

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

We've had a mixture of cold and mild and wet weather over the past few weeks. Is the worst of winter behind us? Only time will tell. I've seen snowdrops already open (at the church in Hursley) but the daffodils are only just forming their leaves so I think spring is still a few weeks away.

Announcements

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 just before Christmas - or you can also renew from the BCSS website, at:
<http://society.bcsc.org.uk/index.php/subscriptions.html>

The branch has been contacted by **James (Jim) Smith** who was a former member of the long defunct Poole & Bournemouth Branch of the BCSS. He is looking to sell his collection of plants, which consists of approx. 300 plants ranging from 9cm pots to 35cm pots. The plants are priced from £2 upwards. Jim also has 27 years of NCSS/BCSS journals for sale, starting from 1968. Jim lives in Broadstone near Poole. He can be contacted by email: <contact secretary for details>

Branch members will be saddened to learn of the recent death of **Jan Collard**, wife of Peter Collard, from the Isle of Wight Branch. Jan visited our branch on numerous occasions over the years with Peter, for quizzes and special events. She was diagnosed with terminal cancer last autumn, and passed away in a hospice in January. We send our condolences to Peter and his family.

Less well known to some of our members, **John Cox** was a regular at many national BCSS events and also at ELK in Belgium, attended by numerous members of our branch over recent years. John was a member of Bradford Branch, and he managed the BCSS archives in the past. Sadly John collapsed and died suddenly a few weeks ago. He was always a friendly and welcoming man and he will be sadly missed by everyone who knew him.

Last Month's Meeting

Members' Mini-talks

Ben Turner mentioned that his talk was about a trip to South Africa in 2006. He was lucky to be able to go behind the scenes at the Karoo Desert Botanical Garden and see their reference collection. It is an immense and fantastic resource, although Ian Acton suggested it has recently "gone to the dogs". It is one of around 10 botanical gardens in South Africa and is located near the town of Worcester, which is 70 miles from Cape Town. As you drive up there, you encounter a road sign saying "Give Way to Tortoise" – and you have to watch out for them on the roads. He had a guide for the day who was from the local Xhosa tribe and whose anglicised name was Shaun. Shaun had come over to the UK in the previous year to work on a display at the Chelsea Flower Show, and Ben had taken him round some gardens in the UK. Shaun is a great horticulturalist and was also an expert Tortoise wrangler and we saw him handling one. Next we saw him in the reference collection, doing some weeding. Everything is grown in square or rectangular pots and a lot of the main pots are ceramic. Everything is ordered in terms of genera. We saw some of the Gasterias, Haworthias and Aloes. There are several different buildings to hold the reference collection and they were still building new ones. These are not really glass houses - but they are needed, to provide shade for the plants. Ventilation is essential, due to the heat. We saw Shaun with the haworthias. A sign said "All references to Asclepiadaceae should be read as Apocynaceae". We saw some Hoodias and Euphorbias. There were also quite a few caudiciforms. We also saw some Euphorbias and Ceropegias, including a nice cristate. There were some Conophytums in the collection and Lithops

too, although these were not looking too good. We also saw *Pachypodium namaquanum*. We also saw some seedlings of Aloes. Dorotheanthus - the ice plant – was in flower.

Their “potting shed” was nice and spacious and tidy. The medium they use is a mixture of fine sand and bark and this is quite similar to the soil in the local habitat - it is sandy and free draining. We saw *Haworthia truncata*. The newest house had polycarbonate roofing - it had only been opened in the previous year. Unusually, it had been named after a well-respected member of staff who was still working at the gardens. It contained items that had been confiscated from people who had dug up plants unlawfully, and so it contained various mixtures of plants. We saw some nice Cotyledons and a close up of the ceramic containers, which were all stamped with an accession number. A sign explained the colour coding used for the plant labels - blue meant summer rainfall area, black meant winter rainfall and green was all year rainfall. A red label signified that plant was on the SANBI “red” list, which signifies endangered or vulnerable plants. IUCN also maintain a red list, but they do not classify South African plants. Paul Klaassen said some of the IUCN classifications were inaccurate. *Gasteria excelsa* had a green label, signifying all year rainfall. *Gasteria glomerata* had a red label and a nicely coloured *Gasteria rawlinsonii* was also on the red list. *Gasteria pulchra* had a green label. A plant of *Aloe striata* was in nice condition. A grass aloe was on the red list. *Aloe vera* is not indigenous to South Africa, but we saw a plant of it.

Next was something called “aloe cancer”. Ben said he saw it on a number of plants in the collection. It’s actually caused by a mite which attacks the plant and the sap released creates a crusted appearance on the plant. It usually occurs near the growing tip or the base of the leaves. It is not easy to control, but a product called “Karbadust” - which was a veterinary product to control mites in chickens seems to be effective on the mites. Alice mentioned that a similar dust is available in this country - it is a type of diatomaceous earth which is used for mite control in poultry etc. We saw plants in various states of infection and treatment. David asked whether plants in the wild were infected? Ben said he hadn’t seen it in habitat in South Africa, but he had seen it on outdoor plants in the USA, when he was at the Huntington. We saw a quarantine room with a “keep out” sign, where plants were being treated.

We saw a cristate Euphorbia, followed by *Pachypodium succulentum*, a Fockea and some more caudiciforms. A Tylecodon had new leaf growth. Ben said there were lots of plants of

Tylecodon paniculata in the wild, and they can get quite large. There was a nice Avonia, along with a few bits of quartz in the pot. Next was one of the oldest plants in the collection, which Shaun was quite excited by - it was a fingernail sized Anacampseros with a couple of tiny leaves only millimetres across. We saw a few other plants including a Huernia, and *Tavaresia barklyi* and *Huernia pillansii*, the latter both identified by Tom Radford. There were a few bulb beds planted outside, in little square sections. From the Iridaceae, Babiana is quite an attractive flowering bulb. A couple of Boophones had wide undulating leaves. Ben mentioned that the Khosa tribe use the scaly covering of the large bulb as a wound dressing for their ritual circumcision rituals! *Aloe pearsonii* looked nice in cultivation, but it can be tatty in the wild. It grows into large bushes in due course. We also saw the porcupine traps positioned outside, to catch any wild animals trying to eat the outdoor plants. Ben mentioned that in the hillsides adjoining Worcester, there were so many succulents growing in the wild. We ended with a slide showing the sun casting an orange glow over a mixture of plants in habitat.

Paul Maddison mentioned he would show us some holiday photos. We started with a field full of blueish-purple flowers - was it a typical English woodland in spring? No - these were not bluebells, but grape hyacinths in a field, in Keukenhof in Holland. Keukenhof has one of the largest flower gardens in Europe and it is known for its spring display of tulips and other bulbs. The flowering occurs for 6-8 weeks and he visited nearer the end of the flowering period, so some of the flowers had finished but there were still plenty of blooms to see. We saw his wife Pam standing next to the tulips, and one could see how tall some of them can grow to! The beds were jam-packed with the tulips, which are planted out each season. A picture showed red tulips fully open and yellow ones beginning to open. The time of flowering varies each year, so the exact timing of a visit to see everything can be difficult.

There were many avenues of flowers and the beds were laid out in colour effects and there were also mixed beds. The plantings included tulips and other bulbs, but Keukenhof is especially famous for its tulips. There are different classes of tulips - some with bicoloured flowers, and also different shapes such as lily-flowered or those with frilly edges to the petals. Some of the pictures were over exposed but the intensity of the flowers in the sun was amazing, they glowed in the sun. We saw a rockery with groups of different types of tulips, as well as daffodils planted in rectangular pens.

Part of the garden has walls affixed with containers made from Dutch pottery, and various mixtures of bulbs were planted in these. Also part of the garden is a big exhibition area where they had displays of orchids. Some featured enormous sprays of flowers and there were lots of different types of orchids on view. There was an elevated viewing gallery in the middle which allowed you to see more views of all the blooms. Some of the orchids were common genera of the type you'd buy at garden centres, but there were other rarer types too. We saw close ups of Miltoniopsis, Dendrobium, Oncidium, Cymbidium and Brassia. *Medinilla magnifica* is a decorative plant with clusters of drooping pink flowers - the common name for this is the Tropical Rose Grape Plant. A Vanda had large purple flowers and there were also "blue" flowered Phalaenopsis - but these were white-flowered plants with the flower artificially coloured with blue ink - just like with cacti, there are no orchids with true blue flowers. There were also some sculptures with orchids arranged around them.

Paul's second outing was to Jersey. We saw some bronze sculptures of cows in St. Helier. Next were some plants seen during a visit to the Eric Young Orchid foundation - *Sobralia* cv. "La Folie" has large yellow flowers and stems which are pink along part of the growth. The gloriosa lily has exotic and colourful flowers. *Anguloa* is an orchid with fragrant flowers. There were numerous Slipper orchids (*Pahioepidium*) including one called "Prince Edward of York". A *Stanhopea* had pendant flowers which look somewhat sinister. This was followed by the bromeliad *Puya berteroniana* - the lower leaves are covered in fierce spines and the plant itself grows to 3-4 feet and then produces a terminal flowering spike which can be several feet in height. The plant dies after flowering but it does usually form offsets. A young plant can go on to flower in 6-8 years if given the right conditions. The flowers themselves are a striking turquoise colour which is quite unlike anything else in the plant world. The plant is supposed to be hardy to 18°F and David mentioned that you do see Puyas growing outdoors in Cornwall.

Rebecca Jakins showed some pictures taken during visits to gardens and at home during the last 15 months. We started with a picture taken at a show in Swindon, of a cactus made from green and red Lego bricks. Next were some pictures taken at Brown Hart Gardens, which is a roof garden near Oxford Street in London. One of the containers featured cacti. Next were some plants which Mark had given to a lady from his church - these plants had got smaller in her care, perhaps due to being kept too warm. Other plants which he had given to another

person had been planted outdoors and these had grown larger. Next was an Aloe growing at Houghton Lodge near Stockbridge. They visited Kew Gardens in June and took several pictures there. Large cacti and succulents were being grown outdoors. Inside, she saw a *Strelitzia regina* in flower - she thought it was exotic and rare but in practice it is straightforward to cultivate and can be bought at garden centres. Mark thought the mesembs planted out indoors looked quite dry and in need of a good watering. An *Echium* was in flower and had a column of cerise flowers. In the tropical greenhouse she saw a green iguana. There were some cacti as well - an *Astrophytum ornatum* and an *Opuntia* were both in flower. Next was a very large plant of *Nolina recurvata* - the pony tail palm. Mark said he had one of these and had put it out in the garden - David said it was not that hardy and probably wouldn't survive outdoors. A picture showed the view from the treetop walk.

Next was a plant with strappy leaves in flower, at Staunton Country Park, near Havant. David said it was a relative of *Yucca*, called *Beschorneria*. Next were some pictures of plants growing in their greenhouse. *Tacitus bellus* forms clusters of pink flowers, and we also saw mesembs and Haworthias and several types of cacti. Next was Mark sitting on a giant wooden ant, which is part of a collection of wooden sculptures at Pinecliff Gardens, Poole. There were some pictures taken at the MSG event in Banstead in September. The final set of pictures had been taken in Ikea in December. There were plants of *Sansevieria cylindrica* on sale. We also saw an indoor propagator which included lighting underneath each shelf - the unit was about 4 feet tall and presumably it would allow plants to be grown even in poorly lit rooms. The final picture was of a cacti plush toy, complete with a realistic insect sewn onto it!

Paul Klaassen mentioned that many years ago, the late Keith Grantham had been to Madagascar and enthused about the plants found there. However it was also evident that Madagascan plants needed higher temperatures than Paul was prepared to provide, and also the eventual size of some of the plants was a potential problem. The picture on the cover of the book "The Succulent and Xerophytic plants of Madagascar" by the late Werner Rauh impressed him and it was fascinating reading. The 2 volume set is currently available current for around £100. He wanted to go on a trip to somewhere he had not been before, so Madagascar was duly chosen. He decided to go with John Childs from the Herne Bay branch. There are lots of tours advertised on the Internet, all are expensive and not very clear about where they'll take you because they rely on

local guides. He happened to talk to Al Luis who had just come back from Madagascar. Al had travelled with a French botanist Christophe Quenel who had been living on the island for 12 years and after Paul made contact with him, the trip was finalised. We saw a picture of John Child while they were at Nairobi airport in Kenya, waiting for a connecting flight. A map of Madagascar showed the area they covered during the trip. As an island, Madagascar is about twice the area of the UK.

In Christophe's yard, we saw the Landrover they would use for the trip. Paul also shot a video of a green chameleon in Christophe's yard. They left the next day and a drive though Antananarivo (the capital) allowed them to see some of the locals. They were caught up in a thunderstorm which turned into a hailstorm and ice came down. Nadia (Christophe's wife) had never seen this before. The nearby fields were covered in ice! We saw a lizard and a chameleon, at the avenue of the baobabs. Kids bring along their pet chameleons, in order to have their pictures taken with tourists, in exchange for treats or money. The locals burn everything down so the wildlife is being pushed out and sometimes they plant new crops which aren't suitable to be grown there.

Waiting for a ferry crossing, we saw a chameleon with John and it tried to chew his finger, luckily their jaws are not anything to worry about. At a nature reserve they saw the white haired verreaux sifaka with its orange eyes. This lemur is supposed to be nocturnal but it came out in the day time. They also saw the greater vasa parrot and more lizards. A picture showed him and John sitting on a Zebu cart - these animals are related to cattle and very important to the local economy. We saw a long thin snake and Paul mentioned there are no poisonous snakes on the island. A night jar had patterned brown feathers and it was very well camouflaged. We also saw some scorpions - some of these can give you a nasty bite. A chameleon came racing through (they eat scorpions) and one of the scorpions jumped onto John and had to be brushed off. Paul also came across the flatid leaf bug - which is a new insect about which not much is known. We also saw a video of these. The adults have bright red wings but the young nymphs are white and fluffy and look like a severe infestation of mealy bugs! The lemurs do eat these insects.

They also came across a bird (a Coua?) with a bluish pattern around eye - the bird was apparently asleep but the colouring around the eye makes it look like the bird is awake. At an arboretum, they saw the Madagascar paradise flycatcher. At the restaurant they had a pizza - Paul liked the picture of

lemurs which was on sale there and decided to buy it. They visited a sign marking the tropic of Capricorn at Tulear / Toliara - he is interested in these regions since they can be quite dry. A picture showed a young boy with his dog. They also came across a lizard with reddish head. Next was a fish which had been served to them. It might have been a centroberyx (a type of snapper). A bus heavily loaded with people and luggage looked extremely unsafe.

A child approached them with his pet chameleon, and the chameleon climbed all over his hat. The kids ask for around a £1 to let you take the pictures with their pets. They saw a ring tailed lemur in a reserve. These come down at the same time every day and they eat figs (ficus) and also eat leaves which are poisonous, so they then need to drink water and lick some rocks which help to neutralise the poisons in the leaves. The fruits on the fig trees grow directly on the stems and Ben said this behaviour is termed "cauliflorus". The flowers are actually inside the fig. Paul also took a picture of a yellow tree frog. A lizard had a white line all down its back. Another chameleon was identified as *Furcifer oustaleti*. John took a picture of a large snake which was a tree boa. Going to a place where *Euphorbia quartzitcola* grows, it took them 8 hours to cover just 40km. The road was very bad and the bridges were often broken. The local villagers came out and helped them cross these by bringing out long planks to cover the gaps. They met Jean Baptiste, a local plant explorer who has covered 200km² of the local area on foot exploring the island and has found plants which were not known before. We also saw a picture of their 4x4 with a wheel off the ground. The roads are extremely challenging. They returned home and to finish off, Paul showed a couple of sunsets taken at the avenue of baobabs. Paul ended by mentioning that Christophe can be contacted via madabotanik.

Next were some pictures I had taken at the **National Show** last year, with David providing commentary. The show was held in August at Godmanchester. We started with some views of the specialist society displays such as the Sedum society, the Mesemb Study Group, the Haworthia Society (who had some plants on display including a green *G. rawlinsonii*, in contrast to the plant Ben had shown earlier) and the Mammillaria society. Now for some of the plants in the show. 1st prize in the larger *Ariocarpus* class had gone to a 2 headed *ariocarpus retusus*. *Ariocarpus trigonus* is difficult to grow, sometimes the leaf tips can die back. We also saw an *Ariocarpus fissuratus* and a grafted *trigonus*. Plants of *Astrophytum ornatum* do become columnar as they age, and the tallest he's seen is 6 feet.

Lophophora are always popular, especially the woolly fluffy ones. We saw *Obregonia* and *Pelecypora aselliformis* - these are always highly rated plants. An example of *Aztekium ritteri* was in beautiful condition, compared to the tired one next to it. *Astrophytum* cv. "Onzuka" had the characteristic herringbone markings. *Astrophytum caput medusae* is the weird new discovery - although the stems do not look like a typical *Astrophytum*, it has flecks, flowers and seed pods which place it in that genus. *Astrophytum myriostigma quadricostata* looks beautiful when it has four ribs but unfortunately as they get older, extra ribs tend to appear and spoil the appearance of the plant. *Eulychnia saint-pieana* is from Chile. We saw *Echinocactus grusonii* with flowers and also the spineless form. *Arrojadoa* are columnar plants which produce a cephalium each year and then continue growing, and the old cephaliums can flower so it can produce flowers at different positions on the stem. It does need high temperatures. There were some nice *Copiapoas*. Amongst the smaller pot size *Gymnocalycium*s, a "highly commended" award was like getting a 4th place. A stunning *Eriocyce* was probably John Arnold's - it is difficult in cultivation. *Uebelmannia pectinifera* comes from Brazil. There was a nice example of *Notocactus magnificus*. The *Mammillaria* class featured clumps of *M. macrothale* and *M. bella*. *Echinocereus rigidissimus* var. *rubrispinus* looked attractive, it sometimes also goes under the field number Lau 088. We saw a miniature *Echinocereus* and a miniature *Opuntia*. *Pterocactus* are *Opuntia* relatives with large roots. *Tephrocactus geometricus* is the most desirable plant in the genus, but it is difficult to maintain in good condition. There was a large clump of *Cumulopuntia boliviana* - it makes ground hugging clumps in habitat. We saw some cristates, including a cristate *Ariocarpus*. Now for some agaves. A nice example of *Agave* cv. "Kissho Kan" was marked "Not As Scheduled" - the pot was oversized! An *Agave victoria reginae* was nicely marked - David mentioned if buying a young plant of this, try and choose one with good markings. *Agave toumeyana* v *bella* forms a dense clump. Next was a hybrid between *Agave* and *Manfreda*, called *Mangave* cv. "Bloodspot". *Agave potatorum kichiokan* is a nice form. Derek Bowdery had some good entries including *Agave eborispina* which has greatly exaggerated points on the end of the leaves. A couple were looking at a large plant of *Nolina recurvata* - it was Adrian and Ann! Another plant of *Agave toumeyana* had formed a larger clump than the example we had seen before. There were some nice *Haworthias* in the show - the *retusa* types are especially popular. *Aloe erinacea* from the Richtersveld is well worth growing. *Aloe dorotheae*

has nice marking and it tends to look better in the winter. *Aloe polyphylla* is from the mountains of Lesotho. A nice plant of *Avonia alstonii* had won 1st and this was Barry Hancock's plant. A *Sansevieria* had red edges to the green leaves. There was a nice example of *Echeveria agavoides* cv. "Ebony" with dark edges to the leaves. *Edithcolia grandis* is a challenge to grow. *Dorstenia gigas* from Gillian Evison had won a diploma, meaning it was the *best* succulent in the show. A new class introduced into the schedule by President Colin Walker allowed for plants in fancy pots. There were some interesting entries, such as *A. polyphylla* in a Polyfilla pot, and a skull with a cristate *Euphorbia* for the brain. A David Livingstone's hat was planted out with *Lithops* (living stones), and an *Aloe* had been planted in a policeman's hat (allo allo). Angie Money had a couple of entries including a pot-doll with *Rhipsalis* for hair.

The final set of slides was from **David Neville**. He had taken a trip to Spain's Costa del Sol last January and had visited Benalmadena, which is a five minute train ride from Torremolinos. He went to the Parque la Paloma which is a public park with all sorts of gardens and lawns and ponds and lakes - it also contains a cactus garden. We saw bed of *Echinocactus grusonii* with signs of flowers. The plants are all growing outside and they get the highest rainfall in January. Some of the plants like it, some don't. We saw *Pachycereus pringlei* and *Cleistocactus strausii*. The *Neobuxbaumia* didn't seem to like the climate and neither did *Myrtillocactus geometrizans*, with the stems collapsing. A tree was the Australian plant *Xanthorrhoea*. *Espostoa lanata* had formed a pseudocephalium - these form on one side of the stem and the cephalium continues to grow with the stem. The park is free to enter and is open to the public 7 days a week.

A "Canary island" bed featured *Euphorbia canariensis*, *Aeoniums* and *Euphorbia balsamifera*. Aloes were in flower and they produced some nice displays of colour. A tree *Euphorbia* showed how large these can grow. Plants which looked like variegated agaves were actually *Furcraea* - these are huge growing plants from Central America. They prefer warm conditions so are not grown much in the UK. Behind the Aloes was a metal sculpture of an *Opuntia*. With *Crassula arborescens*, every stem had flowers on it. *Euphorbia didieroides* was over 4 feet tall. A bushy *Echium* was in flower. *Aloe bainesii* (now called *A. barberae*) can grow to the size of an oak tree. *Alluarias* come from the spiny forests of Madagascar and some of the stems growing here were almost as tall as a lamp post. We saw more Aloes and a *Synadenium*, which is related

to Euphorbia. *Draceana draco* has a different growth style when young and as it matures it then branches. We saw more big-growing Euphorbias. A Senecio was identified by virtue of the fluffy seed heads - it had pencil thick stems. *Kleinia nerifolia* can grow either stout or multi-branched depending on growing conditions. *Crassula argentea* was flowering quite well and we also saw a Portulacaria. The Pachypodiums growing there didn't seem entirely happy - one was nicely coloured but perhaps it was stressed and close to dying and making a last ditch effort to flower before it dies.

Bombax can grow into giant plants which are commonly called the pavement cracker - it is not suited to pot culture at all. There was an amateurish display of artwork, featuring an outline of a cactus and a succulent on a gate. *Chorisia speciosa* is from Argentina/Brazil where it is known as the Kapok tree. *Pachypodium lamerei* usually grows to 8-10 feet tall and flowers before it branches but this specimen must have been damaged because it had branched at a lower height of just 2 feet.. Another plant not in leaf was a Cyphostemma. A large Euphorbia had a yellowish sheen, almost making it look variegated. *Kalanchoe beharensis* was growing to 8 feet tall and had formed nice domed bushes which were in flower. A group of Beaucarneas were also in flower.

We saw some plantings of Cerei - David mentioned it was mainly the bigger growing plants which are bedded out in gardens like this. We saw *Ferocactus pilosus*, *F. glaucescens* and another plant with white and purple flowers, perhaps related to *F. latispinus*. There were several stems of *Cephalocereus senilis*. A beautiful variegated Agave was labelled *Agave tequilana*. There were impressive stems of Oreocereus. A plant of *Agave attenuata* looked a little tatty but the flowering spike was graceful and elegant - it always curves over. There were more agaves, including *A. victoria reginae* and *A. parrasana*. An Ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*) was in flower and had tubular red flowers.

An agave looked rather messy as it was dying after flowering - some do produce plantlets on the inflorescence and you can re-propagate from these. Near some Opuntias, the ground was littered with pads and spines - but we saw a nice plant with medium sized pads and attractive brown areoles - they look nice - from a distance. When searching for the park, he had been told to look out for a roundabout with windmills, and as he left the venue, he found this - however instead of the Dutch wind mills he had imagined, there were about 80 children's wind spinners mounted on the structure.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 18 entries in the January table show, and 5 entries for "Plants in Flower".

	Cacti – Echinocatus	Succulents – Aloe
Open	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Leuchtenbergia principis</i>	(1) A Bailey <i>Aloe somaliensis</i>
	(2) B Turner <i>Echinocactus grusonii</i>	(2) B Turner <i>Aloe ramosissima</i>
	(3) -	(3) I Biddlecombe <i>Aloe perfoliata</i>
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Ferocactus fordii</i>	(1) G Penrose <i>Aloe sinkatana</i>
	(2) I Biddlecombe <i>Echinocactus grusonii v. brevispina</i>	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Aloe longistyla</i>
	(3) -	(3) T Smith <i>Aloe cv "Lizard Lips"</i>

Cacti/Succulent in Flower
(1) G Penrose <i>Aloe bellatula</i>
(2) B Beckerleg <i>Othonna pachypoda</i>
(3) B Turner <i>Haemanthus albifloss</i>

Ivor Biddlecombe

Snippets

Diatomaceous earth

Earlier in this newsletter, Ben mentioned the use of “Karb dust” to treat “Aloe cancer” at the Karoo botanical garden. Alice looked up the ingredient and found it was diatomaceous earth.

The explanation I found for it online says “Because it is a light dust, diatomaceous earth easily clings to the bodies of insects as they crawl over it. The tiny diatom particles then cut into the waxy coating of insects and they dry out and die of dehydration within 48 hours.” Another website said “Since diatomaceous earth works in various ways, it is effective on bed bugs, beetles, thrips, mites, ants, roaches, aphids, slugs, snails, fleas, pillbugs, ticks, crickets, millipedes/centipedes, and earwigs.”

There seem to be food and industrial grades available (some people take it as a supplement – although reading the above I don’t think I’d want to ingest it). I’ve seen 500g packs on sale for a few pounds, a 2.5kg tub for £20 and a 20kg industrial bag for £30. There are also some warnings when using this substance – since it is such a fine powder, wearing a face mask is advised when applying it. Also there are numerous stories of people using it to kill bed bugs and then ruining their hoovers when they tried to vacuum up the dust - because it is so fine, it can get into the motor and clog it up.

Anyway the thought of using a relatively inert substance to eliminate pests is attractive. I will get some and spread it around some of the plants to see if it really is effective against mealy and red spider.

Vinay Shah

Next Month’s Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on March 7th and will feature a talk by Julie Carey, on plants from her collection.

The March Table Show will consist of the **Opuntia** group (cacti) and the **Haworthia** 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 Opuntia group includes *Austrocylindropuntia*, *Cylindropuntia*, *Grusonia*, *Maihuea*, *Maihueiopsis*, *Nopalea*, *Opuntia*, *Pereskia*, *Pterocactus*, *Puna*, *Tacinga*, *Tephrocactus* and *Tunilla*

The Haworthia group includes *Astroloba*, *Haworthia*, and *Poellnitzia*

Forthcoming Events

Sat 11 th Feb	Isle of Wight	Branch Quiz (questions by Ron Mitchell)
Sat 18 th Feb	Portsmouth	Large Flowered Mammillarias – Chris Davies
Tue 7 th Mar	Southampton	Plants from my Collection – Julie Carey
Sat 11 th Mar	Isle of Wight	Slide Show – SW USA #1 - by Keith Grantham
Mon 13 th Mar	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Sat 18 th Mar	Portsmouth	Cacti & Succulents - 5 short Videos - Tony Mace
Tue 4 th Apr	Southampton	The Huntington Desert Garden & LA County Arboretum - Ben Turner
Sat 8 th Apr	Isle of Wight	Ramblings in NE Mexico (Chris Davis)
Sat 15 th Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Auction
Tue 2 nd May	Southampton	Cultivation & Propagation Workshop, demonstrations and discussions

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

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