

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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## Editorial

There was only one day of snow last month – but unfortunately it fell at exactly the wrong time, causing us to cancel the February Branch meeting. Although conditions around Southampton and the immediate area weren't too bad, several of our members (and the speaker) would have had more treacherous and icy roads to deal with on the evening of the meeting. Hopefully the worst of winter is behind us – certainly the last few days of sunny weather make it feel like spring is almost here.

## Announcements

The **May branch meeting** will be our annual '**Cultivation and Propagation Workshop**' evening, with a range of demonstrations and discussions on various topics. The branch committee has come up with a selection of subjects to be covered during the evening (more details in the April newsletter), but if you have any suggestions or requests please contact David Neville to let him know what you would like us to include. Alternatively, if you would like to lead a discussion or demonstration on any topic please speak to David as soon as possible.

One of the new things we would like to do at the May meeting is to have a '**Spare Plants Exchange**' table. We would like everyone to bring along seedlings, cuttings and offsets for which they would

like to find new homes. Everyone participating can arrange swaps of their plants with other people who have bought along plant material, or can offer their items for sale to everyone at the meeting, we suggest a nominal price of 50p. Ideally participants won't need to hand over any money, because they will be able to arrange plant swaps with other people.

The 'Spare Plants Exchange' table will be quite separate from the regular plant sales tables. If it proves to be successful we will consider organising further opportunities to do the same thing in the future.

Of course, if you have lots of plants and propagations that you would like to offer for sale on a regular basis you are welcome to bring them along to any branch meeting for selling on the plant sales tables. Any plants offered for sale on the regular monthly sales tables should have a separate label bearing your initials and the price; this will be removed upon sale and your takings will be given to you at the end of the meeting, less 10% sales commission for branch funds.

Michelle Fox-Rousell has a large plant of *Rhipsalis pilocarpa* which has flowered and is growing well – however it has got too large for her and she would like to exchange it for a *Ceropegia* or *Hoya* – if anyone is interested in doing a swap, please see Michelle at today's meeting!

## Members' Mini Talks

Things didn't get off to a good start since I had forgotten the connecting leads for the digital projector at home! This necessitated a rush home to fetch the leads while the audience amused themselves (by holding the raffle a little bit earlier than normal!)

**Ben Turner** described a visit to Brooklyn Botanic Gardens. Whilst not as big as New York's main botanical garden, what struck him was the number and variety of cacti and succulents (cacti in particular) actually being grown outside in the rock garden display and elsewhere in the garden. We saw a couple of general shots. New York does get pretty

cold in the winter – it can receive a lot of snow and the temperature goes well below freezing. He was impressed with the number of cacti being growing outside. Although he's mainly into growing succulents, he is also interested in hardy cacti, so if anyone knows of cacti that can tolerate British winters outdoors, do let him know. It's the Opuntias and relatives which are generally viewed as reliably hardy, and he did see several Opuntias here.

In the Rock garden, the labelling was pretty good although this one wasn't – it was probably an *O. robusta*. There were also plenty of labels which seemed to refer to plants that weren't there any more. *Echinocereus fendleri v. fendleri* (pink flower hedgehog cactus). One of their remits is to grow plants that are native to the US, so there were plants from the Southwest and one or two from the East coast. The plant seemed to be doing quite well with a couple of new heads growing. He also found a couple of plants of *Escobaria vivipara v. rosea* - a diminutive plant, but doing well. David Neville said it grows all the way up to Canada and is really hardy. Another Opuntia was not labelled but featured some nice glochids. There was a label for *Echinocereus viridiflorus* – the “nylon hedgehog cactus” - but he didn't see any plant there, so it may have succumbed. *Opuntia aurea* was the golden prickly pear. There were a few agaves and mesembs too. *Opuntia basilaris* is the beaver tailed prickly pear. He had thought this was a more tender plant and spineless – but here it was quite spiny. Further on he did find *O. basilaris v. basilaris* and this plant didn't have spines. The plant is usually easy to recognise since the pads are usually cordate (heart shaped). He also found *O. basilaris* var. *brachyclada*. Next was a plant which grows all over New Jersey - in people's front gardens and right out into the country too - *Opuntia humifusa*, which is also known as *O. compressa*. It extends up the East coast to Canada. It has lovely yellow flowers and masses of pink fruits too. It was really attractive and did not seem too fussy about where it was growing – he found it in the native plant garden and also in another spot near one of the ponds and under pine trees. He did collect a seed head and brought home the seeds - Paul Klaassen mentioned you can also propagate this species from the fruits.

In the Native Flora Garden, in a display of eastern coastal plants, there were grasses and helichrysum (everlasting) flowers. Here were some *Cylindropuntia* types - *Opuntia imbricata* ‘White Towers’ with slender stems and white spines. This was not a variety he was familiar with. David said the species usually has thicker stems than that. Another hardy one was *Opuntia polyacantha* – it appeared to have been here a few seasons. There

was also variety erinacea with nice long spination. This plant is not easy to grow, it seems very sensitive to moisture. *Opuntia polyacantha v. hystricina* was the grizzly bear prickly pear. Ben mentioned the common names were quite interesting – there's an *Eryngium* – a sea holly – which is known as the rattlesnake master. Paul Klaassen said that in one of the national parks, he had spoken to some of the experts there and he was told that by law they were not allowed to use the latin names, because the parks are there for the people and not for academics, and people in general would not understand the complex latin names. Unfortunately, these common names tend to vary from state to state, so they are not exactly reliable.

Agaves are one of his favourites and the featured plant was *Agave toumeyana v. bella*, with proliferatype markings. It doesn't get very big. Something he found interesting was *Agave victoria-reginae* ‘Aureo Marginata’ which was in a tropical bedding scheme and probably taken in for the winter. There were a group of three of these off to the side and if the plants were being grown in this country, they would probably have been pinched. It is a choice plant, and these were most likely micro-propagated clones. In the desert house there were various succulents and cacti and one which stuck out was *Manfreda maculosa* - the parent of some of the hybrids that Stuart Riley sells. *Manfreda virginica* is a plant which is totally hardy and almost herbaceous in this country and sold as a hardy garden plant. It dies back in the winter. Ben showed an overall view of the desert house – there was nothing special, although *Alluaudia montagnacii* from Madagascar stood out – it is a bit different from the commoner species *A. ascendens*.

**Sue Wilson** was next and her talk was titled “Autumn Flowers in the Peloponnese 2014”. She and Mark had visited Greece last November, hoping in particular to see cyclamen and crocus in flower. They used the book *Flowers of Greece and the Balkans*, by Oleg Polunin as their reference. They flew to Athens and drove south west, spending 3 days in the mountain areas before going to Gythio and the two peninsulas.

It was early November and there was already snow on the mountains, with Mount Chelmos being prominent. There was some alpine flora to see, including *Scabiosa crenata* with small furry leaves. In the limestone was the milk vetch, *Astragalus parnassi*. It is very spiny and was coming into flower. Sheep and goats graze here so it must be unpalatable. The first crocus they came across was *Crocus cancellatus* ssp. *mazzariicus* – it has very pale purple stripes in the centre. They moved down

the country, to another mountain range, just west of Sparta. They did try and go to the historical site of the old town (Mistras) but when they got there, the gates were due to shut in an hour and it was too large area to explore in that short time. The first euphorbia they encountered was *Euphorbia rigida*. *Cyclamen graecum* had attractive leaf markings – these vary greatly in terms of leaf shape and colours.

*Sternbergia lutea* ssp. *sicula* were restricted in where they grew but they could see the yellow colour of the flowers on the sides of the road as they were going to Sparta. A picture of a car on a road next to some sheep was not an example of someone overtaking, it was actually the shepherd driving the car, and it's a fairly common sight over there. The next picture show Mark having a bit of a snooze after lunch. After going down to the Mani Peninsula, they found *Euphorbia acanthothamnos* - the Greek spiny spurge. A small road led to abandoned olive grove terraces. These were good hunting grounds and they found cyclamen (*Cyclamen graecum*) and crocus (*Crocus goulimi*, and *Crocus boryi* – with long stamens) everywhere. Sue explained that Naturetrek do trips that month and they had checked beforehand where they go.

Sue mentioned that due to hard economic times, some people from the towns and villages were coming back to the old abandoned orchards and were restoring them. These restored orchards were better when looking for bulbs in flower. *Colchicum pusillum* reminded us that Colchicium is a member of the Lily family whereas Crocus belongs in Iris. *Arisarum vulgare* was from the Arum family. *Lilium candidum* had huge leaves and does also go under the name Madonna lily. *Narcissus serotinus* has star-shaped white flowers. They also found *Scilla autumnalis* and *Spiranthes spiralis* - the latter having spiral of white flowers growing up the stalk.

Down at the seaside at Gythio, a roman wall had been eroded away. There's a shipwreck which has been there for many years. She also saw old pot handles in the ground but didn't dare pick any up since there are strict laws about collecting artefacts. On the beach they found *Euphorbia peplis*, the Purple Spurge, and another colchicum - *Colchicum cupanii*. Next we saw Mark standing in front of Monemvasia – which reminded her of The Hobbit and “Middle Earth”. This is an amazing village which has been there 100s of years. It was late afternoon but there weren't many people about. They saw *Euphorbia dendroides*, the tree spurge and more cyclamen and some views of the town of Gythio. Gythio has a small island which is covered in crocus and cyclamen and other bulbs. *Ecballium elaterium* is the squirting cucumber - if you touch the

ripe fruits, they explode, squirting out seeds and water. They found *Cyclamen graecum* with a darker pattern on the leaf and more *Crocus goulimi*. Sue ended by saying that if you wanted to see cyclamen or crocus in the wild, this was well worth a visit.

After the mid-meeting break, it was **Paul Klaassen's** turn to present. He mentioned that he does quite a few talks, and 2-3 years ago Rudolf Schulz from New Zealand mentioned they were having trouble getting decent speakers for the Australian convention. Paul told Rudolf he was willing to do it and got an invite. His name was misspelt on the printed programme but this meant he got numerous apologies and more name drops than anyone else. The event was a three day convention in Brisbane Australia, and in his case, it was all expenses paid and he had a wonderful time. Other speakers at the event included Karen Zimmerman from the Huntingdon Institute in the US and Tok Schoeman from Windhoek, Namibia, but Tok was ill and couldn't come, so Ernst van Jaarsveld from South Africa came in his place. The flight was from Heathrow to Singapore to Brisbane with the first leg taking 13 hours 50 minutes, and then a further 7 hours and 35 minutes, with a 5 hour stopover.

We saw some pictures of their hosts Ruth and John Higgins, along with Karen Zimmerman and wife Debra (they are from California!) taken outside Ruth and John's garden. They were taken out for a sightseeing trip and a drive through town showed some very modern architecture along with some greenery between the buildings, which could be identified using Atilla Kapitany's book *Australian Succulent Plants*. He was taken to the hall where they used to have their annual cactus show. There are some impressive pachycauls from Australia, the prime example being *Brachychiton rupestris*, the Australian Bottle Tree. Out in the countryside, these have been destroyed in the areas surrounding the town, but there were some specimens within the town which are quite impressive. Basically, on different continents, plants have arrived at the same solution. Young plants are not quite bottle shaped. If the tree has a chain around it, that's probably a good indication that it's worth crossing the chain to have a picture taken.

They went to the Roma St. Parklands – where there was a track labelled Bottletree Ridge, with some of the plants bedded out. There was also Cycad Avenue. Brisbane seems to be a nice mixture of tall impressive buildings and lots of parkland in between. People like to pose hugging the trees but Paul warned that sometimes the bark can have spikes. A cycad was in flower and had formed huge cone. They went on to the Lone Pine Koala

Sanctuary. The animals can be a bit smelly due to their diet. He had a few pictures taken and also paid \$5 for the official photo opportunity – where he was advised to not scare them since they tend to urinate if they feel threatened! There were lots of lizards running around.

For the convention itself, the first day was an outing to three nurseries/private collections with two coachloads of people. The plant sales at the convention were a little disappointing. One of the visits was to “Plantation 2000” where they saw some a tree covered in huge stag’s horn ferns. Australia is very strict about imported plants and a quarantine area was set aside as a test area to see how likely it was the plants would escape into the wild. There were lots of big pachycaul plants from Madagascar, and lots of Melocacti. It was only October, but the weather was quite warm. There were two nurseries at the same garden which were very impressive and the retired owners Lou & Tish Randall made them welcome. A cover protected the plants from the sunshine. Some of the plants featured black L shaped metal posts with white label stuck on – these labels would probably last as long as the plant. To make up for the lack of rare or choice plants, they grow Epiphyllums and Bromeliads We saw a picture of Attila Kapitany looking at some Tillandsias and also a closeup of an Orthophytum (bromeliad) which Karen was eyeing up.

Back at the convention, the plant sales area was pitch dark until someone found the light switch. The plant sales were quite disappointing compared to what we see here - the range of plants was nothing particularly rare or choice. The raffle was \$5 per ticket, with the prizes featuring paintings of cacti/succulent flowers by Brisbane artist Maria Field. We saw Ruth Higgins, president of the Queensland Society, giving the welcoming speech. In the audience was Ernst van Jaarsveld, along with Atilla Kapitany and Victor Aprozeanu next to him. He also ran into a friend of Ernst’s called Pablo Weisser, who was a Chilean who lives near Ricardo Keim, in the area where Friedrich Ritter used to live. Pablo used to work as a student collecting material for Ritter and he had some interesting stories to recount.

It was time for more visits to collections. Here the plants were in strong cages, to keep the climate out and provide support for shade clothes, as well as allowing plants like epiphytes and bromeliads to be hung. Paul Forster’s collection was somewhat less tidy but there were still interesting plants to see. The next collection was at Bob and Judi Proctor and we saw them preparing for a barbecue. Although they

had a large garden, it was now 45°C outside so people just remained near the veranda – it was only 32°C in the shade! Only mad dogs and Englishmen and the odd Dutchman would go out to take pictures! It was very dry but he found a few things to photograph, including some little Mexican figures dotted around the place, and some plantings of hybrid agaves. The following day was the start of talks at the convention - 87 people attended, all from Australia and New Zealand. His talk was “Fog - a cloud that is in contact with the ground” and he spoke for 56 minutes on this!

On his last day, Ruth and John took him to Steve Irwin’s *Australia Zoo*. Steve died a few years from a stingray attack but his kids and wife still run the Zoo. After some shots of crocodiles, we saw a spiny anteater which Paul said was very smelly and a koala with very long fingernails. We also saw Paul beside a kangaroos and a snake – a constrictor type – which was safely behind some glass. The final picture was of Paul posing in the mouth of a gigantic Crocodile sculpture.

**David Neville** was our next speaker. He showed some pictures from the summer of 2011, when he drove out to the Czech Republic, to visit 2-3 nurseries and see some collections of private growers. Just as he was leaving, Ciprian Suta asked if he could go along and this helped out with the driving. They left the Solent area at 10pm one evening, crossed using the Channel tunnel and then drove through France and Germany, finally arriving east of Prague at 4pm the next day. They spent the following 2-3 days there. The Czechs have the longest history in Europe of cultivating Cacti and there are many famous Czech collectors and growers. The first collection we would see was a very impressive collection at the outskirts of Prague, and belonging to Libor Mejstřík. Behind his house was a large polycarbonate tunnel and we saw a view into this greenhouse. The place was packed with plants. There was lots of ventilation and sturdy galvanised staging, with lots of shelving. Winters in that part of Europe are severe, so growers tend to pile everything into one heated glass house. Libor had a big collection of plants in very good condition, but these were mainly smaller, younger plants since he hadn’t been growing them that long.

We saw some general shots of the plants. *Gymnocalycium prochazkianum* has a nice bluish-grey body and remains flat and disc shaped – it was the first time he’d seen it in the flesh. Libor grows a lot of seed and the greenhouse was immaculate. We also saw many nice blue bodied plants of *Echinocactus horizonthalionus* – this is a very slow growing choice plant. These were virtually all

grafted - this species is very slow and tricky from seed, so is nearly always grown grafted - but it stays typical even on a graft. There were platforms in the centre - with seedlings on top but this was arranged so as to not affect light to other seedlings below. Everything was very clean and tidy. A *Coryphantha* introduced in the last decade is *Coryphantha kracikii*, named after the Czech Karel Kracik. It has beautiful supination, with centrals only developing once it matures - there were no centrals on the young plants. The number and strength of spines also increases with age. We could see the variations between plants due to different habitat collected seeds. The plant is harder to grow than most *Corys* but it is starting to appear in collections more and more. Another choice species is *Coryphantha werdermannii* - but it is very variable. Again the centrals develop later in life. Libor quite liked *Ariocarpus* and we saw lots of young plants in 2¾ inch pots. All of these were grafted - David said this was fairly common in Czech collections and also other parts of Europe as well. Nearly all the *Ariocarpus* had habitat collection data on the labels.

Some of the things he was growing from seed were smaller, slower growing things and he put multiple plants in a pot to take us less room. Examples of this were *Turbinicarpus*, *Pelecyphora* and *Epithelantha*. Some of the plants were already several years old and starting to flower, and you could see the buds on the plants. There were all sorts of other things here as well. We saw a cristate *Epithelantha* amongst the others, and it had come up from seed. He had lots of *Echinocereus* which grow quite fast and these were fairly immature plants. Goodness knows what he would do in 2 or 3 years' time. One of his quotes was "I never get rid of any, I like to keep all the variations" - well he would soon need to build another greenhouse! His collection is remarkable because he also works 5 days a week. He had a decent collection of *Stenocactus*. There are issues with this genus of how many species there really are. When grown well the plants feature copious white wool and have wonderful spination. One labelled *S. vaupelianus* had very short spines but was still attractive. He had a lot of *Epithelanthas* too. The plants featured different labels but many of them look the same. Paul Klaassen said that someone at ELK had told him that the spine clusters are quite different. Most look like micromeris. *E. unguispina* is a bigger faster growing variety which produces black centrals eventually. *E. bokei* has very short spines.

Next was a picture of Libor and Ciprian. Libor had some bigger plants of *Ariocarpus* - mostly grafted - with lovely white wool in the crowns. We saw some typical *A. retusus* and *A. trigonus* - and somewhere

between the two *A. confusus* which has varying flower colours. *Obregonias* are beautiful when grown well. Don't water these from the top to avoid spoiling the white wool in the crown. They can be tricky to grow sometimes and it's another plant that grows quite well on a graft. *Copiapoas* are always popular in collections. We saw *C. cinerea* and *C. krainziana*, up on top and along the side were lots of seedlings and David was hoping to buy some from Libor for growing on and selling. All the seedlings were growing in shallow punnets and when tightly packed they were pushing one another up in a mound. Outside the greenhouse there were cold frames everywhere and these were also full up of plants and seedlings. Another building was half brick half double glazed, with some wood trim and UPVC double glazing. Tender plants such as *Melocactus* and *Discocactus* were kept here. Even if you keep *Discocactus* warm, they are best grown on grafts. Some were growing woolly crowns and starting to produce cephaliums and the magnificent white nocturnal flowers. Some of the smaller growing *Discocacti* (*D. araneispinus*, *D. boomianus* and one of the most famous, *D. horstii*), all come from Brazil and need high temperatures all year around.

*Uebelmannia* are not as sensitive. *U. pectinifera* is a plant which everyone admires with the vertical ribs, black spines and purplish epidermis. In this building were also seedlings - the current year's sowings. There were multiple levels of shelves, with lights under each shelf. The red dots in the soil were acadama or seramis. The small seedlings looked like they were *Epithelanthas*. Most of the seedlings were from his own seed but he had also bought thousands of packets of habitat collected seed. There was plenty of shelving to accommodate plants from the cold frames. There were more plants in cold frames outside We saw *Sulcos* and other propagations for sale - many were in flower. There were plenty to choose from - it was a case of digging up the plants from trays and sticking them in a bag with the name written on. This was ideal for him since it took up less space than potted plants.

Now on to another collection near Prague - this belonged to Karel Rijs - who was in his late 70s or perhaps even 80s. These were old fashioned metal framed greenhouses, with the glass all discoloured - the place was nearly as ancient as Karel! Again all the available space was being used - you had to stand on a box to see what was growing near the roof. On the benches were galvanised trays. Karel sells a huge number of plants and churns out choice plants in large numbers - including plants such as *Pelecyphora stombiliformis* and various *Ariocarpus* and *Turbinicarpus*. No one in the UK does anything

like this, but over there, a number of growers produce choice plants in this way. The *Ariocarpus* seedlings were lovely healthy plants. Plants of *Pelecyphora aselliformis* are very slow and slender stemmed when young. Everything was in good condition, and everything was for sale, although it wasn't cheap – prices were 4 and 5 euros even for fairly small plants. We saw plants of *Strombocactus disciformis* and *Aztekium hintonii*, and in the foreground, seedlings of *Ariocarpus kotschoubeyanus* which were already flowering sized as evidenced by flowers forming in the crown. This is how they naturally grow, pulling themselves into the ground. Some of the grit tumbles over the plants, making them almost subterranean. Karel, who spoke barely any English, has a collection and this was mostly *Ariocarpus* along with a few other choice things. Big plants of *Ariocarpus (Neogomesia) agavoides* were grafted, and we saw the large growing form of *Ariocarpus elephantidens*. *Ariocarpus scapharostrus* is one of the most highly rated and difficult and he had hundreds of mature plants - some were grafted but many were on their own roots. Some of these were not for sale at any price – except perhaps Japanese prices. There were two forms of *A. scapharostrus* – some with longer pointed tubercles and others with fat chunky tubercles. Some were very old. There were doubled headed examples of *A. retusus*, and the rounded ones were probably grafted - they grow flatter on their own roots. *A. bravoanus* is the rarest of the *Ariocarpus* in cultivation and is very restricted in the wild since the habitats have been stripped (and some of the culprits include Czech and Japanese collectors).

We saw some more of the *A. retusus* and *A. furfuraceus* forms. *A. fissuratus v. lloydi* were on grafts, making them look even bigger and rounded. There were some stunning plants of *A. kotschoubeyanus v. albiflorus* - these were bigger than anything he's ever seen in the UK and would walk away with top prizes at the National Show. The plants were big and round and really beautiful. *Ariocarpus trigonus* was being grown in shallow pans, which surprised him since the root is normally a big swollen rootstock - and if these plants were grafted, then where's the stock? In any case the plants were doing very well. *A. trigonus* is one of the more difficult ones to grow due to die-back of the tubercles, so it is rarely seen on the show bench. The plants are going to be highly rated if you can grow one without that symptom.

With plants of *Aztekium hintonii*, 4 specimens were very blue and might be ex-habitat whereas others were greener and were probably seedlings. David mentioned that even if Czech growers get hold of

plants they shouldn't, they do at least propagate and distribute material. When mature, *Aztekium hintonii* produces strange coarse spines. *Turbinicarpus alonsoi* was one of Charles Glass's last discoveries. *Aztekium ritteri* has been known for a long time but is still very rare in cultivation. Here was also the spineless form of *Turbinicarpus pseudopectinatus*, which he had not seen before. A plant of *A. furfuraceus* had bloated tubercles - and despite the wrinkled surface, it was a grafted plant. Karel was propagating some *Ariocarpus* by rooting individual tubercles. Many of these cuttings were not doing anything and were shrivelling/dying - but some had rooted and were producing new plants. You can also use this technique with *Mammillarias* but David had not seen it applied to *Ariocarpus* before.

Vinay Shah

### Table Show Results

There were 16 entries in the January table show.

	Cacti – Echinocactus	Succulents – Aloe
Open	(1) G Penrose Echin. horizontalionus	(1) G Penrose Aloe comosa
	(2) B Beckerleg Leuchtenbergia principis	(2) B Beckerleg Aloe haworthioides
	(3) S Wilson Echin. platyacanthus	(3) I Biddlecombe Aloe sp.
Intermediate	(1) G Penrose Echinocactus texensis	(1) B Beckerleg Aloe erinacea
	(2) I B Beckerleg Ferocactus macrodiscus	(2) I Biddlecombe Aloe "Pepe"
	(3) -	(3) I Biddlecombe Aloe "Lizard Lips"

Ivor Biddlecombe

### Bookworm Corner (February)

What a change in the weather, one day mild and sunny and the next biting cold winds and hail showers. At least the winter flowering honeysuckle, sweet violet and the first of the snowdrops in the garden confirms that spring can not be that far behind.

The birds are flocking into the garden to top up on the assorted food been put out for them. Along with

the usual house sparrows, starlings, dunnocks, robin and collared doves we have recently seen an increase in chaffinch numbers. More recent species to grace our garden are blackbirds, pied wagtail, song thrush and reed buntings. However all the birds leave the garden rapidly when the local sparrowhawk decides to pop over the fence in search of breakfast or lunch!

Down the marsh we have plenty of wintering brent geese, teal, shelduck, wigeon, oystercatcher, black-tailed godwit and redshank. The brent geese this winter seem quite happy grazing on the grass verges adjacent to the road, just shows how quickly they can get used to vehicles and people at a respectable distance. A good spot if you are interested in photography!

**'ENJOYED THE LECTURE? THEN ENJOY THE BOOK!'**

### **February**

This evening we will be enjoying 'Spring in South Africa' with Alice Vanden Bon. This should involve lots of lovely flowering bulbs in addition to a good range of succulents. Books worth considering for a read are 'Succulent Flora of Southern Africa' (D. Court 1981) which although is showing its age in the quality of the photographs (a mixture of black and white and colour), it is good in giving the location within the short description of each named species. The book covers 164 genera but be aware that name changes have occurred since the book was written. 'Cacti and Succulents in Habitat' (K. Preston-Mafham 1994) contains a chapter on Southern Africa. The area covered is small but the advantage of this book is that it consists of solely habitat pictures. The text is not educational, more of a travel log making the whole book an easy bedtime read with some lovely pictures such as *Conophytum pearsonii*. Another book to study is 'Lithops – Treasures of the Veld' (Hammer S.A), this has descriptions and excellent pictures on species and cultivars. All of these books can be found in 'Featured Book Corner!'

*Sue Wilson*

## **Bookworm Corner (March)**

Well the weather has been a bit of a mixed bag lately, you never quite know if you are going to be walking the dogs in sunshine, rain, hail, fog or snow at the moment! However spring is now within reach as not only are the winter flowering honeysuckle, sweet violet, snowdrops, crocus and the first of the dutch iris in flower but big fat queen bumblebees and honey bees have been seen in the garden.

The garden birds are still using the food put out for them. The house sparrows, starlings, dunnocks, robin, collared doves, chaffinches, blackbirds, pied wagtail, song thrush and reed buntings are all frequent visitors. A number of pheasants and black-headed gulls have come to expect their daily bread ration, all seeming to appear out of nowhere when the food is chucked out onto the adjacent grassland. However the local sparrowhawk is still a frequent visitor in search of breakfast or lunch!

Down the marsh we still have plenty of wintering brent geese, teal, shelduck, wigeon, oystercatcher, black-tailed godwit and redshank. Most of these will be starting to leave us soon for breeding grounds home and abroad. The brent geese this winter seem quite happy grazing on the grass verges adjacent to the road, just shows how quickly they can get used to vehicles and people at a respectable distance. A good spot if you are interested in photography!

Not much is happening in the cacti house at the moment. Some of the succulents are growing well including echeveria, aeonium, pachyphytums, avonias and faucarias. Mark is looking forward to watering all of his cacti shortly, however he has already watered everything growing in the hotbox that is kept at 10°C. The first of the mammillarias, *M. picta* is producing good sized buds and should be open soon.

The large tub of plastic pots has just made its reappearance into the sitting room which can only mean one thing - Mark is about to start potting up in earnest! Watch out at the Portsmouth branch summer show for lots of happy plants from Mark this year gracing the show bench. This takes me neatly onto Crufts, the dog show everyone has heard of. Rosie the naughty elkhound will be in the ring again this year, so watch out for her on the telly at the weekend!!

Do come and have a look at the *Books For Sale* down in the library corner.

**'ENJOYED THE LECTURE? THEN ENJOY THE BOOK!'**

### **February**

Unfortunately the talk on 'Spring in South Africa' by Alice Vanden Bon was cancelled due to winter weather. However if you fancy reading up on South Africa have a look for the following books: '**Succulent Flora of Southern Africa**' (D. Court 1981) which although is showing its age in the quality of the photographs (a mixture of black and

white and colour), it is good in giving the location within the short description of each named species. The book covers 164 genera but be aware that name changes have occurred since the book was written. **'Cacti and Succulents in Habitat'** (K. Preston-Mafham 1994) contains a chapter on Southern Africa. The area covered is small but the advantage of this book is that it consists of solely habitat pictures. The text is not educational, more of a travel log making the whole book an easy bedtime read with some lovely pictures such as *Conophytum pearsonii*. Another book to study is **'Lithops – Treasures of the Veld'** (Hammer S.A), this has descriptions and excellent pictures on species and cultivars. All of these books can be found in **'Featured Book Corner'**

### March

Tonight's speaker is our friend from darkest Devon, Ian Woolnough. His presentation **'World Collections & Nurseries'** is another tricky one for me to recommend books on (I am sure some speakers have awkward subjects on purpose). I think maybe have a look at some encyclopaedias such as the good standby **The New Cactus Lexicon'** (Hunt), which is a weighty set of books but well worth the effort as it has great pictures and text for every (hopefully) cacti Ian came across. Another one to consider is **'The Cactus Family'** (Anderson F), quite a chunky book which helpfully has a list of worldwide botanic gardens with significant collections of cacti at the back which you might like to include on your holiday plans this year. However it is an old book, (2001) so do check first! Finally if you have been inspired by what you have seen tonight consider taking home **'The Complete book of cacti and succulents'** (Hewitt T.) which covers potting and propagation as well as discussing various species. As usual these books can be found in **'Featured Book Corner!'**

Sue Wilson

### **Snippets**

The following piece was written at the end of January – but the message still applies – if you haven't already renewed your BCSS subscription, please do so!

### **Notes from the Secretary**

With the March issue of the BCSS Journal currently in production is it probably a good time to remind everyone that if you haven't already renewed your BCSS membership for 2015 you need to do it as soon as possible. Payment can be made by completing and returning the form that accompanied your December Journal, or you can do it online.

Membership for 2015 remains at £15 - this is a remarkably low fee if you consider the size and quality of the quarterly journal, and the bulk of the membership fee pays for the production, printing and mailing costs of the journal. A quick look around at other societies, many of which produce a greatly inferior journal in comparison to ours, shows that membership fees are around £25 and more!

The cost of BCSS membership has been kept low partly by the large amount of money raised through Gift Aid. Any BCSS member who pays UK income tax should complete a Gift Aid form for the society, enabling the BCSS to reclaim tax from the government. If you haven't completed a Gift Aid form in the past (or if you aren't sure if you have done so please contact me and I will check) I can supply you with a form for completion, which I will then send to the National Treasurer.

David Neville

The following article was spotted by Dot England in the RHS's *The Garden* magazine:

### **Winter survivors**

A 'top 10' of the most popular agaves likely to survive the UK climate has been compiled. Paul Spracklin, garden designer and succulent enthusiast from Essex, initiated a survey following three consecutive cold, wet winters (from 2009/10 to 2011/12) and subsequent high number of plant losses. Results from 113 people who grow agaves outdoors put *Agave americana* at the top of the list. It was overwhelmingly the most popular for cold tolerance, especially by those wanting to grow just one agave. *Agave montana*, a relatively fast grower in the UK, and - if space allows - *Agave ovatifolia*, which reaches almost 2m (6½ ft) across, were also good choices and appeared in the top 10. The survey has enabled Paul to find out which agaves can be considered as reliable candidates for wider, long-term planting. You can read Paul's full article in the March 2015 issue of *The Plantsman* (see p19.)

*RHS - The Garden (March 2015)*

### **Bill Maddams 1926-2015**

I am very sad to report that Bill Maddams, Vice-President of the BCSS, passed away on January 13<sup>th</sup>. Bill visited our Branch several times in years gone by, speaking about Mammillarias, and also about *Coryphantha* and related genera, although I'm not sure that he has spoken to the branch since we moved our meetings to West End.



Bill was a scientist (with a background in physics), and quite a serious man, but he was very amiable and a true gentleman, always very placid and polite. The last time I saw and chatted with Bill was at Wisley Gardens last May when a group of Southampton Branch members attended the event organised at the gardens by the Mammillaria Society. Bill was Editor of the Mammillaria Society Journal from 1960 until now, which is an amazing feat in itself, but he was also Chairman of that Society from 1960 until 2011.

Bill was heavily involved in the negotiations that took place before the creation of the BCSS in 1982, when the Cactus & Succulent Society of Great Britain and the National Cactus and Succulent Society merged.

Anyone who had any dealings with Bill over the years will remember his hand written (with a fountain pen) letters, which were often lengthy and at times difficult to decipher; he never adopted a typewriter, let alone a word processor or computer.

Bill made a great contribution to the cactus and succulent hobby in the UK over a very lengthy period, and those of us who knew him will reminisce over the loss of another of the stalwarts of our hobby.

David Neville

## Next Month's Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 7<sup>th</sup> April and will feature Paul Klassen talking about a trip to Mexico in 2014. Of course Paul has spoken to us several times before and this should be an interesting account of a visit to a country which is brimming with interesting cacti and succulents.

The April Table Show will consist of the **Rebutia** group (cacti) and the **Echeveria** subgroup (succulents). 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. In addition there is a class for any **flowering** cactus or succulent plant.

From this year, the table show classes will use the classifications from the *Guide to Shows 10<sup>th</sup> Edition*. (contact me if you haven't got a copy of this)

The Rebutia group include *Aylosteria*, *Cintia*, *Cylindrorebutia*, *Digitorebutia*, *Mediolobivia*, *Neorebutia*, *Rebutia*, *Setirebutia*, *Spigazzinia*, *Sulcorebutia* and *Weingartia*.

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

## Forthcoming Events

Sat 14 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Isle of Wight	Branch Quiz & Members' Talks
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup> Mar	Portsmouth	Plants and Animals of the Western Cape - Hazel Taylor
Tue 7 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Southampton	Mexico 2014 (Paul Klaassen)
Sat 11 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Isle of Wight	Tony Roberts – title TBC
Sat 18 <sup>st</sup> Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Auction
Tue 5 <sup>th</sup> May	Southampton	Cultivation & Propagation Workshop (with demos and discussions)
Sat 11 <sup>th</sup> May	Isle of Wight	Mexico: Spring & Autumn in the Sierra Madre Orientale (Cliff Thompson)
Sat 16 <sup>th</sup> May	Portsmouth	Practical Demo on Grafting Cacti (Cliff Thompson)
Sat 16 <sup>th</sup> May	Portsmouth	Display / Plant Sales @ Sparsholt College (Countryside Day)

Branch website: <http://www.southampton.bcsc.org.uk>  
 Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/southamptonbcsc>

## Questionnaire 2014 - Results

1)	As a member of the Southampton Branch are you interested in :		
	Only in attending meetings of the branch?	YES 2	NO 27
	Only in attending selected meetings dependant on guest speaker and their subject matter.	YES 27	NO 3
	Attending members open days?	YES 26	NO 2
	Attending future social events e.g. Trips to nurseries, Events, conventions or shows, summer garden party?	YES 27	NO 1
2)	Number of meetings per year.		
	At this time we hold 12 monthly meetings. Would you prefer breaks in the summer months and in January?	YES 4	NO 26
3)	It is necessary to raise funds to pay for the rental of the hall.		
	At this time we do not levy a meeting charge but hold a raffle and charge for refreshments. Should we change this practise and charge a door fee which would include refreshments?	YES 7	NO 21
4)	At each meeting we hold a raffle. Should we continue with the raffle or phase it out as a means of funding?	YES 24	NO 4
5)	At each meeting we have a table show. Do you find this interesting and worthwhile?	YES 24	NO 2
6)	We have a small lending library of specialist books.		
	Do you find this facility useful?	YES 23	NO 6
7)	We have a monthly newsletter which we hand out at meetings.		
	Do you find this newsletter useful and informative?	YES 28	NO -
	Would you wish to contribute to the newsletter?	YES 7	NO -
8)	We invite guest speakers to our meetings. Are you interested in:		
	Talks on Plants in Habitat	YES 27	NO -
	Cultivation	YES 27	NO 1
	Specific Genre	YES 27	NO 2
	For our information do you grow?	CACTI 1	SUCCULENTS 1
		BOTH 21	
9)	Would you be interested in: Swapping seedlings or cuttings?	YES 20	NO 7
	An auction of larger plants ?	YES 13	NO 15
10)	Will you be attending our Christmas AGM	YES 20	NO 3
	If yes would you favour a catered event, at a small cost per head, rather than the bring a dish option?	YES 7	NO 10
11)	Would you be interested in helping at shows? (Sparsholt, Romsey and New Forest)	YES 8	NO -
	Would you like to join our committee?	YES 5	NO -
	Would you be happy to help at meetings?	YES 10	NO -