

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Branch Secretary

David Neville
6 Parkville Road
Swaythling
Southampton
Hampshire
SO16 2JA
davnev@btopenworld.com
(023) 80551173 or
07974 191354

Newsletter Editor

Vinay Shah
29 Heathlands Road
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO53 1GU
vvshah@clara.co.uk
(023) 80261989

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Editorial

Our clocks changed 9 days ago and so we're supposed to be on summertime now, but the weather has cooled down the past few days. I have watered my plants a couple of times in March but have held off until we get back to some warmer weather. A few Mammillarias and Echeverias are in flower, and following the waterings, there are signs of new growth on most of the plants.

Announcements

Our meeting today almost had to be cancelled because the week prior to Easter is "Holy Week" – but fortunately we received special dispensation and were allowed to use the hall for today's meeting.

The branch's financial accounts for the year to September 2011 have now been prepared, and copies of this are available at today's meeting.

Tickets for the 16th **Havering Cactus Mart** are available from Eddy Harris. This will be held at Romford, on Saturday 12th May. At least 12 leading nurseries will be present, so there should be a good selection of plants for sale. Admission is only £1. There's a leaflet about this event at the front table.

Next month's meeting will be a **cultivation evening**, so if you have problem plants – or those which need identification, please bring them along. There will also be a discussion about cristate and monstrose plants, so if you have any of these, please bring them along. Finally last year, the branch handed out free Mammillaria and Echeveria plants to members – please bring these in so we can take a

look at how they're doing! Do mark the plants with your name to avoid fisticuffs over the best grown plants ...

Our speakers from last month (Keith & Kathy Flanagan) have decided to invite us to an **Open Day** to view their collection – further details next month.

Elton Roberts' Californian Collection

Before the talk started, David Neville highlighted a plant which had been entered into the table show. It was an *Echinocactus grusonii* which had been purchased by Jim Roskilly from *The Grange* – and the plant had bright red spination. Geoff Card said he had also bought something similar. David said that this wasn't a new variety – the plant had been sprayed with red paint to achieve this appearance, and the new growth should revert to straw coloured spines. As far as the Dutch growers are concerned, this was just a way to sell more plants.

Geoff proceeded to welcome Keith and Kathy. Kathy mentioned that they had never given a digital presentation before and weren't used to the equipment either, but hoped that the talk would go OK.

Elton Roberts was introduced to Keith by another member of their branch, and Kathy met him a year later. They got married out in the States, and Elton was their best man. He rattles a few cages with his outspoken nature, but he has a fantastic collection of plants, is a very good grower and happy to talk to anyone about them. Elton lives at Ripon, which is about an hour's drive east from San Francisco, and also near the town of Sacramento.

He has several hothouses for his plants and these are built in different styles. Some have plastic side walls with plastic sheeting for a roof, and others are open-framed buildings with plastic or netting for sidewalls. There's a sales house and the other houses have slight variations to accommodate different groups of plants, such as Rebutias and Sulcorebutias, and succulents and Copiapos. One of the houses even extends into his mother-in-law's

garden. Tephrocacti are kept on tables outside all year round. The weather is mild but can reach close to freezing in the winter mornings, going up to 80°F in the daytime.

Kathy said that in the USA, showing your plants is a big thing and American growers will sometimes pay more for the bowls than the plants. We saw *Ariocarpus agavoides* in a nice red bowl. *Akersia roseiflora* had tubular pink flowers – and this was one of many hanging plants in his collection. *Tephrocactus alexanderi* v. *geometricus* is a distinctive plant with pale egg-shaped stems. It is rare in cultivation, but he had some huge plants. A three-headed *Turbiniacarpus lophophoroides* had pale pink flowers, and one of the heads was going dichotomous. *Turbiniacarpus klinkerianus* was covered in flower buds and had good spination. A short-spined form of *Thelocactus phymatothelos* had strange growths in between the tubercles. We also saw a group of *Echinocactus horizionthalonius* plants, which had all been grown to impressive sizes.

There were quite a few *Echinopsis* in flower, but not all were labelled, and even if they were, you'd have trouble getting near them because they were growing in a tangled mass. A couple of the hybrids who flowers Kathy liked were called Maria and Roxy. Next was a shot of one of the natives – a lizard with brown patterned skin, which was about 6 inches long. Underneath, they are a vivid blue colour, but it's difficult to photograph this. *Coryphantha greenwoodii* had yellow flowers emerging from dense white wool. We also saw a group of the sale plants, including small *Ariocarpus* plants priced at a few dollars. An example of *Ortegocactus macdougallii* was perfect, without any of the usual brown patches. David said every example in habitat is marked. We saw *Turbiniacarpus ysabelae* and also *Stapelia flavipurpurea* – she had given him a piece of the latter, and Elton had grown it on into a nice flowering sized plant.

After some more *Ariocarpus* plants, we saw a Hoya flower cluster, and some nice *Astrophytums*, including *Astrophytum myriostigma* cv. Onzuka. Kathy said these were on their own roots – apart from just one or two plants in his collection, Elton doesn't tend to like grafted plants. An *Echinocereus* growing as a rat's tail cactus had a nice magenta flower and was probably a Morangaya. *Ariocarpus retusus* had white flowers. A nice double-headed *Astrophytum capricorne* had jet black spines in the growing point.

A nice *A. myriostigma* had spoilt its appearance by growing a spare rib midway up the stem. Another heavily flecked *myriostigma* cultivar had some strange lumpy growths at the growing point. A monstrose plant with a weird mixture of spiral and fan shaped growths was labelled *Eulychnia castanea* but Paul Klaassen said although it was widespread in US collections, no-one knew what it really was since it does not flower. Next was *A myriostigma* cv. Kikko, although the plant did not seem to yet have the chins which David said were a distinctive feature. *Neochilenia occulta* had grown into a large multiheaded plant. *Coryphantha calipensis* was a couple of feet across. *Coryphantha elephantidens* had a lovely light/deep pink flower on it. Three or four *Coryphanthas*, including *C. greenwoodii* were growing together, stuck into each other like velcro.

The collection of *Coryphanthas* included *C. maiztablasensis*, *C. robustispina* v. *scheeri*, *C. poselgeriana* and *C. ramillosa*. *C. recurvata* had golden spines and the heads were the size of dinner plates. Seedlings from a few years ago were now in 5 inch pots. Kathy mentioned that there was some problem with some of the *Coryphanthas*, which developed white spots and then went white all over. *C. tripugionacantha* was over a foot high.

Some plants of *Echinocactus horizionthalonius* had spines growing in a spiral pattern. The spines looked especially beautiful just after the plants had been watered. *Echinocactus polycephalus* had fierce spines. Five heads of *Echinocereus pulchellus* were fighting for space. A plant of *Pelecyphora strobiliformis* was crested, and another was a three headed specimen. The *Ferocactus* collection included some nice specimens with fierce spines, and there was also a plant of the "creeping devil", *Stenocereus eruca*. A *Ferocactus macrodiscus* in a huge ceramic pot was a beautiful specimen. *Echinomastus johnstonii* is nice in habitat but it doesn't do as well in cultivation, even in Elton's collection. A quick view of the plants growing outside showed a large *Opuntia*, some cereoids and yuccas.

Back indoors, Elton has several specimens of *Geohintonia mexicana* and these flower every year. There was a large plant of *Turbiniacarpus ysabelae*. There was a nice plant of *Echinomastus mariposensis* with the dense spines covering the body entirely. We also saw a picture of the same plant with a ring of flowers – a picture which Elton had sent her. We also saw plants of *Echinomastus warnockii* ssp *pallida* and *E. warnockii kakui*, and their flowers.

Pediocactus knowltonii was in good condition but there were signs of mealy bug on some of the areoles. We also saw *Cochiseia robinsorum*, and *Mammillaria tetrancistra* – David Neville said that the latter is one of the most difficult plants to grow on its own roots. *Coryphantha maiz-tablasensis* was again featured and these were huge plants with some lovely pink flowers. *Thelocactus hexadrophus* and *Turbinicarpus laui* were in 6-8" pans. Alongside a small *Mammillaria humboldtii* was a bonsai subject, probably some species of *Trichodiamea*, which has a big tap root. We saw *Turbinicarpus lophophoroides*, multi-headed *Mammillaria crucigera*, and a little *Ariocarpus*. Kathy mentioned that people now take their dormant *Ariocarpus* plants to Elton, for him to resuscitate. A picture of one of the hothouses showed dozens of hanging plants suspended in the air, waiting to ensnare you or give you a headful of spines if you wandered down the plant benches. Kathy explained that being 5' 2", Elton was just about safe from this.

Other views showed many more plants and Kathy commented that Elton's really got too many plants. There were lots of yuccas, and he used to grow Agaves previously. An *Islaya* had pink fruits. *Mammillaria fraileana* was in flower. *Coryphantha runyonii* was a huge plant with pink flowers. *Pediocactus peeblesiana* had curly spines. We also saw an *Epithelanthus*, and a *Turbinicarpus lophophoroides* which was a foot high. David Neville said that in habitat this plant remains as a round ball.

An *Ariocarpus* plant that had come in for resuscitation had 8 heads but was all shrunken because its owner had not been able to grow it. Elton has written articles on his theories on acidified water, having noticed that plants go downhill rapidly in cultivation. The pH of desert rains between Arizona and California varies from 4 and 5.6 but his own well water was alkaline, at pH 7.5. Cacti do prefer acidic levels such as pH 6 or lower, so he added vinegar at 4 teaspoons per gallon, which was enough to drop his water down to pH 5.5. He noticed a dramatic difference in his plants in just one season Keith himself has tried the acidified water and has noticed his plants recovering, including those which had not grown for ages, and he suggested this was well worth trying, using white vinegar.

Kathy mentioned that she would have loved to bring the next plant home - it was a light-red spined form of *Mammillaria lasiacantha* in a 10-12" pan. We also saw *Turbinicarpus bonatzii* and *T. hoferi*. Elton was a stickler for using the names on the label - even if they were sometimes wrong. The first time

she found a *Sulcorebutia* in his collection, she noticed it had hairy flower buds suggesting it was a *Lobivia*, and told him about this, but soon realised he doesn't like being told his labels are wrong!

Next were several of his *Thelocacti*, including *T. bicolor ssp. schwarzii* and *T. matudae*. He's got a hothouse round the back which contains big old plants which are terribly overgrown since he was ill some of the time and unable to tend to them. Included were 2 plants of *Thelocactus hexaedrophus* – these were beautiful plants and the early morning sun made the spine clusters shine like little stars. Elton is now 70 years old and has just too many plants to look after, including some that are now too big to move or lift.

Buiningias were forming cephaliums. The temperatures rise in the late morning and it's a problem to keep the temperatures in the hot houses down. A *Mammillaria theresae* had just about finished flowering and consisted of over 50 heads. *Turbinicarpus aloinsii* had magenta flowers and was also huge. *T. lophophoroides* had white flowers with pink centres. A plant of *T. hexaedrophus* was 18 inches across. Kathy said when you see these plants and then come back to your own collection, you feel deflated. We saw a few more *Ariocarpus* starting to flower, *Echinocereus brandegeei* with pink blooms and also a *Mila* and *Mammillaria schumannii v. globosa*.

Carrying on after the mid-meeting break, we saw *Gymnocactus viereckii* becoming dichotomous. *Coryphantha pseudonickelsiae* was in flower, and *Coryphantha ramillosa* had lovely lilac-pink flowers. Behind was a large *Coryphantha poselgeriana* – a plant which rarely gets to bigger than a 5" pot in this country. Another *Coryphantha* had its skin marked in patches of white. It looked like red spider damage but Elton was adamant that it was something else. Whatever it was, it didn't seem to touch the plants around – and just seemed to affect the odd *Coryphantha*.

Kathy said that with a lot of *Coryphanthas*, the flowers change colour as they mature – and we saw some plants with pale apricot and yellows in different shades. There are also some whites and pinks out there and they seem to come up true from seed. Elton grows a lot of *Echinocereus* - but not many were in flower during their visit so she had not photographed most of them. A plant that was new to her was *Neolloydia matehualensis*, with a beautiful pale blue stem colour. There were two different clones of this attractive plant. A *Trichocereus* cross growing outside had some of the most beautiful flowers she had seen, in shades of

red, orange and pink. David agreed that the flowers were stunning but the plants looked horrific to grow. We saw more of the plants growing outside. An *Echinopsis* with pink flowers was also beautiful.

Kathy said there was a lot of repotting which needs to be done, but there was no space and Elton's wife has told him he's not having any more hot houses. A huge 4-headed *Echinocactus grusonii* illustrated the point about plants needing repotting. Back outside, there was a mound of earth next to a paving slab. Apparently the slab had been lifted up by gophers, something we don't have to worry about in this country. They don't seem to damage the plants but no-one knew how big the animals were. A plant of *Turbincarpus nigrata* in flower had strange curly white spines. A close up of *Ferocactus rectispinus* showed the lovely spines. Something different caught your eye every time you went into the greenhouse. *Weingartia neumanniana* had grown nicely and was offsetting. A view of the hanging and epiphytic cacti showed a bit of a jungle with the plants reaching from the roof to the ground, and no space to get in between the plants.

Strombocactus disciformis was in flower and growing an extra head. *Astrophytum asterias* cv "Super Kabuto" was heavily flecked. *Aztekium hintonii* was in flower. We also saw a nice variegated Agave. *Ariocarpus kotschoubeyanus* had purple flowers. The 8-headed *Ariocarpus* brought in for revival was now flowering nicely. *Coryphantha difficilis* was flowering. We saw a double headed *Thelocactus heterochromus* and *Astrophytum myriostigma* cv "Lotusland", followed by close-ups of the markings of *A. myriostigma* cv "Onzuka" and more close-ups of spines on some of the other cacti, including *Echinocactus horzonthalonius*. A *Mammillaria insularis* had nice pink/white flowers.

We saw some more pictures of the outdoor flowers, followed by *Mammillaria humboldtii* and her favourite plant – the *Mammillaria lasiacantha*. We ended with *Thelocactus lloydii* in a 10" bowl, *Thelocactus phymatothelos*, *Strombocactus disciformis*, a pink tinged *T. lophophoroides* and *Turbincarpus psuedomacrothele*, and a final picture showing a mixed collection of ten different species.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 6 entries in the March table show.

	Cacti – Echinocactus	Succulents – Agave
Open	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Leuchtenbergia principis</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Agave titanota</i>
	(2) -	(2) T Radford <i>Agave stricta</i>
	(3) -	(3) -
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Ferocactus macrodiscus</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Agave potatorum</i>
	(2) J Roskilly <i>Echinocactus grusonii</i>	(2) -
	(3) -	(3) -

Ivor Biddlecombe

Branch Committee Meeting

A committee meeting was held on March 19th 2012.

There was a discussion about the lack of a published financial report for the year ending 30-9-2011, and David Neville stated to the committee that the accounts were finalised but the auditors had severe problems with their computer system and were currently in the process of re-installing various software packages and re-loading corrupted database files. It was hoped that the report would be available for adoption at the next branch meeting.

We have received notice of a new member in Highcliffe, Dorset. The society has produced a new membership pack and this is also available to branches to sell to the general public at a small profit. It was agreed to buy 10 sets to see how they sell at the events we attend.

Keith and Kathy Flanagan contacted David after the March meeting to see if he would like to arrange a branch visit to their collection. It was agreed that this would be popular and a date would be confirmed. (Subsequent arrangements have been made for the afternoon of Sunday May 27th. Full details will appear in the May newsletter).

Our new librarian, Ciprian Suta, has already managed to sell a number of the spare books that

had been sitting around for a while. They are being shipped to buyers in Romania!

It was noted that income from the raffle at monthly meetings was not as good as might be hoped, and from the figures it appeared that perhaps a fair percentage of people were not buying tickets at all. Since many of our meetings run at a loss it is imperative that we encourage sales of raffle tickets to help fund the cost of visiting speakers, hall hire etc. We do not want to introduce a monthly attendance charge, but this is something that the majority of branches in the BCSS now do.

Entries in the monthly table show are now lower than ever before. We need to do something to encourage more people to bring plants along.

Discussions took place about the May Workshop meeting. Some ideas and proposals were agreed, but suggestions and ideas of topics they would like to discuss should be sought from the members at the April meeting.

It was agreed to buy the new book on *Echinocereus* by John Pilbeam for the branch library.

Plans and arrangements for the public displays that we shall attend were discussed, the first of which is Sparsholt Countryside Day in May. Although some committee members are unable to attend, it was agreed that we have enough people to man the stand.

Future meeting dates were set as June 15th and August 13th, providing the meeting room is available.

David Neville

[The following was handed to me at the last meeting, with a request to make sure I included it in s month's newsletter]

Snippets

Cephalocereus blondii (nomen nudum)

The generic name is derived from a combination of cephalium which is a terminal growth producing abundant hair, and cereus which refers to columnar, ribbed, succulent and usually upright stems. (Note: cephalium should not be confused with the term pseudocephalium or "false cephalium" which is a lateral zone or tuft of or hair or bristles, often of a darker colour, which develops at maturity in certain taxa). The epithet blondii describes the colour of the hair produced by the cephalium.

The body shape is complex but always with twelve ribs. The morphology may be plastic. The epidermis is smooth when young, becoming furrowed or wrinkled in older specimens. Areoles are sparse and widely spaced. The cephalium is usually dark in immature specimens, becoming pale later. The change may occur suddenly. The colour range from white through to yellow has been recorded, sometimes with streaks or patches of darker shades.

Seed remains the only satisfactory means of propagation. Young specimens require early potting. Liquid feed is appreciated with increasing mineral content towards maturity. Cultivation of older specimens may prove challenging, but they often respond well to bedding out.

The species has been known for several thousand years, having been mentioned in some of the earliest known texts. It remains a mystery why such an attractive and widely distributed species has eluded proper botanical description until 1st April 2012.

A Non and A.N. Other

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on May 1st, and will take the form of a cultivation and propagation workshop. As usual, this will be an open format meeting, with a few pre-selected topics, but also time to discuss any problem plants and to help identify your plants. So bring along anything that is giving you trouble, or whose name you don't know, and we'll try and identify it for you.

In addition, if you took up the offer of the free *Mammillaria lanata* and *Echeveria lilacina* plants handed out by the branch last year, please bring them in so that we can see how everyone's plants are doing – but do label them so that they don't get mixed up with someone else's plants.

Finally, one of the discussion topics will be monstrose and cristate plants, so if you have any of these in your collection, please do bring them along

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*, *Airamboa*, *Austrocylindropuntia*, *Brasiliopuntia*, *Consolea*, *Corynopuntia*, *Cumulopuntia*, *Cylindropuntia*, *Grusonia*, *Maihuenia*, *Maihueniopsis*, *Marenopuntia*, *Micropuntia*, *Nopalea*, *Pereskia*, *Pereskiaopsis*, *Pterocactus*, *Puna*, *Quiabentia*, *Rhodocactus*, *Tacinga*, *Tephrocactus* and *Tunilla*.

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

Forthcoming Events

Sat 14 th	Apr	Isle of Wight	"Wildlife" - Colin Haygarth
Sat 21 st	Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Auction
Tue 1 st	May	Southampton	Cultivation & Propagation Workshop
Sun 6 th	May	Portsmouth	Display / Plant Sales @ Bishops Waltham Garden Fair
Sat 12 th	May	Isle of Wight	"Brazil" - Cliff Thompson
Sat 19 th	May	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Sparsholt College Countryside Day
Sat 19 th	May	Portsmouth	"Brazil Part1 : Rio Grande do Sul" - Cliff Thompson
Tue 5 th	Jun	Southampton	"What I Saw Last Winter - Bolivia & Mexico - Paul Klaassen
Sat 9 th	Jun	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Summer Show @ St Colman's Church Hall, Cosham
Sat 9 th	Jun	Isle of Wight	"Peru" - John Hughes
Sat 16 th	Jun	Portsmouth	"Collections of the World" - Ian Woolnough

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