

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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## Editorial

The weather has continued to be milder than usual, and I think we only had one or two frosts in the whole of February. Lots of snow drops and daffodils are out in flower and many plants which should be dormant at this time of the year seem to have made an early start to their growing season. Perhaps it is too early to write off Winter, but I have already given my plants a couple of light waterings on days when the sun has been out. It remains to be seen whether the short rest will affect their growing and flowering later in the year. Actually I haven't got round to repotting anything so despite the weather, the plants are probably not too happy with me at the moment!

## Announcements

A reminder (if you have not already done so!) to renew your annual membership of the Society. This can be done using the forms that were sent out with the December journal, or online via the BCSS website ( <http://www.bcss.org.uk> ).

Because our meeting hall is unavailable on the usual Tuesday next month, there will be **no branch meeting in April**. (As a consequence, there will also be no newsletter!) However, just a few days into April, we will be taking part in the **Spring Flower and Garden Show**, at Broadlands, Romsey. We would appreciate some assistance for this 3 day event over the Easter Weekend since we are likely to have our hands full with Prickly Potting (letting young children pick out a plant and then help them pot it), plant sales and just talking to the public. Remember, if you help in our marquee then you are

entitled to free entry to the event – just use the back entrance (@ Romsey Rapids) and follow the signs for exhibitor car parking. If you are going to be able to help, please let Margaret or David Corina know.

The **May meeting** will be a **Mini-Show**, with 10 classes of plants. An information sheet is available from the front table which explains the groups of plants eligible for these classes. Please note that we are relying on members to bring along plants for entry into the show. During the first half of the meeting everyone will have a chance to judge each of the classes and write their choices on a marking sheet. These results will be collated and then in the second half, Cliff Thompson will explain how he would have ranked the plants and how his selection compares with the audience's choice.

## Last Month's Meeting

### Plants of Interest

Margaret Corina had volunteered to bring in *Plants of Interest*, and she mentioned it was difficult at this time of the year to find something interesting and which also looked attractive.

She started by suggesting that everyone should grow a selection of Mesembs because you'll have something in flower throughout the year. First was a *Ruschia stenophylla* in a 3" pot. *Ruschia* is a diverse genus, and the species range from small succulents to shrubs over a metre high. This particular plant had magenta flowers. Next was *Mitrophyllum latibracteatum*, which she had been growing for years and years and which had finally decided to flower. The plant was also in a 3" pot - it was 4 inches high and had yellow flowers. David Corina later mentioned that these plants might make good dyes - out in habitat, Margaret had slipped and landed on one of these plants – the succulent leaves stained her jeans and the mark had never come out!

*Marlothiostella uniondalensis* comes from Uniondale in the Little Karoo – this is a place that Margaret has been to, although she hadn't found the plant there. The plant was growing in a 3" pot, and it featured a number of pink/magenta buds.

*Delosperma sphalmanthoides* was the name of a tiny plant with magenta flowers growing in a 2" pot. It is well suited for ground cover in rock gardens, where it will form a low growing mat.

Next was a group of 4 pelargoniums which she had brought in to illustrate the different growth forms. *Pelargonium paniculatum* comes from Namibia, was very succulent and had green stems. It forms white flowers with dark tips. *Pelargonium triste* was the first pelargonium to be brought from South Africa to England. It is a geophyte with tuberous roots with carrot-like leaves. The name means sad (on account of the dark purple and yellow flowers which are also scented.) *Pelargonium rapaceum* has a warty stem forms pea-like flowers. It also forms a tuber. *Pelargonium cortusifolium* is a shrubby plant which hails from Namibia. This plant reminded her that it was always a good idea to give friends a piece of your plants – if you happen to kill it, you can ask them for a piece back!

Next was a unnamed species of Dipsacadi. This genus is a member of the Liliaceae. Margaret mentioned that the flowers had a very strange scent and advised people not to get too close to it during the break. The next pair of plants were rather more familiar – a pair of Lachenalias, named *L. bulbifera* and *L. pendula*, although now considered the same. Margaret didn't agree with this assessment - one has spotty leaves, the other doesn't. And although both have the inner tube of the flower protruding, one does so much more than the other.

Next was a Bulbine, and Margaret decided to quiz the audience by asking them the specific name. No one had any suggestions so she tried providing a clue – “Why would I have bought it?” No one was any wiser, so she eventually had to reveal the name as *Bulbine margarethae*. “It doesn't look like you!” was one comment from the audience.

*Whiteheadia bifolia* only forms two leaves. This specimen was only a baby, in habitat they can grow to a foot across. It has strange green flowers where the bracts are arranged in a stacked spiral pattern. The plant is a monocot.

Thanks are due to David Corina for providing the following write-up of last month's talk.

### **Succulents on a Shoestring**

Many of us were intrigued by the title of John Watmough's talk, and basically it was directed at two types of hobbyist. On the one hand, to

encourage people new to the hobby, especially youngsters who did not have much money and/or much space, and to those (he included himself here) who were restricted in the money they were allowed to spend on their hobby.

He outlined the various methods available to the hobbyist. First was plain stealing, which, of course, he disapproved of; or to beg or scrounge an offset or a cutting from the owner (who is usually quite pleased and happy to oblige, provided it is not a prize specimen). Thirdly were the alternatives of purchasing small, cheaper plants or raising from seed. Lastly was the possibility of acquiring plants from members who have had to give up the hobby. Unfortunately this often involved resurrecting a piece of a rather neglected specimen! John then spoke about a selection of plants that he had obtained by legitimate means with plants and slides.

Starting with a *Pelecophora*, a very elderly and tatty plant, for which a successful recovery achieved, and a cutting of a *Senecio* hybrid scrounged from Gordon Rowley, along with various other *Senecio* cuttings scrounged elsewhere. *Euphorbia pubiglans* was obtained as seed and a small-headed form of *Lophophora* as an offset. Other examples were obtained as gifts (often as complete plants that were no longer required by the owner), were *Crassula x marchandii*, *Matucana aureiflora*, *Thelocactus multicephala*, and an *Escobaria*. The Mesemb Study Group, through their seed and plant exchange (and often 'give-aways') were another source. Through this and other groups John had acquired an Aloe of horticultural origin from Pretoria (via Brian Conway), *Aloe hardyi* (a nice miniature) *Crassula justicorderoi*, *Zeuktophyllum suppositum* (named for its shape!), a *Monadenium*, *Orostachys*, *Stomatium*, *Senecio cordifolia*, a *Sedum*, and an *Ipomoea* (some of these apparently scrounged at National Shows).

Derek Tribble is also a generous donor of bits of plants, most notably Crassulaceae, which are shunned by many growers, according to John. These included bits of *Cotyledon woodii*, a *Gasteria* (most of which can be propagated from offsets or leaf cuttings), *Ceropegia stapeliiformis*, and an *Anacampteros*. Moving to 'cheap' plants or bargains, John mentioned browsing garden centres, which normally have no idea about succulents! Here were *Senecio* cv. 'Himalaya', a large *Cheiridopsis peculiaris*, *Hesperaloe parviflora* (a member of the agave family, with attractive red flowers) and *Rhinophyllum broomii* growing as a weed in another pot. [Your scribe once found a nice

*Melocactus matanzanus* going cheap in the local branch of Haskins!]

Continental wholesale nurseries, which are not normally open to the public but can be visited by arrangement on organised trips (see Newsletter December 2006) can be a source of very cheap plants with often a huge choice, examples were *Encephalocarpus* and *Astrophytum*.

For those prepared to attempt a resurrection, most plants, with care and patience, can be rescued from offsets or other relatively undamaged bits (cuttings) e.g. *Agave minima variegata* and *Aloe pretoriensis* (possibly a hybrid) in which case both must be propagated vegetatively.

John then moved on to discuss some hints on rescuing bits as cuttings and also to seed raising. He recommended a warm sand bed is useful for re-rooting things as diverse as mesembs such as *Glottiphyllum* and *Dinteranthus* and cacti, such as offsets of *Neolloydia*. As is the case with some seeds, it important to know when the subject's growing season is to avoid sowing or watering at the wrong time of year. Homing more onto raising from seed, probably the cheapest and often the only way to get new plants. John harvests seed from his own plants wherever possible, although some species are reluctant to set seed, or as the case for euphorbias, a plant of each sex are often required, and only 1-3 seeds produced per capsule (and then one needs special devices to capture the seeds when they are forcibly ejected from the pod). Examples were *Mammillaria theresae* and a *Neowerdemannia*.

The second half was devoted to the slides, and began with views of John's greenhouses and views of his 'economy' methods for saving heat, and other home-made bits of growing aids. The slides covered much of the ground and plants already discussed, but also included some shots of plants that he did not succeed with. Different plants were then discussed, including more beginners' plants such as *Aloe variegata*. Like many of us, he thought that this plant, were it to be introduced now, would be considered choice, but it is easily propagated. Just as well, as in habitat it is now not common, and often occurs on sites well protected by ostriches!

Further examples followed. The choice *Jovibarba sovijetta*, (a close relation to *Sempervivum*, and can be grown outside); an unnamed *Senecio* from near the Limpopo river, and *Thelocactus lausseri*. Many other plants were discussed, mainly from seed, e.g. *Lophophora v. lewinii* (an obsolete name, but worth keeping the labels if they include collection data), *Mammillaria coccinea*, *M. senilis*, *M. hernandezii*,

*M. yaquensis* (via a piece hooked onto John's jumper, a plant that is very 'tenacious' and has well-hooked spines), *Crassula alcicornis* (once believed extinct, it is herbaceous and dies down to a resting little tuber in summer), various *Discocactus* and *Opuntia* group plants. Some stapeliads he had propagated (by cuttings) included *Stultitia hardii* (keep pruned) and *Ceropegia sandersonii* (easy), but *C. conrathii* is difficult – try tips of stems and rooting hormone containing a fungicide. Mesembs are usually easy from cuttings, but newer, green pieces are preferred to old, woody stems on the more woody species.

For highly succulent species such as *Lithops* and *Conophytum*, it is essential go deep enough so as to include a piece of true stem (meristem) down under the leaves otherwise success is doubtful! Other mesembs mentioned include *Eberlanzia spinosa* (now *E. sedoides*), *Jensenobotrya lossowiana* (comes from the foggy coastline of Namibia), *Aptenia* (suitable for a sheltered rock garden), *Didymaotus* (often poor germination), *Dinteranthus*, and of course the readily available *Lithops* from seed, and also *Aloinopsis* from seed. Due regard should be given to ascertain the correct time of year for sowing (and watering) many of the 'other succulents'.

Others were *Crassula mesembryanthoides*, *Adromischus phillipsae* and *A. fallax*, *Orostachys* (large terminal flower spike; sometimes included in with *Sedum*, another genus very easy from cuttings). *Dioscoria (Testudinaria)* has to be propagated from seed, as do many euphorbias, although it is worth trying root cuttings of *E. pubiglans*; *E. stellaespina* seed germinates well. Yet others are *Talinum* (prolific self-sower), many *Senecios*, and *Oxalis* (but be careful as some can become self-sown weeds). For those with the room, *Cussonia spicata* is the best species. (Most others eventually form small trees, although I have grown a potted *C. paniculata* outside in a very sheltered spot for two years. It not really even an 'honorary' succulent in my opinion!)

For the cacti, most can be grown from seed, although miniatures like *Blossfeldia* require extreme care as they are very small; many benefit from being grafted at the large seedling stage (if you feel brave enough to try!), *Weingartia neumanniana* seedlings and small cuttings look almost identical when small. *Frailea cataphracta*, as for most *Frailea*, makes lots of seed, often without the flowers opening (cleistogamy). Further good subjects include *Astrophytum*, *Ariocarpus* (slow! most initial growth is underground), *Echinocereus davisii*,

*Gymnocactus*, *Turbinicarpus*, *Neowerdemannia vorwerkii*, and *Mammillaria theresae* (a good seed producer).

John ended his talk with a few more tips on propagation. Altogether it was an undemanding, enjoyable 'light' presentation, enlivened in many places with examples of John's dry wit.

David Corina

## January's Talk

[Ed – I was unable to include a write-up of the photos which Tony Grech showed us in January in the last newsletter, but here is the delayed article.]

The final set of digital pictures that we saw in January were taken by Tony Grech, who wanted to show some of his plants in flower. Most of the pictures were taken against a plain background, which is a good idea to avoid any distractions from the main subject. Some of the plants had labels in their pots but Tony was not sure about the names of some of the others, so he let David Neville provide a commentary on the plants.

We started with a magenta-flowered *Chamaecereus* or *Chamaelobivia* hybrid, a pale pink flowered *Mammillaria bocasana* and a *Gymnocalycium* with pale yellow flowers which had darkish tips on the petals. *Rebutia krainziana* is a fairly typical *Rebutia*, but easy to identify thanks to its characteristic spination. This particular plant had orange-yellow flowers. We then saw a few more *Chamaecereus* or *Chamaelobivia* hybrids. There's a large variety of these hybrids in cultivation - although somewhat prone to red spider, they are undemanding and well worth growing since most produce lots of flowers. *Rebutia senilis kesselringiana* was covered in glassy spines and had yellow flowers - the typical *senilis* has red flowers. We saw a young plant of *Thelocactus lloydii* with a white flower which obscured the plant body, and a stunning plant of *Mammillaria guelzowiana* had five or six magenta flowers open. Someone from the audience mentioned that this plant tends to be short lived and dies after just a few years, so it's worth starting off new plants of this every few years.

*Mammillaria glassii* had several bodies in a small pot with red hooked centrals and a nice rose pink flower. *Mammillaria zeilmanniana alba* has white flowers. A 2-headed *Notocactus (Parodia) scopa* had neat spines and a cluster of flower buds with 2 glossy pale yellow flowers open, and more on the way. *Chamaelobivia* cv. 'Pauline' has deep magenta

flowers and distinctive plant bodies which make the plant easy to identify. *Gymnocalycium mihanovichii* is also easy to identify - this plant had a dark brown body with a solitary pink flower which was as wide as the plant itself. The next *Mammillaria* had rose-coloured flowers and hooked central spines, but no-one was able to volunteer a guess as to the name. The next *Mammillaria* had a complete circle of 20 flowers, but again no one was sure of the name.

Next was another clone of *Mammillaria zeilmanniana alba* with a ring of white flowers. *Mammillaria albilanata* was neatly spined and also carried a ring of small magenta flowers, with some wool in the crown. *Rebutia perplexa* was covered in 25 pink blooms and David mentioned it was one of the best pink-flowered *rebutias*. A red flowered *Chamaecereus silvestri* might possibly have been a hybrid. *Pelecyphora aselliformis* had one magenta flower - it has characteristic neat comb-like spines.

This was followed by a *Stenocactus*, the species of which are hard to name at the best of times. *Lobivia arachnacantha* had large white flowers; the next plant was a sprawling *Echinocereus* (possibly *salm-dyckianus*) with a glowing red flower. There were a couple more *Chamaecereus* plants - one had peach star-shaped flowers with narrow pointed petals and the other had red flowers, similar to a *Lobivia*.

*Parodia mutabilis* had a cluster of several orange flowers which completely hid the top of the plant. *Mammillaria magnifica* had a partial ring of carmine pink flowers close to the crown of the plant - it also had very long spines. *Rebutia buiningiana* had orange red flowers; next we saw a couple of shots of a large white flower on a *Trichocereus* plant. This was followed by *Echinocereus fitchii* (possibly *Echinocereus melanocentrus*) sporting a pair of large magenta flowers. The body of *Astrophytum ornatum* was nicely marked with white flecks and it had a nice pale yellow flower. *Mammillaria surculosa* was covered in lots of criss-crossing spines and had attractive yellow flowers which David said were citrus scented.

We then saw a 2-headed specimen of *Mammillaria matudae* which had rings of deep magenta flowers on both heads. One of the stems was leaning towards the edge of the pot and David said this plant often preferred to hang over the side. There was another example of a *Mammillaria guelzowiana* - this was a smaller plant in a 3" pot with a solitary flower - the flower petals were shorter but wider than the earlier example. *Mammillaria candidae* forms a fine mesh of white spines which cover the body and which has small white flowers with brown

midstripes on the petals. *Gymnocalycium andreae* has strong incurving spines and a white flower with a brown midstripe on the back of the petals.

The next plant was labelled *Notocactus turickensis* but this does not appear to be a valid name. The plant had quite broad central spines and the flowers were pale yellow with a red stigma. There were a couple of unnamed *Echinopsis* plants with white and magenta flowers respectively and a fairly typical yellow flowered *Weingartia*. *Copiapoa humilis* was a dark bodied plant with a small yellow flower and black/grey spines. *Gymnocalycium horridispinum* had long spines and a pale pink flower which had not opened fully. *Mammillaria spinosissima* cv. pico had a good collection of pink flowers around its head : this is an unusual mutant with no radial spines. We also saw several shots of a tall *Trichocereus* with a large white flower.

*Echinocereus pentalophus* had untidy spines but a large pink flower with green stigmas. An orange flowered *Parodia* was quite attractive, with the ribs displaying a nice twist down the plant body. *Echinocereus audustus* bore a couple of large magenta flowers with silky petals and nice fine spines along the ribs, and this was followed by a red *Gymnocalycium baldianum*, a pale pink *Gymnocalycium mostii* and a cream flowered *Neoperteria*.

An epiphyllum had unsightly stems for bodies, but the large flower (several inches across) was stunning, with dark pink outer petals and light pink inner petals. *Echinocereus subinermis* is easy to recognise – it has a dark green body with small spines and the flowers are yellow with green stigmas. *Parodia peniculata* had glassy white spines and had orange flowers. A top of a *Correocactus* bore a salmon pink flower containing many anthers. Tony said that the flower was around 4 to 5 inches across.

*Echinoocereus pulchellus* had a lumpy body with short spines and a magenta flower. *Notocactus crassigibbous* bore three attractive pale yellow flowers with slender petals which completely hid the plant body. *Mammillaria rekoii* had a ring of pink flowers around the crown and long hooked centrals. *Gymnocalycium bruchii* had neat spines on the bodies and pale pink flowers and we saw an *Echinocereus* with a typical long-tubed white flower. *Astrophytum ornatum* had a creamy yellow flower and a *Weingartia* had yellow flowers with petals which were all ruffled backwards, giving them an unusual but attractive appearance. Another spinier *Weingartia* had yellow flowers each of

which contained one or two red-tipped petals. *Astrophytum myriostigma* had a whitish flower and we saw another *Epiphyllum* flower with pink petals and a darker midstripe. This was followed by shots of a pink *Echinopsis* hybrid and *Echinopsis aurea*. which had 5 cup-shaped yellow flowers. We also saw a red flowered *Trichocereus*, a pale pink *Echinopsis* hybrid and an *Aporophyllum* (which is a cross between *Aporocactus* and *Ephiphyllum*) with orange-red flowers. This was followed by another rose-pink *Echinopsis*, a white flowered *Gymnocalycium* which had produced lots of baby offsets along its ribs, and *Notocactus roseoluteus* which has glossy pink flowers with yellow centres.

We ended with a larger specimen of *Echinocereus subinermis* with seven yellow flowers, a pink flowered *Notocactus ottonis* v. *vencluanus*, a yellow flowered *Dolicothele* (perhaps *sphaerica*), the white flowered *Gymnocalycium saglionis*, and finally *Astrophytum capricorne* which had long curly spines and a large yellow flower with lots of anthers and a red colouring in the throat.

Vinay Shah

**Table Show Results**

There were 12 entries in the table show at the February meeting.

	<b>Cacti – Rebutia Group</b>	<b>Succulents – Echeveria Subgroup</b>
Open	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Sulcorebutia rauschii</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Echeveria lilacina</i>
	(2) J Burnay <i>Weingartia</i> sp.	(2) J Roskilly <i>Echeveria agavoides</i> cv 'Ebony'
	(3) –	(3) J Roskilly <i>Graptopetalum bellum</i>
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Rebutia perplexa</i>	(1) J Burnay <i>Echeveria</i> cv. 'Topsy Turvy'
	(2) J Roskilly <i>Sulcorebutia arenacea</i>	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Echeveria laui</i>
	(3) –	(3) J Roskilly <i>Echeveria lindsayia</i> ?

Ivor Biddlecombe

## Next Month's Meeting

There will be no branch meeting in April, so the next meeting will be held on May 1<sup>st</sup>. This will take the form of a Mini-Show. A leaflet detailing the eligible classes is available from the front table – or if you forgot to pick up a copy, the information will also be available from our website. Please do make an effort to bring along some plants to enter into the show. The audience will get a chance to judge the 10 classes and afterwards, Cliff Thompson will take us through his views on the best plants in each class.

As mentioned earlier, if you happen to have some spare time over the Easter weekend, please do consider helping out at the Spring Flower and Garden Show at Broadlands. The Show usually attracts a number of nurseries, selling many types of garden plants.

There will be no table show at the May meeting.

## Forthcoming Events

Fri	16 <sup>th</sup>	Mar	Isle of Wight	"India Revisited" – Doug Donaldson
Sat	17 <sup>th</sup>	Mar	Portsmouth	"Haworthias in Habitat & Cultivation" – Derek Tribble
Mon	19 <sup>th</sup>	Mar	Southampton	Committee Meeting (@ 79 Shirley Avenue)
Tue	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Apr	Southampton	No Meeting – hall unavailable
Sat	7 <sup>th</sup>	Apr	Romsey	Display & Plant Sales at Spring Flower and Garden Show, Broadlands, Romsey
Sat	9 <sup>th</sup>	Apr		
Fri	20 <sup>th</sup>	Apr	Isle of Wight	"Argentina – Part 1" – Cliff Thompson
Sat	21 <sup>st</sup>	Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Sale
Tue	1 <sup>st</sup>	May	Southampton	Branch Mini-Show (Judging Explained – Cliff Thompson)

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