

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

At the start of last month we were subjected to some unusually severe weather, leading to cancellation of our January meeting. A severe weather warning had been announced on the day of the meeting, and although there wasn't much snow in some parts of Southampton at that time, other areas in the region had several inches to contend with, and untreated roads in many areas made driving very dangerous. The cold spell persisted for several days and it took well over a week for the snow to finally disappear.

I have not ventured out in the conservatory for a couple of weeks, but I did notice the orange flowers of an Aloe through the window. Around Christmas time, I found some nice Christmas cacti in flower at Homebase and proceeded to get pink, red and orange flowered variants. These plants were a couple of pounds each and blooming well. Over the years, dozens of Schlumbergera hybrids in various colour combinations have been created but it's pot luck as to what is mass produced and available in the garden centres each year.

Announcements

Copies of the **2010 Branch programme** are available from the front table. The Zone 11 programme is also being prepared and should be available in the near future. The branch and zone programme details are also available on our website, www.southampton.bcss.org.uk. Note that the Isle of Wight branch have moved their monthly meetings forward to the 2nd Saturday of each month, and they have also changed their meeting venue to a hall located in Wootton, near Ryde.

David Kirkbright has sent out a reminder that the cutoff date for the Journal mail-out is earlier than it

used to be, so members should renew their **membership for 2010** as soon as possible, to avoid a delay in receiving the Journal. Renewal forms should have been included with the December Journal. If you have a debit or credit card, it is also possible to renew your membership online, by visiting: <https://www.cactus-mall.org/bcss/index.html>

Northampton & Milton Keynes Branch will be holding their annual auction at Nether Heyford Village Hall, NN7 3LE, on Saturday 24th April 2010. Further details of how to submit plants for sale and how to get to the venue are posted at <http://northants.bcss.org.uk/auction/auction1.htm>

Last Month's Meeting

Annual General Meeting

Chairman Peter Down started proceedings for the evening and began by relaying the sad news that Margaret Corina had passed away on the 19th of November. He reminded us of the many things that Margaret had done for the branch and as a committee member. We observed a minute's silence in her memory.

Peter then delivered his report as Chairman. This time last year, the Committee had been worried about a drop in attendance at meetings, but this year we have regularly had 30 and even 40 people present. Peter remarked that members from nearby branches such as Portsmouth often come to our meetings, and it was also good to see that several new members have joined recently and come along to the meetings.

There was great sadness at the death of Margaret Corina - we owe a great deal to Margaret and her husband David before her, for all the time and hard work which they put into the branch over many years. Our 50th Anniversary Convention in 2004 was a great success thanks to her planning and organisation, which ensured that everything ran smoothly. Her house in Shirley hosted many committee meetings and these ended with a large quantity of doughnuts and muffins. She was especially generous to sell off her plant collection in

September. During the course of the year, David Neville and Mark Jakins have taken on her duties as Secretary and Treasurer. Peter also thanked all those people who had been a help and a friend to Margaret during the past year.

The success of the branch is due to hard work of all the committee members, especially at the displays and events that we put on.

Peter mentioned that he had given notice of dropping down from the Committee after 50 years of service. He thanked all those members who supported the branch in many ways, even by just coming to the meetings and taking part in the raffle or buying plants or refreshments. It had been a privilege to be involved with so many lovely people since the start in 1954, and he wished the Branch every success in the future. He will still come along to meetings as long as he can.

Next was our **Secretary**, David Neville who mentioned that his report was also in newsletter, and he would take us through some of the main items. It had been a successful year for the branch as far as the monthly meetings were concerned. We had had a good range of speakers and hopefully most of you have enjoyed most of the meetings. We haven't really done anything different but attendances have picked up and the more people there are, the better and friendlier the meetings are. Everyone mingles and makes each other feel more welcome. Also our seating arrangements are such that people tend to mix more than at other branches.

We did a number of displays this year – Whiteley Village, the Harold Hillier Gardens at Ampfield, the Solent Fuchsia Show at Titchfield, and also the New Forest Show, where tens of thousands of people come along – it is such a large event that it is well worth doing. We have lost the Easter Show at Broadlands since the organiser went into liquidation in the previous year and has been unable to resurrect his company, and at present there are no other specialist garden shows due to be held at that site. Our efforts with Children's Prickly Potting were aimed at that event and once we gave away 580 plants over 3 days – this was all the brainchild of David and Margaret Corina, and it did the branch a lot of good, both financially and in terms of goodwill.

Looking at events for this year, we hope to set up something at Hilliers again. We will also attend Whiteley at the late bank holiday weekend in May. The Solent Fuchsia society is still deciding whether they will re-invite us in 2010. The Romsey Show

has been added to the programme of events but we are not yet sure whether we will be allowed to sell plants there. We are also thinking about attending an Open day at Sparsholt Agricultural College. Somerley Estate near Ringwood has a fairly large show, and there is also a large garden fair organised by the Rotary Club at Eastleigh, near Southampton Parkway Station, although we'd have to pay at least £50 to attend this. Alice Jankovec mentioned there was a show near her in Dorset, and she would get further details. There was also some discussion about Exbury Gardens, and whether we could host a display there during one of their open days. They received Margaret Corina's bulb collection so maybe that will carry some favour.

In his report David had written about some of the other committee members. Bruce Beckerleg does plant sales. Vinay looks after the website and the newsletter - please do help out with articles for the newsletter - if everyone can just write something about a plant which has flowered, or a cultivation problem, or where they might have seen or grown an interesting plant, just providing one article each would make a large difference. The monthly Table Show is the other thing that can do with some support. Seeing a selection of mature plants is always a pleasure, and apart from the regulars who enter, we'd like to see more participation from everyone. So please do try and bring something along. The eligible classes for each month are listed in the programme and also mentioned in the newsletter.

David commented on Peter Down's decision to stand down as Chairman. Peter was the driving force behind the inauguration of the branch in 1954, and apart from a few years at the beginning when he was in the army, he has served on the Committee continuously for 50 years. David thanked Peter for his enormous contribution to the branch. This had been recognised by the National Society - in 2004, at our 50th Anniversary Convention, Gordon Rowley presented Peter with the Robert Holt Meritorious Award.

David mentioned he had also put together the programme for next year. All the speakers are confirmed although there might be some additions to the events and displays we will take part in. For January we'd like members to present slides or digital pictures for just a few minutes. In February, Angie Money will show us some pictures of visits to Chile taken some years apart and we can see the difference over time. In March we have Terry Smale who is an expert on succulents from South Africa discussing plants growing in different climatic

conditions. In April, Derek Tribble will give a talk on Gasterias, using slides and plants. This is the first time he's ever heard of someone giving a talk on this genus. In May we have a practical workshop which will discuss various topics. If you have unnamed plants, bring them along. In June, Paul Klaassen will talk about Brazil, which is where he is currently exploring, and in July Alan Phipps from Bristol will talk about Arizona, a location which he visits every year. July will also be the month when the BCSS National Convention will be held. In August Cliff Thompson will talk about plants he found in Southern Peru. In September, Ian Woolnough will talk about South West USA, and in October Stuart Riley will show us plants and digital pictures of three different and unrelated genera. In November, David himself would talk about Oaxaca Mexico, where you find plants quite different from other parts of Mexico. In December we will have the usual AGM and Christmas Social evening.

David ended by mentioning that if anyone had ideas for other speakers or other types of meetings, they should get in touch with him. Perhaps we could consider some more social events or Open days.

Mark Jakins delivered the **Treasurer's** report. He explained he took over from Margaret in the middle of the year. He had no experience of such matters but can handle a spreadsheet and has been finding out things as he goes along. Recently he got the bank account details transferred across and he was now working on getting the balance sheet done. He had produced a spreadsheet showing all the transactions, and a copy of this was given out at the meeting. He will work on getting more organised about the monthly bills and receipts. He mentioned that he was learning lots of things retrospectively. He had had a hectic year but he will have more time to spend on this next year, and he would work with Colin Bielckus to get the balance sheet completed. He also thanked Peter Down for everything he had done for the branch, and how this had helped him to enjoy every single meeting he attended.

The meeting moved on to election of the **Committee members who would serve in 2010**. Geoff Card was previously Vice-Chairman but had agreed to step up to Chairman. Peter mentioned that Geoff had previously been Chairman of the New Forest branch and was also the Zone 11 Chairman. Geoff said he hoped the branch would continue its success in 2010. Peter had been in touch with some of our newer members to ask if they would sit on the committee, and all three had accepted. The first of these was Bill Seymour, from Verwood – Bill had agreed to be our Vice-Chairman.

Our Secretary would be David Neville. Peter mentioned that we were very privileged to have David in our Branch – David has previously been the vice chairman of the National Society and also produced the Journal for some years. His services were in demand as a judge and he was very knowledgeable about cacti and succulents. Mark Jakins would continue as Treasurer, and Ivor Biddlecombe as Shows and Displays Manager. Bruce would continue handling Plant Sales, and Glenn would continue with Catering. Glenn thanked those who had stepped in to help when his work commitments had prevented him from attending meetings. Jim Roskilly would continue to handle Publicity, and Dot England would continue as Librarian. The newsletter and branch website would continue to be handled by Vinay.

Two new members elected to the general committee were Ben Turner and Alice Jankovec. June Purseglove and Tony Grech were thanked for handling the raffle and getting signatures in the attendance book, and Colin and Lorraine were also thanked for auditing our accounts – they agreed to stand for another year.

David and Geoff thanked Peter for everything he had done for the branch and presented him with the gift of a white-flowered Phalaenopsis orchid plant. David also proposed that Peter became our honorary president, and this was accepted by the members. Peter said this would be only our third president, and perhaps a good move because the previous two had both lived into their nineties.

The final part of the AGM was to award of trophies for the monthly table shows. This year, Bruce Beckerleg had won all 4 trophies (Cacti – open and intermediate, and Succulents – open and intermediate). Anna-Liisa Sheader had won the Ladies Cup for accumulating the highest points by a female exhibitor.

With the formalities over, it was time for everyone to finish exchanging cards and to tuck into the food and drink that had been spread out along the tables on the side of the hall. Each year there seems to be more and more food and this year was no exception!

Vinay Shah

Branch Committee Meeting

A branch committee meeting was held on 18th January. Peter Down had kindly agreed to allow the committee to use his living room for the meeting, even though he himself had stood down from the committee last December.

For three members (Bill Seymour, Alice Jankovec, and Ben Turner) this was their first committee meeting, having just been elected in December. The venue for future meetings was discussed briefly. It was felt that the meetings should be held in the western part of Southampton since several members of the committee live in the New Forest and Dorset areas. David mentioned that Peter Down had checked the availability of a meeting room at a local church (St. Winfrid's) and this might be suitable.

Mark Jakins mentioned that the accounts for 2009 were finalised and a draft set had been produced by Colin and Lorraine Bielckus. One item that was discussed was depreciation of the Branch Library. It was queried whether this was appropriate since some of the older and more valuable books probably hold their value.

The Christmas mail-out was done in December and 52 copies of the newsletter, 2010 branch programme and a letter from the Secretary were posted to members (or ex-members) who did not regularly attend our meetings. David reminded members to renew their memberships as soon as possible.

The December and January branch meetings were discussed. The former (the AGM) went well. The latter had to be cancelled due to the weather. David Neville went to the hall just in case, and it took him 45 minutes to get there, for a journey which normally took him 10 minutes. In the event, people had been sensible, and no one else went to the hall!

The Solent Fuchsia Society have invited us to their show, but the event has been cut back to just the Saturday. A suitable date has not been arranged with Hilliers as yet. Ben would follow up to see if we could arrange a date for a display at Sparsholt. Our presence at the Romsey Show was still to be confirmed.

David mentioned that he would make a start on producing new branch leaflets and cultivation booklets, stocks of which were running low.

Vinay Shah

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on the 2nd of March, and will feature Terry Smale, who will be giving a talk titled "Succulents from the Winter Rains". This is likely to feature plants from South Africa.

The March Table Show will consist of the **Echinocactus** Group (cacti) and the **Agave** Group (succulents). Please note that you are allowed multiple entries in any of the classes.

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

The Agave group includes *Agave*, *Beaucarnea*, *Beschorneria*, *Calibanus*, *Dasyllirion*, *Dracaena*, *Furcraea*, *Hesperaloe*, *Manfreda*, *Nolina*, *Samuela* and *Yucca*.

Forthcoming Events

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|--------------------------|---------------|--|
| Sat 13 th Feb | Isle of Wight | no meeting |
| Sat 20 th Feb | Portsmouth | "Frailea hunting in Rio Grande do Sul" – Angie Money |
| Tue 2 nd Mar | Southampton | "Succulents from the Winter Rains" - Terry Smale |
| Sat 13 th Mar | Isle of Wight | Branch Quiz & Members' Talks |
| Mon 15 th Mar | Southampton | Committee Meeting (TBC - St Winfrid's Church (Salisbury Road, Totton, SO40 3JA) |
| Sat 20 th Mar | Portsmouth | "Cactus Plants Tame & Wild" - Alan Phipps |
| Tue 6 th Apr | Southampton | Growable Gasterias - Derek Tribble |
| Sat 10 th Apr | Isle of Wight | India Na Doug - Doug Donaldson |
| Sat 17 th Apr | Portsmouth | Bring and Buy Sale |

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