

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

British Summer time started last weekend and the spring equinox was 2 weeks ago, but the weather is still somewhat questionable. I have watered my conservatory plants on three weekends during March and there are signs of growth amongst several of the plants. One cactus already in flower is *Mammillaria perezdelarosae* which had a number of creamy white flowers open at the weekend. The top of the plant looks fine but the bottom section has shrunk into quite a narrow waist, so some surgery may be needed in the future.

Announcements

June Purseglove will no longer be regularly attending our meetings so we would like to know if any members are willing to handle the raffle at our monthly meetings on a regular basis. If not, we may have to spread the task around volunteers.

Printed copies of the Zone 11 Programme are available from the front table. The programme is also available online, via a link from our website.

Last Month's Meeting

Our speaker for March was Suzanne Mace, and David asked her to spend a few minutes talking about why she was standing in the election at the forthcoming AGM to choose the Society's Chairman. The other candidate is Dr. Alasdair Glen, and ballot papers have been sent out with the March journal.

Suzanne has been proposed by David Kirkbright, and seconded by Colin Walker. Why has she allowed her name to go forward? She thinks the society is an incredible society, where people are able to make lifelong friendships. However it is crunch time, with the national membership declining. Many of our members started off as juniors, and we need young people to join the society. We are now in the electronic age – just how much do we embrace it? Southampton is doing OK, but so many other branches aren't. Our ways are going to have to be passed on, and we need to help out branches which are currently struggling to allow them to continue. The election is an opportunity to have your say, so please use your vote.

Succulent Miscellany - plants & slides

Suzanne started her talk by thanking people for bringing in plants for discussion. She had brought along three from her own windowsill. She asked "What is a succulent"? Something that doesn't wilt if you don't water it for a week? The first plant was a begonia she had got from Gordon Foster at one of the National shows. It had recently had caterpillars on it and so had to be cut back a little, but there were nice new shoots coming along. This was *Begonia carolinifolia*, which is quite widespread in habitat. Last year it flowered with a huge thick spike with a ball of pink flowers which were self fertile – the seed can be sown to obtain more plants. Does it wilt if you don't water it? No, thanks to the thick stem.

A plant which Terry and Jennifer Smale had brought for them last September was *Begonia gregii suffruticosa*. It has a swollen base but was wilting and perhaps needed some Viagra. Charles Hayter from the audience muttered "Don't we all?" to which Suzanne's response was "Speak for yourself, Charlie!"

A plant she had got a couple of years earlier was *Begonia tripartitum*. This was put out by Dibleys, and was usually pink-flowered although this plant was a white-flowered form. Again, the flower was self fertile. It flowers and flowers until the light conditions worsen. If you don't water it, it does create a mess by dropping leaves and wilting.

Begonia is noted in the Handbook of Shows, but it is debateable as to which species are allowed. At this point Mark Jakins suggested it was a clash of "Physiology and human aesthetics" which left most of the audience deep in thought. It grows well on a north facing kitchen window, and has a nice thick base to it. It needs a big pot and one can't call it a bonsai. There were some seedlings growing in the pot and Suzanne said these had encroached from a nearby *Dorstenia*, and members could help themselves. She was also willing to let people have cuttings of the begonias – just ask.

She moved on the audience's plants and asked if there were any problem plants. First up were some plants from Ben Turner, and the first example was a *Euphorbia meloformis* which had a narrow stem. Suzanne said this was normal and these globular plants come up with a thin stem before fattening out. She advised that it could be repotted with some gravel around the base to better support the top part of the plant. Another plant in the tray was *Euphorbia horrida*. Suzanne mentioned that this was not one of the nicest forms to grow and found another example on the table which was more attractive. Have a look around and see if you can find a nicer form. She advised repotting it into a bigger pot since the plant is top heavy, and spring is a good time to do this. There seemed to be a little shoot trying to come out from the base. Some gravel round the base should allow the shoot to develop and emerge. Ben said he had brought it in because of the brown marks on there but Suzanne said this was just aging. The plant's stem was being strengthened and it doesn't need chlorophyll down there.

Next was a *Gasteria* with a bottom leaf which was going rotten. Suzanne pulled this off since one needs to prevent the rot from spreading into other parts of the plant. She suspected that the plant was being kept a bit too wet, and maybe that had set off the rot. Ben said he was growing it on the floor, amongst gravel on membrane. Suzanne suggested getting some polystyrene ceiling tiles and placing them on the floor under the plants - that would insulate them and prevent them getting too cold. She also advised putting some top dressing on the soil – this elevates the leaves off the soil and reduces the chances of rot. Another leaf on the plant was going bad, but not enough to warrant being pulled off.

Euphorbia turricalli "Sticks on Fire" was next – this was a selected form with orange-red stems, but it was going black in places. Ben said it was a stunning sight as a big plant and he had got some plants from Kirstenbosch stands at the Chelsea

Show. Suzanne said the better colours are obtained in habitat. This was a cutting from a bigger plant which was orangey yellow all over. She thought it was nothing to worry about and the plant would improve when he started watering and it picked up growth in the spring.

Next was a *Gasteria* which Ben had brought in for naming. Suzanne said it was hard to be sure, but it might be a hybrid, possibly containing *G. batesiana* or *G. armstrongii* in it. Another plant had not had good attention at some point in the past - Ben said it had been damaged by frost in the previous winter and was just about recovering. Suzanne said that although *Gasterias* do benefit from some water in the winter, the cold and damp can be a problem for many growers, and she keeps hers dry in the winter.

Next were some plants from Alice Jankovec. The first was a *Mitrophyllum* or possibly a *Jacobsenia*, but most of stem was dead. Suzanne suggested that some of the remaining pieces be used as cuttings. Like other mesembs it shouldn't really be watered at this time of the year. The next plant had been purchased at *The Range* – Alice had managed to find a pot full of small *Pleiospilos nelii* "Royal Flush" for £3.99. The plants had a purplish body. *Pleiospilos* normally have yellow flowers, but this cultivar can have purple or pink or deep orange flowers. It will be interesting to see what turns out with these, but they represented quite a find – each of the heads potted up in a 2" pot could be sold for £2. These are not slow growing plants and they are less tricky than *Lithops optica* cv. "rubra".

Next was an *Echeveria* which seemed very dry and this was affecting the production of flower spikes. Suzanne mentioned that many members of the *Crassulaceae* are winter growers and need some moisture in the winter. The plant was an *Echeveria runyonii* cv. "Topsy Turvy". *Titanopsis hugo-schlechteri* had top dressing which matched the golden brown colour of the plants. *Crassula mesembryanthemopsis* had flowered but it looked like the plant could have done with some more water. Ivor said it was tricky and always seemed to suffer and die from either under or over watering. It does need some water in the winter and Suzanne suggested watering always from below or round the edge of the plant. *Conophytum herreanthus* ssp. *meyeri* was a plant with relatively large heads. The next plant had been grown by Ivor from Mesemb society seed – Suzanne thought it was probably *Delosperma lehmanni* which has white/straw flowers. It looked like it could have done with some more water during the winter.

Back to some of Alice's plants and we saw seedlings of some nice mesembs in tiny insulated pots, obtained on the Continent. There were 4-5 seedlings in each pot and the plants included Frithia, a Conophytum, a Trichodiaemia, and *Conophytum pellucidum*.

Another tray contained some winter growing plants. A sarcocaulon had some leaf on it. With Cissus the trick is how to stop it growing. A Ceraria was grafted and she wasn't sure why. The stock was *Portucalaria afra*. The plant looked like it needed some water. Ivor was concerned that it had lost all its leaves in the cold spell but Suzanne said they would grow back. David Neville said the plant was probably grafted because the cuttings won't root, at least for most people. *Mitrophyllum grande* looks at its best at this time of the year thanks to the bright green new growth. *Dorstenia gypsophila* was a plant which David had persuaded Ivor to rescue from Margaret Corina's collection. Suzanne said he would have to find out when it grows in Socotra, and water it accordingly! It is one of the most difficult succulents to grow.

Next was an Adromischus plant brought in by Mark Jakins. This was once a nice plant (as evidenced by previous flowering) but Suzanne couldn't see much of it which was healthy. She thought this was due to some sort of virus in the plant and even if cuttings were taken to rescue the plant, it would happen again. She suggested getting rid of it – perhaps bin it on the way home! Next was an unhappy *Titanopsis calcarea* which Mark was growing on a shelf in the greenhouse. It was being grown in a shadow and Suzanne said this plant needs as much light as possible and a little water in the winter. It shouldn't be temperature sensitive. She suggested clearing out the dead leaves and supporting the remaining stems to see if it revives. Alternatively you can take cuttings but make sure there are at least 4 leaves on each piece. The next plant was a Hoodia with one new growth but distorted older growth. It was being grown in a greenhouse where it gets down to 2°C and Suzanne this was much too low. Bring it inside for the winter, and completely cut off the bad head with a clean sharp knife since it won't recover. Let the cut callous over in the air and then the rest of the plant should recover.

Next we saw a lovely succulent Pelargonium in full leaf and looking beautiful. *Tylecodon buchholzianus* has had masses of flowers on it but you can never be sure about it because it doesn't put out many leaves. Another plant was clearly a bulb – it was *Veltheimia bracteata*, with two lovely flower spikes growing. One of the leaves had a slight problem but overall

the growth was fine and not weak or limp. This was another plant from Margaret.

An aloe with a flower spike should bloom in another couple of weeks. There was a nice Gasteria which was the "Barberton" form of *G. batesiana*. It had lizardy type skin. There was also a lovely dwarf variegated Agave with two shoots. Suzanne mentioned there are some nice hybrid aloes around, including the Kelly Griffin hybrids and David Neville mentioned that Stuart Riley had brought some along last year. *Crassula falcata* was from Jim Roskilly and it was being kept much too dry – there is no need to try and emulate South African conditions to this extent! It has coral pink/red flowers which are sweetly perfumed. It wanted overnight soaking in a bucket of water. A Senecio was a nice plant and it should eventually have scarlet flowers. There was a good pot of Adromischus, but it needed fresh soil – also it was dropping leaves and needed a bit more moisture.

Next was a beautiful lithops, *Lithops aucampiae* "Kuraman" form and it was a lovely colour. Mark Jakins asked "Would you be able to come back and give a talk on how to identify Lithops. Ivor says there's two - white and yellow". Suzanne said there were also plants with yellow flowers and a white centre. But if the plants are not in flower, how do you tell them apart? One needs to keep a record of the flower colour. This is not something you can learn from a lecture – she mentioned she has a big collection of Lithops, has visited collections, looked at Desmond Cole's book, and Steve Hammer's book. You have to study the books and try to take it all in – eventually it will go in and you will learn about them. People who raise plants select the extreme forms and so sometimes the plants we grow are getting a way away from the original collections. Look at things online, and every source available and hope that it's correctly labelled. Some people have better memories for patterns.

After the mid-meeting break, Suzanne switched to slides. She resumed her "What is a succulent and what isn't" theme. Some Euphorbias are accepted as succulents and some aren't. *Euphorbia pulcherrima* grows into quite large bushes in the Canaries. Next was a horror story – a plant in her greenhouse which was covered in red spider mite. The plant had to be thrown out. We saw a Sarracenia and its flower, which resembles a daffodil. Next was a picture of an Agave flower spike taken at Tom Jenkin's greenhouse. The spike grows lateral arms which bear the upturned flowers and these had no petals but lots of stamens. *A Dyckia marnier-lapostele* is not considered a succulent but it was beautiful thing,

which was drought resistant and it won't wilt if not watered for a week. *Hechtia argentea* was photographed at Kew Gardens. These have vicious teeth on the edge of their leaves. A Cycad can withstand periods without watering and is best kept outside in the summer months.

A general shot at Zurich botanical gardens featured their succulent bed, with Adeniums bearing pinky-red flowers. There was also *Euphorbia canariensis* in the foreground. There were also Aloes in flower, and some Kalanchoes. Some Euphorbias can produce multiple flowers from one point, some cacti can do that as well, for example Weingartia. We saw 3, 4, and even 5 flowers - almost like a peduncle. We saw *Euphorbia coerulescens* which forms clusters of flowers. More flamboyant are the *Euphorbia millii* hybrids which are being mass produced in the Far East - these are becoming more available. Sometimes they are grafted onto a stronger rootstock.

Euphorbia neohumbertii is used for hybridising - it has nice patterns on the stems from the old leaf scars and bears flowers close to the body. *Euphorbia stenoclada* has a different way of flowering - the flowers are maroon red and produced in clusters at the ends of the branches. Only the stamens and pollen is visible. The stems become covered in felt when they are about to flower. It can grow into a very large plant. *Monadenium majus* was photographed in Alan Hart's greenhouse in Cheshire. It had a big rootstock and every year sends up new growth and flowers. There was also a Hildewinteria hanging down. Another member of the Euphorbiaceae is *Jatropha podagrica* which has a caudex and a felty appearance on the new growth. *Pedilanthus macrocarpus* has a seed compartment containing just three seeds, rather like the Euphorbiaceae - the seeds are the size of coffee beans. It has male and female flowers on each stem, and the females open first. *Pachypodium lamerei* had been obtained from Gordon but it did not survive the relocation to their greenhouse.

A picture of *Dorstenia gigas* was taken at Tom Jenkins' nursery. Next was *Agave victoria-regina*, and Suzanne asked whether people considered it hardy. Some members have grown it outside, at least until the severe winter of two years ago. She mentioned a little tent over the plant in the winter might help - it does come from the warm climate of Mexico after all. *Agave parryi* (we had seen the flower spike of this earlier in the talk) has slightly bluish leaves. The plant dies after it flowers. The plants do gather themselves for flowering - the leaves in the centre become smaller and also

develop a reddish tinge. *Beschorneria* is related to *Yucca*, but the flowers look like those of a bromeliad. They had it growing outside in Brighton for a while.

We saw a picture of a seedling of a dragon tree (*Draceana draco*) followed by what it looks like when older, featuring the 1000+ year old example at Icod in Tenerife. There were probably a lot of these trees on the islands originally but most have been cut down for wood, only leaving a couple of large ones left. Should *Sansevieria* be in the guide to shows? *S. grandis* has one of the largest flowering spikes in this genus. The flowers open in the evening and have a strong scent of hyacinths, and many flowers are formed on one peduncle. *Aloe pillansii* as a seedling is a manageable plant - they had got one from South Africa in 1988 but it was now touching the roof. They were not sure what to do with it. *Aloe plicatilis* has a unique fan shape and it will only start branching once it has thought about flowering. The flowers are not that wonderful. It can be re-rooted from cuttings.

Aloe polyphylla is now more widely available thanks to tissue-culture, and you can grow a matching pair with clockwise and anti-clockwise spirals. It can be grown outside with some protection. They don't like water in the central growing point, so tip the pot sideways, rather like cyclamen. *Aloe reynoldsii* is named after the author of the two definitive books on this species. It is one of the lesser enchanting plants since it gets straggly and the flowers are not worth writing home about. Everyone's favourite is *Aloe variegata*, the partridge-breast aloe. It's a plant which many people grow when starting off in the hobby, but for some reason, she doesn't find it as easy to grow now. *Pleiosipilos nelii* "Royal Flush" was photographed in July at Steven Hammer's nursery - it had fat capsules on it. At another nursery (C&J's) they found *Pleiosipilos bolusii* cv. "Envy" which has green leaves and a white flower. We also saw a mass of *Spalmanthus* - this is a winter grower, and flowers in early spring.

A picture of *Dorotheanthus rourkei* was taken in the wild, the plants tend to mimic their surroundings. Apparently it is a pig to raise from seed. A plant from Phil Desmit was *Antimima promontorii*, which grows on a promontory overlooking the sea. *Dorotheanthus* in the wild growing en masse, the soil was also a nice colour. At Steve Hammer's former nursery in Belen, they came across the natural hybrid between *Gibbaeum album* and *Muiria hortenseae* which is named *Muirio-Gibbaeum muroides*. We saw *Mitrophyllum grande* coming

into growth. Around October time, the new growth comes up through the centre of the old leaves and pushes off the resting sheaths. It was growing in quite sandy, gritty soil.

At one point, Tony had got a microscope to take some close-up pictures. They didn't get too far with this but we did see a *Huernia* in flower. *Kalanchoe uniflorum* has nice pendant flowers, and she would like a piece if anyone has this species. *Echeveria laui* is one of the best – do try not to touch the leaves (the farina comes off), avoid pests and give it maximum sunlight - apart from that, it's a piece of cake. If you want to grow a Hoya, then Hoya "Shooting Star" (also known as *H. multiflora*) was recommended. The leaves are very thin and not as succulent as other hoyas. *Crassula congesta* has sweetly perfumed white flowers. *Tradescantia* contains some borderline succulents. We saw *Aloe striata* flowering en masse, the display being produced by a large plant in an 18" pot. It is not a difficult one to grow.

Now for some historical slides, from 10 years ago. We saw a picture of the cactus area of Sonia Barker-Fricke's greenhouse, with her husband George also in the picture. The pictures were taken the weekend when she passed away. Other pictures taken at Sonia's included mesembs and Dudleyas too. *Gibbaeum dispar* had a large cleft between the two leaves.

Aloe striata when grown in the Southern hemisphere had better colouring. We saw some pictures from Zurich Botanic Gardens, courtesy of the late Terry Hewitt. We saw a large *Pachypodium* with no leaves, *P. lamerei* in flower, and also a hybrid between *P. lamerei* and *P. namaquanum* - flowering at a smaller size than *P. lamerei*. *Euphorbia poissoni* has whitish stems, and we saw a mass of *Rhipsalis* in a hanging pot. Some pictures taken at Hollygate showed plants out in a bedded area, including *Haworthias*. There was a vine with a strange red flower. *Aeonium tabuliforme* from the Canaries was in flower. There was a massive *Pterodiscus* and also *Ceropegia fusca* or *dichotoma* – you can't tell them apart until it flowers. There was a huge *Gerrardanthus* which must have been trussed up for some time since the caudex was growing into and around the supports. Back at Zurich, *Ceropegia ampliata* had masses of flowers. *Ipomoea holubii* forms a caudex and has a nice pink flower. Lots of these were imported in the past, but you don't see it around these days. *Pterodiscus speciosus* is another caudiciform and we saw it with a flower bud. It is terribly prone to red spider mite. *Kalanchoe marmorata* has attractive spotting on the

leaves. An *Echeveria* at Hollygate had rosy pink flowers and David Neville identified it as *Echeveria rosea*.

Now for some early 1970's slides of Sussex Show at Littlehampton, and we saw Clive Innes and John Brookes. A group of four consisting of Gordon Rowley, Keith Mortimer, Brian Lamb and David Hunt were judging a show in the early 1970's. We also saw Bill Stevens and Michael Martin being presented with trophies. A view of the young Tony Mace prompted various comments about clothing and appearance in those days! We also saw Patty O'Hara, Pat Stacy and Geoff Lowell from Crawley. The entrance to the show in Eastbourne was 1/-, and we again saw the illustrious group of four judges.

At the end of the talk, there were a couple of questions from the audience. How can *Pachypodium lamerei* be cultivated without pinching its growth? Suzanne believed this may be due to not potting it on sufficiently – it is a tree after all. And an *Adenium* which wasn't growing well may be in need of more water and more sun.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

The March table show unfortunately set some sort of unwanted record, with only one entry being submitted! Please do make an effort to better support the table show.

	Cacti – Echinocactus	Succulents – Agave
Open	(1) -	(1) -
	(2) -	(2) -
	(3) -	(3) -
Intermediate	(1) -	(1) J Burnay Agave stricta nana
	(2) -	(2) -
	(3) -	(3) -

Ivor Biddlecombe

Branch Committee Meeting

A branch committee meeting was held on 7th March. Tony Grech was welcomed into the committee, having been elected at the December AGM.

Paperwork to have our new treasurer Alice Jankovec added as a signatory to the branch's current and savings accounts was being prepared.

It was mentioned that the hall rent will be increased from next year. David had also learnt that there is no insurance cover on library books stored at the meeting hall.

The National society has recently announced that it will arrange to pay the hosting fees for internet websites for all the branches in the country, with setup assistance also being provided if necessary. We had already paid the hosting fees for the current year, so will benefit from this arrangement from next year onwards.

June Purselove has decided that she cannot come to our monthly meetings and so we need someone to handle the sale of raffle tickets each month. Ciprian had done the job at the March meeting, and during the meeting, David had asked for volunteers for future meetings.

In recent months, the Branch had received donations of books from members including Philip Clemow and also the wife of Mr H Roth, a member from Highcliffe who passed away recently. We have also received pots from Dave Philips.

Recent meetings were discussed. These included the first talks given at our branch by Ben Turner and Alice Jankovec. Attendances at our meetings remain very healthy and we discussed how to maintain this. Suzanne had mentioned during her March talk that she viewed our Branch as one of the more successful ones in the country, but overall membership numbers continue to fall.

Ivor asked whether the selection of cakes he brings along for the refreshments (ginger, cherry, date) could be expanded or changed. No-one could think of any improvements - but if anyone does have any ideas, please get in touch with Ivor.

The table show in March was a big disappointment with only 1 entry submitted across all the categories. Perhaps people had brought plants in for Suzanne and had forgotten to bring more for the show. It was hoped this was just a one-off.

Topics for the forthcoming cultivation evening were discussed. Topics included Plant ID and naming, seed raising and repotting. It was also thought that it would be interesting to give all members a young cactus/succulent plant and for everyone to be asked to grow it on and bring it back next year so that we could compare results.

Preparations for the events due to be held in May were discussed briefly and we need to purchase a waterproof gazebo for outdoor events. The date for this year's annual dinner was provisionally agreed as 1st July.

Vinay Shah

Judging a cactus and succulent show in Barbados

I was sorry to miss the February meeting..... but not that sorry, as I was in Barbados at the time! I couldn't believe my luck, but the Barbados Cactus & Succulent Society (BCSS!) contacted the British society and asked if they could recommend a qualified judge to travel to the island to judge their 50th Anniversary Show. A number of judges in the UK were contacted, and the names of those who were willing and able to travel on the specified dates were put into a hat, and my name was pulled out! The cost of my flight and accommodation were covered by sponsorship organised by the Barbados society.

The cactus and succulent classes at their annual show are usually judged by non-specialist judges, with little or no knowledge of cacti and succulents, but because this was a special anniversary show the members of the cactus group wanted to have a specialist judge. Judging took place on the Friday afternoon, and although the 2 usual judges were supposed to be co-judging with me, they asked if I would judge the classes but would also talk them through all the plants and my reasons for the prizes awarded so that they could learn more about the plants.

The venue for the show was the headquarters of the Barbados Horticultural Society, from which the cactus and succulent group was borne. Numerous nurseries and plant sellers had outdoor stalls, while the competitive classes were in a couple of halls and in a large lean-to glasshouse that are on-site. The schedule of classes for the cactus and succulents is based on the British BCSS Handbook of Shows, so the classes looked pretty much like those in our UK shows. However, the selection of species available

for sale in Barbados is very limited, and the import of plants and seeds is very strictly controlled and very difficult for amateurs, so the range of plants exhibited was more limited than we see at home. Many of the plants in the show were less mature than those we often see here in the UK, but needless to say there were some superb exhibits amongst them, particularly in the classes for other succulents. Adeniums are extremely popular in Barbados, and they grow quite easily there..... so easily in fact that they are popular garden plants. It was not unusual to see adeniums (or Desert Roses, as they are commonly known out there) growing outdoors and standing 5 to 6ft tall! There were some lovely specimen adeniums in the show, and some huge plants of the large flowered hybrids of *Euphorbia millii* (the Crown of Thorns). Agaves and aloes were also of a very good standard.

The Horticultural Society show was held on the same day, at the same venue, so there were plenty of other exhibits there to admire. The range of tropical and exotic plants and flowers was incredible, and the range of orchids that can be grown in that climate was breathtaking.

I was required to be present at the show on both Saturday and Sunday afternoon so that the members of the cactus group could ask me questions about the judging etc, and anything else they wanted to know about the plants. Bajans are very friendly, laid back people, which meant that my time spent with them at the show was very enjoyable.

Two members of the Barbados BCSS collected me from my hotel on the morning after the show to take me on a tour of some gardens and to see a couple of species of succulents that grow naturally on the island. When on holiday in hot places it is common to see many cacti and succulents growing outside in gardens, but in Barbados there are few species that can withstand the wet season, and so the selection of plants seen growing as garden ornamentals was rather more limited. Some agaves and aloes seem quite happy, and some larger growing euphorbias (mostly those species that grow into trees) excelled, along with the adeniums that I mentioned earlier, and *Pachypodium lamerei*. I did see a few other cacti and succulents, mostly growing in sheltered positions where they were protected from excessive rain.

Species of Melocactus grow naturally on most of the Caribbean islands, but on Barbados they were wiped out many years ago (perhaps we can blame the Brits for this, as much of the natural vegetation of the island was cleared for sugar cane plantations).

However, *Agave barbadensis* also grows there, mostly on rocky areas near the coast, along with *Pilosocereus royenii* which likes a similar terrain, and I was taken to see both of these species growing naturally. The agave is a large, green-leaved species which is seldom seen in collections in the UK (probably because of its size), and the *Pilosocereus* is a fairly dull, branching plant, but nonetheless it was very nice to see them growing in their natural environs.

My chosen holiday destinations are usually to places where cacti or succulents grow naturally, and so a trip to the Caribbean is not something that I had ever really considered. But I have to say that it was a lovely place to go to escape the British winter for a few days (other than the many mosquitoes that drove me crazy while I was there), and drinking a morning cup of coffee on my balcony, overlooking an idyllic Caribbean beach with palm trees, white sand and turquoise ocean I almost forgot that I had missed a meeting at all! Sorry Ben!

David Neville

Next Month's Meeting

The May meeting will be held on 3rd May and will feature a local speaker – none other than our President Peter Down, who will be describing plants from one of the countries he has visited, namely Bolivia.

The May table Show will consist of the **Opuntia** group (cacti) and the **Haworthia & Gasteria** groups (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.

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*.

Forthcoming Events

Sat	9 th	Apr	Isle of Wight	"Nature in Close-Up" - Colin Haygarth
Sat	16 th	Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Sale
Sun	1 st	May	Portsmouth	Display / Plant Sales @ Bishops Waltham Garden Fair
Tue	3 rd	May	Southampton	"Bolivia" - Peter Down
Sat	14 th	May	Isle of Wight	"Brazil" - Cliff Thompson
Sat	14 th	May	Sparsholt	Display / Plant Sales @ Sparsholt College (Countryside Day)
Mon	16 th	May	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Sat	21 st	May	Portsmouth	"Gasterias in the Flesh" - Tony Roberts
Sat	21 st	May-	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, Ampfield
Sun	22 nd			
Sat	4 th	Jun	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Summer Show @ St Colman's Church Hall, Cosham
Tue	7 th	Jun	Southampton	"The Island of Socotra" - Bob Potter
Sat	11 th	Jun	Isle of Wight	"Patagonia" - Anna & Martin Sheader
Sat	18 th	Jun	Portsmouth	"Cotyledon, Adromischus, Tylecodon" - Derek Tribble

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