee. Peter mentioned that he would write a letter of thanks from the branch, in recognition of her service to the branch.

Next was the secretary's report. David said he didn't have much to add to the written report. The 2018 programme of events had been finalised and copies were available from the front table. He mentioned that it is quite hard to put together especially as it fills up, and these days September is one of the most difficult months because our meeting is usually just a few days before the ELK conference in Belgium and many speakers tend to be unwilling to travel to the branch just a couple of days before they would head for Europe. He had managed to book some old favourites and one or two who had not spoken to the branch for a while. We also had a new speaker, John Foster - from Gloucester - who will be bringing live plants for his talk on Senecios. June will be interesting, with Bob Potter talking about Ethiopia – it's a quite a difficult country to visit these days. David also mentioned that he had included next

January's meeting in the programme - we would be holding it a week later than usual because January 1st falls on a Tuesday in 2019.

David mentioned that if there are subjects you would like a talk on, do let him know and he will seek out potential speakers for the future. In terms of membership, it had been a successful year, with several new members joining during the year - the numbers attending the monthly branch meetings had dropped slightly compared to a couple of years ago, but we continue to have relatively good attendances. Last month we had a very good talk from Dr Mark Preston, and Mark Jakins mentioned that Rebecca had found that talk fascinating as well.

Although Alice was not present, we did have copies of the 2017 accounts and these were handed out to members. Our auditors – Colin and Lorraine were present and David thanked them for doing the accounts so promptly after the year end. We had made a profit of £124 for the year, and this was after having purchased a number of books for the library. David mentioned that the cost of speakers varies a lot and sometimes if they travel a long distance they may need to stay in a local hotel or B&B and that cost is borne by the branch. Jane Williams mentioned she had a spare room and wouldn't mind putting up speaker for a night. The accounts were adopted and signed off by Adrian and a copy can now be sent to the national treasurer.

Our shows and displays manager Ivor Biddlecombe mentioned that he can no longer get up and down his loft to get all the staging materials but Bruce Beckerleg had agreed to store these and bring them along to any displays we put on, and we'll see how we get on in the coming year. Ivor mentioned he's willing to train up any member who wanted to take over the role of handling the display.

With the newsletter, I've continued to produce the usual number of printed newsletters each month to hand out to meeting attendees. Quite a few new members joined this year and a few of them have attended the branch meetings, with some having come more than once. The website was updated with pictures from the 2016 National Show and we also ensure that the website has a description of the upcoming monthly meeting, so that members have a better idea of what the meeting will be about. A page on our website features links to other useful sites on the Internet but I've not updated this for several years. Whilst researching the monthly meeting write-ups, I have come across many interesting new sites, so when I have some free time I will update that page by adding more links and pruning any links which no longer work.

For plant sales, Bruce Beckerleg reported that takings had been good at meetings and displays and the relevant information was contained in his written report.

Our librarian Richard White reported that the library had obtained a few new books during the year and he was also planning to add the new book *Succulents of Southern Africa* by Robin Frandsen, early in 2018. David mentioned he had seen this title and it was a very good looking book which should be quite popular. Richard mentioned that during the year he had also done a stocktake of the library's books so that we have an up to date list of all the books we possess and know their whereabouts.

Glenn was asked if he had any comments on the catering. The kitchens at the meeting hall had just been renovated during November. Everything was going well and he appreciated the monthly donations of cakes from Alec Mant and other items from Ivor, and also the efforts of the other volunteers who step in and help out in the kitchen from time to time.

Next was the election of the 2018 Committee. David mentioned he had received very few nominations. There were no nominations for chairman and he didn't want to pressurise Adrian, but Adrian had agreed to taken on the role. Vice chairman (currently handled by Adrian) would be taken on by Richard White. For secretary, David said he would continue in the role but would be seeking ways of reducing his workload by passing on some of the tasks that had been done by the secretary in recent years, but which could be just as well handled by other members. Alice was willing to re-stand as treasurer, as was Ivor for Shows and Displays, Bruce for plants and myself for newsletter and website. Richard would continue as librarian, having taken over from Sue Wilson in 2016. Publicity had previously been handled by Ben Turner but this would be taken over by Robin Caddy. There are also 2 general committee posts and Tony Grech agreed to re-stand, and Jane Williams agreed to take on the other spot. Finally, Glenn was willing to continue as Catering Officer.

We also needed to appoint auditors for the following year, and Colin and Lorraine Bielckus said they were willing to do this in 2018. They were thanked for doing the 2017 accounts.

There was no other business so it was time to move on to the final part of the meeting - the award of prizes to the winners of the monthly table show competition. At the end of the year, Ivor adds up the points which have been awarded to everyone during

the course of the year, in order to calculate who had won the most points over the whole year, in each category. The top 3 points winners in each category were listed in the December newsletter. The winner of the Open Class for Cacti was Ivor, and Ivor also won the Open Class for Succulents. The winner of the Intermediate class for Cacti was Bruce, and Bruce also won the Intermediate Class for Succulents. Miranda Stevenson won the Ladies Cup for the most points won during the year by a female entrant (she also won this last year). Bruce won the trophy for "Plant in Flower" and again this was a cup which he had won in the prior year. He had forgotten to bring the trophy in, so it was just as well that he was retaining it!

With the formalities over, David invited everyone to tuck in the food which had been laid out. Due to the fact that several members were absent, there was actually plenty of food left over, even at the end.

Vinay Shah

Rooting Haworthias

Having bought some Haworthias from a Chinese seller on Ebay, I was somewhat disappointed to receive plants with hardly any roots on them. Now this isn't a disaster because Haworthias often lose their roots and it is possible to encourage them to grow new roots, but it's not something I've had to do recently for any of my own plants. After searching on the Internet, I found the following posts in one of the BCSS forums:

1) "As to rooting down, make sure the base [of the plant] is dry, place on a pure mineral mix. I use pumice, bottom heat and water weekly, I get 90% plus success using this method. Can take a good few weeks though. I also use the same method for encouraging offsets on leaves."

2) "I'll second the cat litter. I had several lose their roots along with a couple of the more choosy Aloes and a few weeks in the cat litter has worked wonders. I have taken to rooting most things in it now as it is cheap (ish) and reusable - I just lift the rooted cuttings out, shake off the loose pieces, top up the tray and reuse. I have found it very good for rooting non-C&S plants as well - especially softwood cuttings of shrubs for which I used to use Perlite."

At our own cultivation meetings, cat litter products have been discussed in the past and the two which seem to be reasonably priced and easy to obtain are :

- Tesco's low dust cat litter - £4.10 for 10L, from Tesco's.
- Sanicat / Sophisticat Pink Cat Litter - £12.49 for 30L, from Pets At Home.

The Tesco material is Danish "moler clay", as is the pink Sophisticat product. However, I have also seen internet mentions of a cream-coloured Sophisticat product which seems to be made from Spanish Sepiolite.

The Tesco material is a finer grade (granule size around 2mm-5mm) which is suitable for smaller plants. The Sophisticat material is larger, with a 5mm-10mm particle size. Below are some pictures, posted in 2007 by someone called Graham in another BCSS forum article:



Tesco low dust cat litter



Sanicat pink cat litter

Has anyone else in the branch been using these materials to re-root plants or for taking cuttings? It would be interesting to hear of your experiences and

whether you have any tips on how to improve the success rate when rooting either mature plants or offsets and cuttings.

Vinay Shah

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on February 6th and will feature a talk titled "Brazil - The Land of the Uebelmannia" by Cliff Thompson who is a member of Portsmouth Branch. Other than this genus, Brazil is also home to several other genera of cacti so we should see a variety of plants growing in habitats which are a little different from the rest of South America.

The February Table Show will consist of the **Eriosyce** group (cacti) and the **Crassulaceae** group (succulents), along with "plant in flower". Please note that members can submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

The table show classes use the classifications from the *Guide to Shows 10th Edition* (contact me if you don't have a copy of this).

The Eriosyce group includes *Austrocactus*, *Eriosyce*, *Horridocactus*, *Islaya*, *Neochilenia*, *Neoporteria*, *Pyrrhocactus* and *Thelocephala*.

The Crassulaceae group contains subgroups for *Adromischus*, *Aeonium*, *Crassula*, *Echeveria*, *Sedum* and *Sempervivum*. These subgroups cover many species, including *Adromischus*, *Bryophyllum*, *Cotyledon*, *Kalanchoe*, *Tylecodon*, *Aeonium*, *Greenovia*, *Monanthes*, *Crassula*, *Rochea*, *Dudleya*, *Echeveria*, *Graptopetalum*, *Pachyphytum*, *Tacitus*, *Sedum*, *Jovibarba*, *Orostachys*, *Rosularia*, and *Sempervivum*

Forthcoming Events

Sat 13 th Jan	Isle of Wight	No Meeting
Sat 20 th Jan	Portsmouth	Echinocereus- Julian Cook
Tue 6 th Feb	Southampton	Brazil - The Land of the Uebelmannia – Cliff Thompson
Sat 10 th Feb	Isle of Wight	Sweet Peas - Keith Brewer
Sat 17 th Feb	Portsmouth	Gymnocalycium – Graham Evans
Tue 6 th Mar	Southampton	Peru 2017 – Ian Woolnough
Sat 10 th Mar	Isle of Wight	Nature in Close-up #5 - Colin Haygarth
Sat 17 th Mar	Portsmouth	Lithops - In Captivity East to West - Dr Jonathan Clark
Tue 3 rd Apr	Southampton	What I Saw Last Winter - Mexico & Madagascar - Paul Klaassen

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

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/southamptonbcsc>