

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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## Editorial

We've entered March, and spring feels like it is just around the corner. This seems to have been a more "normal" winter, with snowdrops flowering in February, and daffodils likely to open in March. My daylilies have made attempts at producing bright green new growths but the cold weather has held them back.

I picked up a number of Easter cacti at Haskins Garden Centre – they were offering decent sized-plants in 4 different flower colours. Although the plants are covered in buds, the stems look limp and I'm not sure they will survive more than a season. I suppose from the nursery's point of view, selling a plant which flowers itself to death is an ideal item to sell!

## Announcements

There are a couple of copies of the Rowlands seed catalogue available at the front table.

The Southampton Garden festival will be held in July this year. All those who entered last year should automatically receive entry packs.

The March edition of the BCSS Journal is with the printers and should be dispatched to members in the middle of the month.

## Last Month's Meeting

### Plants of Interest

At the February meeting, *Plants of Interest* were brought in by Margaret and David Corina. David

mentioned he had a look in his unheated greenhouse to see if anything caught his eye, and he had found a few items. *Crassulas* should be coming into flower around now, and the first plant was *Crassula socialis* in bud. It is typically a winter grower, and dies back in the summer. The plant would have been larger, but members of the Alpine Society keep pinching bits from him. Unlike many *crassulas*, the flowers don't smell foul. Next was a *Crassula* picked up in Oxford and which looked like a hybrid of *C. susannae* and *C. mesembryanthemopsis*. This cultivar (*C. cv. "Celia"*) is also illustrated in the back of Gordon Rowley's book on *Crassula*. It seems to be easier than either of the parents, and has white flowers.

*Plectranthus ernstii* is a member of the *Coleus* family but this plant has a chunky pachycaul form. It was just coming into flower. Many plants with a caudex do not form the caudex when grown from cuttings, but this one does. *Peperomia dolabriformis* forms wimpy flowers, but if you remove them, it promptly forms new ones so now David just leaves it alone.

*Cotyledon ladismithiensis variegata* has succulent leaves which are a mixture of green and yellow. The plant has a nickname of "Cub's paws" due to the shape of the leaves. A clone of *Haworthia attenuata* selected from a group at Freshacres Nursery had fine markings on the back of the leaves. Next was a mesemb which he had obtained in the early days of forming his succulent plant collection. It was a *Monilaria* species, and he called it the "Churchill" plant because pairs of succulent leaves were growing in the shape of a "V". The plant spreads sideways and is dormant in the summer.

He had to bring along some *pelargoniums* on behalf of Margaret, and these were stem succulents and geophytes. *Pelargonium klinghardtense* can grow indoors and but likes a hot/dry situation. It forms a chunky caudex but can get etiolated. *P. barkleyi* is smaller and has hairy leaves, as does *P. appendiculatum* which has grey-green leaves carried on short stems..

*Senecio articulata f. varigata* would probably be very popular if it was introduced as a new plant. It grows upright stems which look like stumpy fingers.

Finally, there was a group of Aloe / Gasteria / Haworthia hybrids. These were plants that he had either created himself or acquired. Aloe cv. 'Doran Black' has leaves covered in white markings and it was in flower. *A. rauhii* x *A. descoinsii* and Aloe cv. White Diamond had interesting markings. There was also *Haworthia retusa* "White Ghost". A cross between *Gasteria batesiana* and *Aloe aristata* was especially warty, and David suggested that people come up and feel the plant's leaves during the break!

Thanks are due to Peter Down for providing the following write up of last month's talk.

### **Galivanting in South America**

Malcolm Pym from near Exeter was our speaker in February, and he talked about his 2 week trip to Argentina and Chile in the spring of 2005. The trip was organised by 'Willie' Smith in Argentina and Barry and Barbara Glower from the U.K. Besides several Brits there were two Argentinian lady cactus collectors (collectors being the right description, as it turned out) and a chap from Slovenia.

Malcolm has been known for some years for the quality of his 2¼" square slides, but for this talk he was going to show us images taken with a digital camera. With the aid of some diagrams, he proceeded to explain the principles of operation of digital projectors, and in his opinion, DLP projectors were preferred over LCD types since they produced images with better contrast. The projector used for the talk was a Benq PB8240 DLP projector.

We were shown a variety of maps during the talk indicating the area in the two countries where they were each day. It took the best part of the first day to travel across the level pampas area from Buenos Aires to Merlo. The first cacti seen were *Gymnocalycium achirasense* (*G. monvillei*), *Lobivia aurea* and *Notocactus submammulosus*, this is one of the westernmost growing notocacti. [I think it is trying to persuade us that it is a parodia!]. Lots of *Opuntia sulphurea* were seen, a few palms and a red flowered verbena, probably *V. peruviana*, which is widespread in the Andes.

San Augustin del Valle Fertil was the next destination, seeing *Tephrocactus articulatus*, *Echinopsis aurea*, *Echinopsis leucantha*, *Gymnocalycium ochoteranae*, *Trichocereus candicans*, *Harrisia pomanensis*, *Acanthocalycium violaceum*, *Gymnocalycium stellatum* and *Pyrrhocactus strausianus*. At Rio Las Tumanas, they found more *Gymnocalyciums* and *Parodia microsperma* ssp. *mesembrina* v *juanensis* which is rare in the UK. We saw an attractive *Portulaca* and the dwarf *Cereus aethiops*. Much of the next day was spent in the Parque Natural Ischigualasto (Moon Valley Park). There are amazing rock formations caused by erosion, but very few cacti apart from some *Denmoza rhodacantha* and 2 or 3 species of *Trichocereus*. We were shown the "field of balls" which consists of a collection of dozens of round rocks, ranging from 9" (23cm) to 16" (40cm) formed by the wind and weather.

Heading towards Chile, they saw *Tephrocactus articulatus* in various forms from dense papery spines to almost spineless, some large *Gymnocalyciums*, *G. saglionis* and *G. spegazzini*, *Trichocereus terscheckii*, some in flower and *Pyrrhocactus bulbocalyx*. All pyrrhocactus are difficult in cultivation. *Gymnocalycium capillaense* and a small *Puna*, a tiny member of the *Opuntia* group were also seen.

They then climbed to the pass over the Andes through beautiful scenery and ever-thinning air. The customs station at the border between Argentina and Chile was at about 5000 metres (well over 15,000 ft) above sea level. Malcolm and Roger had to receive some oxygen there, to cope with the altitude. No plant life is allowed into Chile so those that had collected plants boxed them up and posted them back to themselves. However, one of the Argentinian ladies collected plants between the two checkpoints. As the customs staff usually have little work to do, they are delighted to check everything crossing their border. The Argentinian lady was discovered with plants about her person and was immediately locked up, for smuggling. Willie Smith, a descendent of a British railway engineer some generations ago but very much an Argentinian was able to persuade the customs people that the lady was an Argentinian collecting wild plants from her own country and that the plants were destined to be re-planted in Argentina. Probably some money changed hands but eventually the lady was released without the plants. Willie had warned her!

The tour descended from the Andes and travelled west to the coast at Copiapo, seeing *Maihue niopsis*

*bolivianus*, *Echinopsis* (formerly *Trichocereus*) *formosa*, various *Tephrocacti* and *Cumulopuntia berteri* on the way. They then turned North, following the coast seeing *Copiapoas* in variety, and some dramatic ocean scenery. *Copiapoa calderana* being the first of them, *Eulychnia breviflora* was seen in flower and also bearing the tennis ball-sized fluffy seed pods. They were now amongst hundreds of *Copiapoas*: *C. marginata*, *C. cinerascens*, *C. columna-alba*, *C. cinerea*, and then a handsome *Rodentiophila* (now *Eriosyce*).

Malcom photographed some brown pelicans enjoying the sun on some coastal rocks. More *Copiapoas*, (*C. albispina*, *C. haseltoniana*, *C. gigantea*), and a yellow flowered legume (a member of the pea family) were encountered. As they crossed the tropic of Capricorn, a photo was taken of the tall stone "sculptures" denoting the seasons of the year by the position of shadows. Interesting wildlife in this area was shown - a giant tarantula and a pretty grey lizard.

Heading back towards Argentina, fine specimens of *Oreocereus leucotrichus* with a yellow look about them and *Trichocereus atacamensis* sometimes over 6 metres (20 feet) high were the dominant vegetation. They came to a salt lake where a cafe had been built from rock salt. The roof was something waterproof with a wide overhang, so that any water coming off the roof didn't dissolve away the walls. The tables and chairs were also made from rock salt. There was a souvenir shop selling rock salt objects - at this point, some wag from the audience asked if they sold any cruet sets!

At the lake were some extremely pink (almost red) flamingos. Apparently the pink colour comes from the shrimps and plankton that they eat. Up in the mountains, they got stuck in a swollen river for four hours (reminding me of a similar experience in Bolivia in 1992). Eventually they got some help and arrived at their hotel even later than normal, at 1:30am. Back in Argentina, there were lots of *Oreocereus celsianus* and *O. trollii* and a few *Pyrrhocactus umadeave*, a lovely plant. They were near the Bolivian border so went to the La Puica and Yava areas, to look for the recently discovered *Yavia cryptocarpa*. We saw some single headed plants and then one with 7 or 8 heads.

They then dropped south through Jujuy and Salta, seeing some *Blossfeldia liliputana*, *Cleistocactus hyalacanthus* and *C. smaragdiflorus* and *Trichocereus atacamensis* (hundreds of these). In the village of Purmamarca it was market day and

the stalls were very colourful with native craft goods and woollens. Just outside this place, *Gymnocalycium saglionis* grew to an enormous size, nearly 2 feet (60cm) across. Other *Gymnocalyciums* such as *G. spgazzini*, *G. catamarcense* and *G. baldianum* are found here.

They stayed at the beautiful Ruins of Quilmas hotel, where Geoff Card and I stayed in October 2004. It is a unique place in an amazing setting, with thousands of *Trichocereus* on the hills all around it. On their way to Cordoba, they visited the Parque de Cardones (Cereus Park) where *Stetsonia coryne* grew like trees. Some of these plants must have been over 200 years old. After a brief visit to the Tractor Museum, they set off to return to Buenos Aires.

We saw some lovely plants, I haven't mentioned all of them (thank goodness, I hear you say!) We saw some beautiful scenery in the Andes, lovely coastal scenes in Chile and several animal and birds with first class photos, so all around it was a very interesting talk especially as some in the audience had been to some of the places visited.

*Peter Down*

[Ed – I had misplaced the January table show results so they were omitted from last month's newsletter – but here they finally are:]

**Table Show – January 2006**

	<b>Cacti – Neoporteria or Copiapoa</b>	<b>Succulents – Adromischus</b>
Open	(1) B Beckerleg <i>C. longistaminea</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>C. susannae</i>
	(2) P Clemow <i>N. wagenknechtii</i>	(2) J Burnay <i>C. ovata</i>
	(3) -	(3) P Clemow <i>Adromischus</i> sp (Natal)
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Neoporteria villosa</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>A. marianae</i>
	(2) P Clemow <i>Neoporteria nidus</i>	(2) J Burnay <i>A. festivus</i>
	(3) R Courtney <i>Neoporteria subgibbosa</i>	(3) P Clemow <i>Crassula</i> cv. Jade Necklace

*Ivor Biddlecombe*

## Table Show – February 2006

There were 15 entries in the February table show.

	<b>Cacti – Echinocactus</b>	<b>Succulents – Agave</b>
Open	(1) T Grech Echinocactus grusonii	(1) J Roskilly Agave utahensis v. kaibensis
	(2) G Finn Ferocactus macrodiscus	(2) B Beckerleg Agave victoriae-reginae
	(3) P Clemow Ferocactus wislizeni	(3) T Grech Agave verschaffletii minor
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg Ferocactus macrodiscus	(1) P Clemow Agave toumeyana ssp.bella
	(2) G Finn Ferocactus acanthoides	(2) B Beckerleg Agave striata v. nana
	(3) P Clemow Ferocactus glaucescens	(3) -

Ivor Biddlecombe

## Next Month's Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 4<sup>th</sup> April, and will feature a talk titled "Tanquana Hunt" by Derek Tribble. *Tanquana* is a mesemb so presumably we'll be somewhere in South Africa. The last time Derek visited, he brought along and gave away a large variety of succulent cuttings, and fingers crossed that he'll do the same on this occasion.

The April table Show will consist of the **Opuntia** group (cacti) and the **Haworthia & Gasteria** groups (succulents). Please note that members are allowed to submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

The Opuntia group contains *Opuntia*, *Airampoa*, *Austrocylindropuntia*, *Brasiliopuntia*, *Consolea*, *Corynopuntia*, *Cumulopuntia*, *Cylindropuntia*, *Grusonia*, *Maihuenia*, *Maihueniopsis*, *Marenopuntia*, *Micropuntia*, *Nopalea*, *Pereskia*, *Pereskiopsis*, *Pterocactus*, *Puna*, *Quiabentia*, *Rhodocactus*, *Tacinga*, *Tephrocactus* and *Tunilla*.

The Haworthia and Gasteria groups contain *Haworthia*, *Astroloba*, *Chortolirion*, *Poellnitzia* and *Gasteria*.

A reminder for committee members that a committee meeting will be held on the **29<sup>th</sup> of March**. (Note that this meeting has been moved to a Wednesday).

## Forthcoming Events

Fri 17 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Isle of Wight	"Succulents other than Mesembs" – Suzanne Mace
Sat 18 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Portsmouth	"Chile 2003" – Angie Money
Wed 29 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Tue 4 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Southampton	"Tanquana Hunt" – Derek Tribble
Sat 15 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Sale
Sat 15 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Romsey	Spring Flower and Garden Show, Broadlands, Romsey
Mon 17 <sup>th</sup> Apr		
Fri 21 <sup>st</sup> Apr	Isle of Wight	"Alpines in Chile" – John Hughes
Tue 2 <sup>nd</sup> May	Southampton	Cultivation Evening

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