

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

We seem to be in the middle of a spell of cold weather at the moment. Even on cloudy days, there's either been a cold mist in the air, or we've had chilly winds from the north east.

On one of the warmer days I did give a few of the winter growers a light drink, however it's still much too early to think about awakening any of the other plants.

Announcements

If you haven't done so already, please remember to renew your BCSS membership. If you have misplaced the membership form sent with the last journal, you can renew on the BCSS website (<http://www.bcass.org.uk>) using a debit or credit card.

I've received an email from Louise Foster who lives in Chartwell Green and who has a collection of 15 cacti of mixed sizes for sale. If anyone is interested, further details are available on the front table.

Last Month's Meeting

Plants of Interest

It was Philip Clemow's turn to bring in some *Plants of Interest*, and he mentioned that the plants which he had brought shared a common theme - they grow in the winter, when there is little activity in most other plants. As a result these plants have to watered in November and December.

During a holiday in the Canary Islands in 1993/94, he came across a bush with seeds which he collected and grew. The plant was labelled *Senecio kleinia*. Two plants came up, and for the first 3 or 4 years, they just had a single stem. However the plants then branched into 3 and 4 stems. Since then they have continued to increase and multiply, and eventually may become too big for the greenhouse. These plants are a couple of feet tall at the moment.

In front of these plants was *Othonna euphorbioides*. This was won in the raffle at the Zone Quiz hosted by the Isle of Wight in 1997. The plant had kept on growing every year and was 8 years old now, and 9 inches tall. The leaves die and drop off, but they tend to get stuck in the spination, leading to a slightly untidy appearance. The plant didn't flower initially but blooms nicely now. It dry for most of the year. David Neville said he had got one at the same time as Philip and his was only 2 inches tall! Another bushy *Othonna* which Philip had brought along was marked with a reference number E33282 and was 7" tall.

The last of the plants was a *Tylecodon*, acquired when Derek Tribble handed out a large number of cuttings when he came to talk to our branch in 2003. Philip had taken a piece of stem labelled as *Tylecodon grandiflora* but there was no obvious way of knowing which way up to plant it, so he cut it into two half pieces which were planted either way up. One of the pieces grew, the other didn't, so he switched the second cutting round, and eventually ended up with two plants which had both grown just as well as each other. Again other people said their cuttings, acquired at the same time, were half the size.

Philip said he wasn't aware of giving them any special treatment, they were grown in a standard greenhouse which was kept free of frost but which probably got close to freezing at edges closest to the glass. Both plants were around 8 inches tall, David Neville said they looked overfed and in the wild, they would not be as leafy. Jim mentioned

that his cutting had done well, it was twice the size and it had flowered this year.

There was also a specimen of *Tylecodon ventricosus* which was in leaf and 4" tall. Apparently, this plant is very poisonous to livestock.

Also on the table was a item which Tony Grech had brought back from Malta - a large prickly pear fruit.

Member's Talks

Following the successful experiment of using a digital projector at last year's January meeting, we had decided to repeat that format for this year's meeting since more and more of our members own digital cameras. We were again very fortunate to have Colin Bielckus loan us the projector for the evening.

Philip Clemow

Philip start off proceedings by showing 34 images which were all taken between March and September last year.

The first picture was of *Rebutia aureiflora*, with 30 orange flowers open. Next was a yellow flowered *Rebutia krainziana* - there are also forms with other flower colours. *Sulcorebutia alba* is named for its white spines and has purple flowers. Philip mentioned this photo illustrated the problems caused by using flash when photographing flowers with glossy petals.

We saw several other *sulcorebutias*, including *S. pampagrandensis* and *S. tunariensis*. *Gymnocalycium bayrianum* had white flowers with a red central ring. *Gymnocalycium baldianum* caused a lot of debate in the hall since the featured plant had two flowers with distinctly different colours - one was red and other was magenta. Philip said he had grown a batch of *baldianum* plants from seed and although there were variations in the flower colours of individual plants, this was the only plant which had flowers of 2 different colours on one plant. Sometimes flowers change colour as they age, but both these had been open for the same time. In the previous year, the plant had flowered with red flowers. David Neville thought it was worth asking "Do you live anywhere near Sellafield?"

Moving on to some succulents, *Pleiospilos nelii* had rose pink flowers - unusually, the plant was

flowering from both the old body and the new body. *Titanopsis primosii* had grey green stems dotted with white markings and bears yellow flowers. *Trichodiadema densum* had magenta flowers. *Crassula* cv. "Pagoda Village" had dark green triangular leaves and small white flowers, and grows like mad. *Huernia zebrina* had ornately patterned flowers which smell like carrion. The stems have four edges which are lined with small teeth. A *Cylindrofolium* had yellow flowers with a slight swirl to the petals.

Back to cacti, and *Opuntia stenopetala* had red flowers on a plant with only 4 or 5 pads. Philip was surprised to have flowers on such a young plant. *Echinofossulocactus tetracanthus* has the characteristic zig zag ribs and white flowers with midstripes of brown or purple. Another plant labelled *Stenocactus crispata* had light purple flowers with purple midstripes. *Echinocereus chloranthus* has green yellow flowers. The form *E. chloranthus cylindricus* has neater spination on the stems and has darker flowers, with greenish brownish petals.

Echinocereus adustus had magenta flowers with ruffled petals, *Thelocactus saussieri albiflora* has white to pale pink flowers, but the Lau variety of the same plant has yellow flowers. *Thelocactus conothele macdowellii* has white spines and a nice purple flower with slender petals. *Solisia pectinata* has neat spination and white flowers with pink stripes. *Escobaria laredoi* has white spines with black tips - the flowers are small and barely emerge from the spines. *Mammillaria bombycina* had 10 heads, almost all with a ring of small magenta flowers. The plant was in a 10" pan but looked like it needed to be repotted in 14". *Mammillaria bocasana splendens* had pink flower buds and starry white flowers. *Lobivia backebergia wrightiana* had dark green bodies and nice pink flowers. *Copiapoa tenuissima* had a yellow flower. *Gymnocalycium beguini senilis* has magenta flowers and black tipped spines. The final slide was a orange-flowered *Rebutia heliosa* covered in flowers which was Philip's equivalent of the traditional sunset slide.

Richard White

Richard said he was going to do the opposite of what Philip had just done. Instead of proving information on the photographs he was going to show, he was expecting the audience to tell him what the plants were. The reason for this is that he wanted help in identifying some plants from the National Show in 2004. He mentioned that the

reason these photos were being shown now is that we ran out of time in the equivalent meeting last year. Also, for those members who didn't know who he was, he had been Southampton Branch's secretary for 10 years but had moved to Cardiff a couple of years ago.

When taking the pictures he hadn't had time to record the plant names, and so encouraged the audience to shout out the names if they recognised something. The 2004 show was held at Spalding, and David Neville mentioned that the next one in 2008 is likely to be in Huntingdon which is a bit closer. The Spalding show was in a nice airy hall, with lots of light. Early on, the crowds hadn't built up since many people were still busy buying plants in the sales tent.

The first couple of slides showed some overall views of the show to give an impression of the size of the event. There were some themed stands at the sides of the hall, and we saw one example of this with a stand manned by the Chileans, which is a group of enthusiasts who grow South American cacti.

After 3 pictures of some impressive *Astrophytum* plants, we saw the dreaded *Machaerocereus aruca* which is spiny and creeps around the ground. We then saw two pictures of *Echinocactus grusonii* including a plan view. Being tall, Richard mentioned it was possible to stick your hand over other people and take overhead shots. His camera also had a swivelling viewfinder / lens arrangement which made this practicle. We continued with some general shots of *Echinocactus*, *Homalocephala texensis*, and *Copiapoa laui*, which has yellow flowers. *Echinocereus brandegeei* has fierce spines and pink flowers which try to fight their way through. There was an impressive clump of *Lophophorus williamsii* – a plant which always sold quickly when offered for sale, perhaps because of its "other" reputed properties. There was a large clump of *Mammillaria compressa* and also a bowl of *Opuntia clavioides*, which is difficult to get to any size.

There followed pictures of *Parodia mairanana*, *Notocactus scopa*, *Notocactus magnificus* and *Sulcorebutia arenacea*, the latter still in flower. *Aztekium ritteri* had won the prize for best cactus. A bowl of *Copiapoa tenuissima* featured over a 100 heads, and we also saw the monstrose form of *Mammillaria bocasana* which goes under the name of "Fred".

Now on to the succulents in the show. A variegated form of *Agave parryi* had yellow leaf margins. There was a tall *Beaucarnea*, and *Cotyledon orbiculata* had attractive red flowers.

There was a nice clump of *Euphorbia stellaespina* while and also *Euphorbia maleolens* which has a central body and radial arms which were growing out and over the edge of the pot. There was a query about whether can you take cuttings of this? The answer was that the best bet is from seeds – it's rare for leaf cuttings to be able to form the central stem. *Pseudoplectanarium malum* is an asclepiad which has long trailing stems, and the owner had decided to wind these in a circle around a piece of stone as a centre piece.

Senecio deflersii had large glossy greeny stem segments and *Pseudolithos cubiformis* was on odd shape, with peduncles along some of the edges. A cristate *Aeonium* had lots of dark brown leaves. A bowl of *haworthia pumila* contained a dozen rosettes. Richard mentioned that "pumila" actually means small, but this is quite a big haworthia. The reason for the misnomer is that the plant was originally grouped with *Aloe*, where it would be considered small. Because of the rules of naming precedence, the specific name has to be retained when transferring between genera. There were a couple of large bowls of *Haworthia truncata* and a striking variegated form of *Haworthia limifoila*. A group of 9 smaller pots of *Haworthia* including *H. emelyae* and *H. lockwoodii* was well presented.

The displays of mixed groups of lithops are always interesting at these shows and this was no exception. The trays were packed full of mixed collections of plants and some contained over a hundred different types. Just how do you judge these? Once section of the show allows for a large collection of plants to be shown in an area two feet by two feet, and we saw one display, containing close to a hundred haworthias which showed the diversity of this genus. Similarly, there were some large displays of conophytums. A couple of closeups showed strongly marked cultivars of *Astrophytum asterias*. Labelled "Super Kabuto", they contained extra descriptions such as "Fukuriyow" and "V-shape" which David thought were just additional descriptions from individual growers. Richard ended with a final slide where he hoped everybody could identify the genus – it was actually a picture of Margaret and David Corina admiring some of the succulents!

After the break, I gave a brief description of some Cacti and Succulent CD's which Ivor Biddlecombe

owns. The first is an electronic “book” on Lithops titled “Lithops - Living Stones CD” which is sold by the author Bernd Schlösser. The CD contains a couple of Microsoft Word documents, the first of which contains cultivation information and pictures, and the second is mainly pictures. Although an interesting piece of work, my comment would be that there were probably better formats which would have allowed access to the images, so that for example one could zoom in to look a specific area of a picture. There was also no index which made it hard to find specific information.

The second CD was the Desert Tropicals Encyclopedia of Cacti and Succulents, dating from 2001. This was produced by Philippe Faucon who lives in Phoenix, Arizona. He started off by creating an informational website about plants which could grow in Phoenix and this then grew into a general database on cacti and succulents. The website can be accessed at www.desert-tropicals.com. Phillippe decided to make the website information available on a CD, without the adverts and with higher resolution pictures which is useful for people who have a computer but can't access the Internet. One of the advantages of electronic documents is that information can be presented in flexible formats – for example, a page of information on a species of Lithops can be created and then indexed so that it appears in several places - under the letter L, in a section on succulents and also a section on Mesemb.

(for a list of cactus & succulent CD's check <http://www.uhlig-kakteen.com/eCDRom.html>)

Paul Maddison

Paul started with some slides of plants at the Eden project near St Austell in Cornwall. He said it pays to look around, since there are some peculiar plants. There are some cacti and succulents but it's not a great collection. Paul's advise was to watch out for pests - one of the photos featured a huge model of a wasp.

Down at St Ives, the Animal gardens at Hayle are worth a visit. The hillside used to be grass but is planted out now, and we could see some large agaves. The Gulf stream keeps Cornwall reasonably warm and one can grow things outdoors which in the rest of the country would only be possible under glass. We saw more pictures of healthy cacti and succulents.

Further down coast – towards Penzance and Lands End, the Minack open air theatre is carved into the Cliffside. Apart from the attraction of the theatre, there is a large variety of plants in the garden. They don't get much rainfall in this region, so the theatre performances are rarely rained off. The plants were again in really good condition. We saw a picture an Aeonium which became even more impressive when the next shot showed a picture of him kneeling near it – the diameter of the Aeonium was revealed to be something like 12 inches! The final slide was accompanied by the comment “this is how they keep their plants frost free in the winter” – it featured a fire-eater throwing a flame - don't try this in your greenhouse!

Tom Radford

Tom mentioned that he wanted to present some slides under the subject of “Hostile Environments”.

We started off with a view of a nice luxury boat moored off the coast of one of the northern island in the Galapagos. The islands are formed from volcanic lava which looks similar to Hawaiian lava. This would not be expected to be a good place to find plants but if you look carefully, you can find things. A small spindly plant with reddish stems was growing amongst the lava. There was also a form of Cereus cactus growing in the lava, quite how it got here is a mystery. In fact, there were several clumps, and some were 18 inches high.

The Galapagos is famous for birds and next we saw a female blue-footed booby. Tom said the chicks came up and gave you a good pecking but you weren't allowed to touch them.

On to Namibia, which Tom described a place of great contrasts. It wasn't really like other parts of Africa – there was no squalor in the towns. We saw an epiphytic cactus growing in the trees - it had numerous yellow flowers 5-6 inches long.

Along a footpath in town, there were large succulent plants planted out. The plants were in good condition and no one had carved their names into the bark. Near Etosha National Park, in the north of the country there's a big lake and many fine specimens of plants were growing there. Amongst Aloes and other pachycauls, there were several types of cacti and these must have been planted there by people and they had now naturalized.

They saw *Stapelia flavirostris*, and also a huge clump of *Stapelia leendertziae* which had stems 12 to 18 inches long. The plant was 4-5 feet across.

Midway between Windhoek (the capital) and the coast, he found a hoodia, with the characteristic flat pink flowers. He brought some seeds back and they germinated.

Next we saw *Welwitschia mirabilis*. The only species in this weird looking monotypic genus grows in a narrow coastal strip in Namibia and Angola. Conditions are harsh with very little rain, although the plants do get moisture from fog. The plants have just 2 leaves which grow around 3-6 inches a year. Often these split and fray so look like several strips. There are male and female plants - but sometimes they are a great distance apart ... that's probably why they have evolved to live for such a long time. A tiny young plant was marked out with a ring of stones to ensure someone didn't walk over it. In this area, they also found a tiny Euphorbia, just 2 inches across. A scene showed trees of *Aloe dichotoma* and various other plants dotted amongst the rocks. It was dry, hot and inhospitable.

Now on to Costa Rica, on a bird watching trip. We saw a golden-browed Chlorophonia. The weather can be very wet and in the rain forest, all sorts of plants grow on the trees as epiphytes – on the ground, they would be washed away. A unusual plant with 2 inch red and yellow flowers looked like it potentially was a succulent, but he hadn't been able to identify it.

Next we moved to the Continent, with a series of cactus nursery visits. Kochs is a nice nursery where you can find all sorts of rare things, all in good condition. At another nursery, there was a good collection of columnar cacti maintained by the owner. At Specks' Nursery (Exotica), *Pseudolithos cubiformis* was available for prices ranging from 68 euros to 120 euros. These were from Ethiopia where they grow at low altitude and they are more sensitive to damp and cold than higher level species such as *Pseudolithos miguirtinus*. None of them are easy and hence represent a bit of risk for the money.

In the summer, Tom visited the Alps. At an altitude of 2500m, there was lots of grass and some interesting little plants, such as Edelweiss. There were quite a lot of succulents growing in the damp mossy areas but one had to look closely to spot them. The featured plant looked like some sort of sedum.

Finally Tom stated that his own greenhouse could also be considered an extremely hostile environment. It is overshadowed by trees causing low light levels. He keeps it warm for his succulent plants which means the cacti don't like it as much. We saw *Huernia uhligiana* in flower, and also a star shaped Duvalia flower which opened in the autumn. He managed to keep *Caralluma socotrana* going for 5 years but the plant looks a bit sick now and is probably going to succumb. Once they start to rot little you can do. Another *Caralluma* had small brown flowers shaped like bells. These were not smelly unlike *Caralluma lutea* which was terrible. The final plant was a *Ceropegia stapeliformis* in an 8 inch hanging tub. The flowers were not quite open and they are around 4-5 inches long from tip to tip.

Derek Prior

The final set of pictures were from Derek Prior who suggested a title of "Cavalcade of Colour". All the pictures were taken in 2005. We saw a pink Notocactus with glossy petals, a magenta Mammillaria and an orange red flowered Echinocereus. *Obregonia denegrii* had a white flower. A couple of mammillarias had rings of yellow and white flowers. We then saw a number of Echinopsis flowers in shades of white, white and purple and pink/orange. The flowers only last a day or two but they are spectacular. *Astrophytum ornatum* had large yellow flowers and *Astrophytum myriostigma quadricostata* had smaller pale yellow flower. *A. capricorne* had yellow flowers with a red centre. *Notocactus magnificus* had yellow flowers, *Parodia nivosa* had orange flowers, and *Mammillaria hahniana* had a ring of intense magenta flowers.

Now for some succulents. *Optica rubra* had characteristic pink bodies. Since they grow into the winter, he gives them a light spray rather than watering them directly. A Sempervivum had pink star-shaped flowers. Delopserma had yellow flowers and a Kedrostis from Ivor had strange green flowers. We also saw a number of Euphorbias, an Orystachys and a *Graptopetallum stellatum* with yellow flowers dotted with red.

We then saw a golden Iris and a number of spectacular day lilies. These are available in a number of spectacular colours and we saw shades of yellow, scarlet, orange, and red. In my garden, Daylilies are one of the few plants which are more vigorous than the weeds!

We moved on some miscellaneous shots, including a pink and white Camellia flower, a lovely picotee Amaryllis and a *Kalanchoe blossfeldiana* With double yellow flowers. We also saw a nice group of a dozen or so pink *Amaryllis belladonna* flowers. Derek mentioned he once had 48 stems in flower, but a tractor ran over the plants!

The talk ended with some pictures from the 2005 branch dinner. Everyone was smiling and looked happy – hopefully this will encourage you to attend the next dinner to see if that's really the case !

Vinay Shah

Branch Committee Meeting

A branch committee meeting was held on 16th January.

Venues for the branch dinner were discussed. We've eaten at the Clump Inn for the last two or three occasions and the committee agreed to explore other possible venues.

Following the success of January branch meeting, there was some discussion about whether the branch should consider purchasing a digital projector. Prices have come down to reasonable levels and a number of speakers on the circuit are switching over to the new format. My view was that it was probably too early to get one since prices will continue to fall, and at the present time, we'd only be likely to use it a couple of times a year.

Vinay Shah

Next Month's Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 7th March, and will feature a talk titled "Wild West" by Neil Oakman. It's a Travelogue to Baja California, Southern Arizona and Southern California.

The March table Show will consist of the **Rebutia** group (cacti) and the **Echeveria** subgroup (succulents). Please note that you can submit more than one entry in any of the classes.

The Rebutia group includes *Rebutia*, *Aylostera*, *Cintia*, *Cylindrorebutia*, *Digitorebutia*, *Mediolobivia*, *Neorebutia*, *Setirebutia*, *Sulcorebutia* and *Weingartia*.

The Echeveria subgroup includes *Echeveria*, *Cremnophila*, *Dudleya*, *Graptopetalum*, *Hasseanthus*, *Oliveranthus*, *Pachyphytum*, *Stylophyllum*, *Tacitus*, *Thompsonella* and *Urbinia*.

Forthcoming Events

Fri 17 th Feb	Isle of Wight	Branch Quiz and Member's Talk
Sat 18 th Feb	Portsmouth	"Three Men and a Condor – Part 2" – Eddy Harris
Tue 7 th Mar	Southampton	"Wild West" – Neil Oakman
Fri 17 th Mar	Isle of Wight	"Succulents other than Mesembs" – Suzanne Mace
Sat 18 th Mar	Portsmouth	"Chile 2003" – Angie Money
Wed 29 th Mar	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Tue 4 th Apr	Southampton	"Tanquana Hunt" – Derek Tribble

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