

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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<b>Editorial .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Announcements .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Last Month's Meeting.....</b>	<b>1</b>
My Collection – Julie Carey .....	1
<b>Branch Committee Meeting .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Cultivation Meeting May 2017.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Books and things .....</b>	<b>7</b>
New books in the library.....	7
Read All About It! .....	8
Table Show Results .....	8
<b>Forthcoming Events .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Next Month's Meeting .....</b>	<b>9</b>

## Editorial

Summer time started a couple of weeks ago, and it's interesting to see how the plants in the garden have also perked up over the last couple of weeks. Azaleas are coming into flower and plants of Pieris also seem to be coming into life with some very bright colours. The daffodils are pretty much done and it's time for the tulips to take over.

## Announcements

The Mammillaria Society's Annual Meeting will be held at RHS Wisley on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> April. As BCSS members, we can go along on that day and get free admission to Wisley if you mention that you are there to attend the Mammillaria event.

## Last Month's Meeting

### *My Collection – Julie Carey*

Julie mentioned that she only does this one talk, but she hoped it would be interesting. It's always nice to take a look at other people's collections. She doesn't have a greenhouse and all her plants are grown in a large conservatory. She has installed staging in one corner and there's also a lip around the conservatory to hold more plants. She grows a mixture of plants but has 2 main passions that she was going to talk about.

The first of these was the Asclepiads. The slides included the names of the plants but she was not a

taxonomy expert, just an enthusiastic grower and the talk this evening would mainly be a flower fest.

Her conservatory is unheated, but it's warmer than a greenhouse due to the shelter provided by the house. She did install an undersoil warming cable but this stopped working 6 months after installation and it's not been usable ever since. The first plant we saw was *Stapelia variegata* and this was the first Asclepiad that she owned. It is one of the easiest ones to grow. It has a reputation for bad smells and it does have a mildly bad smell - when it flowered, her husband did empty the kitchen bin for her in the first time for ages! She had photographed it in different light conditions and with and without flash. We saw the whole plant in bloom, on the windowsill. Some people are put off from growing these plants - they are not the easiest to grow and you have to get by with some trial and error and not get too upset if you kill things. Her picture quality is mostly good thanks to a new camera - but some of the pictures in the talk were older and not so good.

*Huernia zebrina* had not bloomed for her recently so she had to use an old photo, but at least it still gave us an idea of what the flower looked like. A hybrid with red/yellow flowers is fairly easy to grow and also obtain. She doesn't do anything special with her potting mix. She's not had success with cat litter, perhaps she was using the wrong type. She uses a cactus mix with a bit more grit mixed in, and if the plant is particularly fussy, then she'll increase the amount of grit. She buys most of her plant online (Ebay – although you have to be careful, due to hybrids and misnamed plants) - and it's best to buy only if a picture of the actual flower is shown. *Huernia primulina* is fairly easy to get hold of. Cactus marts and the National show are a good place to get these plants. *Huernia kennedyana* was obtained from Anne Adams.

*Orbea longii* is one of her favourites - her sister once walked into her conservatory and asked why she was growing sticks - it just has a long thick stem until it flowers - the flowers looks neat like a button as they slowly starts to open. It's a good one to grow because it doesn't have a bad smell. She always thinks some of the flowers look like alien landscapes. If you don't like the bad smell, try

*Stapelia flavopurpurea* has a sweet smell. It also comes in different coloured varieties. This is a green flowered one, but she also has a red clone which has never flowered for her. The wrinkles on the flower are there to mimic carrion - hence the popular name of carrion flowers. *Duvalia angustifolia* has a small flower, only as big as a small fingernail and it was flowering in a 2.5" pot. She browses Ebay and other online sites quite a bit and one day she was surprised to see one of her pictures (taken from her Facebook or Flickr account) being used to illustrate a plant for sale. She contacted the Italian seller who was using the picture and wrote to him, asking for possible discount on a purchase but she didn't receive any reply!

She finds *Caralluma europaea* easy to grow - it comes from parts of North Africa and also Spain and Italy. The picture was slightly out of focus. The word *Caralluma* is from the Arabic for wound in flesh / abscess and she wasn't sure whether it's a reference to the smell or the reddish brown colour of the flowers. You can grow these plants easily from cuttings but she also has had good success from seeds and we saw seedlings of *Edithcolea grandis*. It has fantastic flowers but is a challenge. She has grown the plants onto mid-sized plants but has not flowered them yet. She's not aware of any other people who have managed it either, and wondered if don't get enough light in this country. Next was *Orbeanthus insignis*, pictured in flower at a friend. She has grown plants to this size and if she managed to flower them, this is what it would look like. She grew a new batch from seed and managed to get them to 3-4 years but then a sudden cold spell came along and the plants died. For sensitive plants, she takes them indoors into the house when winter arrives. *Stapelia grandiflora* is very common and easy to grow, and it was one of the first plants she had. If you know the musical "The Little Shop of Horrors" - the flower buds and the plant Aubrey2 look very similar. When the flowers open - it's quite a hairy flower and smelly too. It does attract the flies and you can sometimes see maggots in the flower.

The next plant had a tiny flower, the size of your finger nail - it was *Rhytidocaulon ciliatum*. It is quite finicky to grow and she has managed to grow them for 2-3 years and then they die. You have to keep these warm in the winter so she takes them indoors and puts them on a spare window sill. She likes the hairy flowers - they seem to mimic hairs on the flesh. *Rhytidocaulon macrolobum* is slightly different. The skins look quite interesting close up but from a distance it's just like a green stick. Close up, the flowers are quite velvety and they look like spiders, which her husband doesn't like.

There are quite a few hybrids around and not everyone is a fan of them. She doesn't always set out to buy a hybrid, but sometimes she'll buy something online or from Ebay and when it flowers she'll post it onto a Facebook group where others may correct the plant's name. When it's an attractive hybrid she doesn't mind. The flowers of the featured *Huernia* hybrid opens up and the petals fold back, and we saw a sideways-on shot to illustrate this. Next was the smallest flower in her collection, which was on *Pseudolithos dodsoniana*. Unfortunately it can be tricky to grow and she's had plants for years and then suddenly they keel over. She did get it to flower and kept it for a few years. *Huernia schneideriana* has red/maroon flowers - they look like lunar landscapes close up.

Next was the red form of *Echidnopsis cereiformis* - you can also get it in a yellow flowered form. The flowers are small - the size of a little fingernail. The skin is also interesting - it has a crystalline appearance. *Stapelia gigantea* was not her plant - this plant belongs to a friend of hers - it's the largest flowered Stapeliad out there. *Duvalia modesta* is a small plant. The flower is a more drab colour but the shapes and hairs are still quite interesting. *huernia pendriformis* is her favourite plant - and also her favourite plant to photograph, The texture just looks like velvet - she has a couple of clones and they are easy to grow. *Orbea divaricata* is commonly called the starfish flower - you can get pinks and yellowish shades too. It is easy to keep for her - but it does depend, some people have success for others and vice versa. We saw another *Duvalia modesta* - it was a deeper red colour this time. The appearance does vary depending on the light. Digital cameras seem to struggle with reds and magentas. Another *Duvalia* hybrid she bought deliberately - from Anne Adams. She also included picture of *Stapelia variegata* and *S. gigantea* side by side to allow comparison of the two flower sizes - when you compare this with the *Pseudolithos*, the flower size does vary hugely.

Moving on to vine-like plants, we saw *Ceropegia ampliata* - she lets it have free reign along the staging but as it wraps its twines everywhere, it becomes a problem when you need to move it. The vines can also become a super highway for mealy bugs. The plant has nice flowers. *Ceropegia stapeliiformis* has long stems and interesting flowers. There's quite a few different shaped flowers amongst the *Ceropegias* and you can get some of them on the Internet. They can be straggly plants and can take over if not pruned. Another one was hanging down from the staging and then grew down and all along the floor. She prunes them from

time to time to keep them in check. *Ceropegia haygarthii* has an attractive little flower – it's quite prolific when it does flower. The flowers of *C. hybrida* have a cage structure at the top of the flower.

Moving on to the sweet smelling plants - she grows several different hoyas. Some people have told her they can't grow *H. carnosa*, but she finds it straight forward. She grows it indoors like a house plant and it prefers a bit of shade, it doesn't like bright light which tends to bleach the leaves. It blooms for several days and releases the strong scent at night. You can smell them even before you see the open flowers. *Hoya obovata* is a plant which she obtained from a grower in Australia. While browsing Ebay, she found a seller of this on Ebay's Australian site and she noticed he was located near her sister. So when she visited her sister, she went to the seller. His back garden was full of cacti and succulents - it must be nice to grow them outdoors all year round! She brought back a small cutting. *Hoya bella* is one of the smaller Hoyas - it can be grown in a hanging pot. A question from the audience asked if she had problems with red spider? She didn't although the plants do get mealy sometimes. *Hoya cummingiana* is a plant she bought at the National Show last year. It was just coming into flower when she bought it, and it opened soon afterwards. It is small leaved variety so would be good choice if you don't have a lot of room.

She had mentioned she sourced many of her plants on the internet. And there's also a lot of other information out there. She recommended checking Martin Heigan's site. He's a great photographer who lives in South Africa - he takes pictures of plants in habitat and of his collection, and insects too. His site is good for IDing plants. On Facebook - there are lots of groups which you can join. The one she belongs to used to have a few hundred members when she first joined and had 7800 members when she took the screen capture and probably double that now. The group has growers from all over the world - people will swap plants and cuttings and will ID plants for you. The International Asclepiad Society produces 3 magazines per year. It is a somewhat technical publication but is useful source of information. Chris Moore passed away a few years ago but he was a BCSS member and his website <http://www.asclepiad-exhibition.org/> has been left active. It contains pictures of his own plants and is a useful source for IDing plants. The next picture she showed a mass of *Hoodia gordonii* plants – you might think it's a field in the wild somewhere but it was actually of plants in cultivation. Hoodias are grown to produce appetite suppressants. They are quite smelly plants, and that collection of plants

must be eye watering. The pharma companies used to grow these in large numbers - but the trade has died down and some of these plantings have now been abandoned.

She moved on to talk about some of her hybrids. Epiphyllums first - most people may have one or two but not more because they take up a lot of room. The species originate from Central America / Brazil and they are jungle cacti. The original species were mostly white flowered, but with selective breeding and crossing, many different colours exist now. There are now hundred and thousands of multi-generic hybrids. They are sold on the Internet and can be sourced relatively easily. They are sold as cuttings and are easy to grow from those. You can also grow from seed but it takes several years to get flowers and there's the added uncertainty of not knowing the exact flower colour of plants grown from seed. We saw some of hers growing out in the garden - she puts them out in the summer, mainly to get them out of the way - but they do also flower better if they are put out in the sun during the summer months. She puts them in a shady spot without too much sun to avoid scorch. The bees love the flowers. She bought this because it was named after her. It is perhaps the largest flower in her collection and an easy one to flower. The flower colours as taken by a camera vary a lot depending on the lighting conditions. She got very excited when she got her first Epiphyllum fruit - they do fruit quite easily. She has pollinated plants herself and others have produced fruit thanks to the bees. We saw the seed pod, and the seeds are covered in pith. She crushes the pulp and then uses a tea strainer to get rid of the pulp. Grown from seed, they will take a long time to get large enough to flower.

We saw "Whirlbird" which has a red/magenta flower. The colours available now are endless. The same flower in sunlight looks completely different. Springtide has a double flower. "King Midas" is orange-gold and "Three Oranges" is red / magenta. "Gene Lund" is hard to photograph - the colours are very rich, and the magenta is intense. She uses plant stands to hold multiple pots and also uses hanging baskets and hangs the plants in the trees for the summer months. She takes them in for the winter and puts them in the garage, where they'll go dormant for a couple of months. She then brings them back into the conservatory in the spring and finally they can go back outside when the danger of frost has passed. They don't seem to mind being in the garage in the winter. She bought this as a white one but it turned out to be a different flower colour so not sure what it is. For these plants she uses an earthier mix, because in habitat, they grow in the

debris between the tree branches and they are epiphytic - so they like moisture and feeding, more so than regular cacti. They can become straggly but you can give them a pruning and keep them compact and also pass off the cuttings to friends. They are quite easy to source online and there are nice picture galleries online. There are lots available on Ebay. Some sellers write the name of the plant on the leaf with permanent ink, which annoys her.

Just to finish off the first half, we saw some odd plants from her collection. She has a few different Massonias and *M. pustulata* is one of her favourites because of the leaves. They are South African plants and the flowers are pollinated by gerbils. There are little pools of nectar in the base of the flowers which attract the gerbils. *Daubinya zeyheri* is a small bulb which she has flowered for the first time - the flowers are interesting mix of colours - red and blue - and there's prominent yellow pollen. You can see the nectar in those and they are also pollinated by gerbils. *Haemanthus* is a plant you can find in the cactus marts. They don't like to be disturbed so she lets the bulbs become quite potbound before repotting. *H. albiflos* has white flowers and is the one you're most likely to encounter. Finally *Scadoxus multiflorus* is a bulb that can be purchased from garden centres. It forms fantastic red flowers consisting of multiple florets.

As we closed for the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the talk, David asked Julie what she used to control pests. For mealy bug she uses a horticultural soap spray. She does have an old bottle of Malathion in her garage and uses this for a really bad infestation but this chemical can't be bought any more.

Resuming after the break, Julie mentioned that her other passion is hybrid cacti. She posts pictures on her Facebook page and also takes the plants into work to enjoy the flowers. Lots of people don't like hybrids and will only grow species but she hoped this talk would change people's minds. She started with Echinopsis hybrids. The Paramount series of hybrids were created by Harry Johnson in the 1930s and 1940s in California. They are a quite well known series, consisting of 26 types which were offered for sale in the 50s and 60s. Then in the 1990s Bob Schick (who works at the Huntington Gardens) created a further 129 hybrids using the Paramounts and crossing with other plants. This trend has continued to the present day and people have added Trichocereus, Lobivia, Echinopsis as well as Hildewinteria to create an even wider range of plants. You can find pictures of the original Schick series online at the Huntington website but unfortunately, because of the plant regulations, they no longer export plants. However the plants did

come over in previous years and so you will find them for sale in this country both online and at Cactus marts.

She showed a page from the Huntington website showing the Schick hybrids, followed by a scan of a couple of pages from the Johnson Cactus Gardens catalogue of 1968. Many of these plants are still in circulation. The listings showed "Stars and Stripes" and "Terra Cotta", the latter is a plant which she got from Terry Smale. Next was an original Paramount Lobivia hybrid called "Blaze" which has cup shaped red and white flowers, which she found on the German Ebay site - this is quite a good source for plants. Sometimes the bidding can reach silly prices. Quite a few of the German sellers also have nursery websites. The Echinopsis swap group on Facebook is a good resource for buying and swapping plants. We saw another view of "Blaze", showing it to be a relatively small and neat plant. As for UK hybrids, Abbey Brook have a web page and usually have a stand at the National show. Ian and Janet Robinson have a nursery in Wales - they produce their own range of hybrids and also sell the Schicks. Southfields sells online as CactusLand and she had brought along an example of their catalogue. They attend RHS shows throughout the year. And on UK Ebay, you can find plants from Manor farm nursery - the Manor Farm hybrids by Susan Pink - and also Bilsdale hybrids.

We saw the Robinson's webpage - they sell other cacti too, but have a good range of the Echinopsis. Next was Southfield's CactusLand webpage. If you don't have Internet access, you can phone them and they'll send through a brochure. They tend not to name their plants individually and instead have ranges called New Dawn, Bourne Pixie, Rainbow etc. We saw the Southfields stand at the RHS Hampton Court show from a couple of years ago. It's quite nice to go and buy the plants when in flower - because they aren't individually named, it's pot luck what you'll get if you order via mail order, whereas if you see the plant in flower you'll know exactly what you are getting. We saw a photo of her haul from Hampton Court and we saw one of the Bourne Pixie range and a Chamaelobivia hybrid from the Rainbow range - she likes the two tone petals. We saw another Rainbow hybrid. The Chamaelobivia hybrids are quite floriferous and they are easy to flower and relatively compact, so they are good ones to start with. They are a bit susceptible to sunburn. We saw one of the New Dawn hybrids - the flower looking almost like a Chrysanthemum. Pictures taken with flash and in daylight again showed differences in appearance. The plants can flower from an age of 3-4 years but as the plant reaches maturity you can get larger

flowers and more flowers. In addition the plants can produce more than one flush of flowers. Unfortunately the flowers don't last very long, for the *Echinopsis* types it might only be a day. The smaller flowered *Lobivia*-based hybrids might last for 2-3 days.

We saw one of the Schick hybrids "Brigitte Beauty" which is pink with a darker midstripe. Anne Adams at one point had a complete set of the Schick hybrids but she's lost a couple of them, so Julie was on the lookout for those - she herself has about 50 of the Schick hybrids. She is drawn to the red and magenta flowers. "Sorceress" is magenta with an orange midstripe - it's a plant she saw at a show in Crawley one year, and this was what started her interest in these plants. "Beautiful Dreamer" is another Schick hybrid, with apricot flowers. A shot of a couple of plants showed the difference in the size and height of the flowers between different hybrids. "Don Juan" is magenta and red, and it's hard to capture properly on camera since the colours are so intense. "Galaxy" is one of the largest flowered Schick hybrids and the flowers are white with a pink midstripe. "Madame Pele" is magenta and "Temptress" is fuchsia. The first time a plant flowers, the flowers might be out of shape and not quite perfect but as the plant matures the quality of the flower will improve in later years. The *Echinopsis* types will usually produce a couple of flushes, but the *Trichos* are less likely to. The *Lobivia* based plants just repeat flower throughout the summer. "Raoul Wallenberg" is red and orange. One of her favourites Schicks "Oracle" has a star-like flower. "Coquette" is bright yellow and she likes the flower structure. "Riptide" is an attractive mix of yellows and pinks and "Daydream" is a mix of orange and pink. "Rosalie" is one of her favourites and looks like a wild rose. We saw some plants on her desk at work - she checks her collection in the morning, and if anything is going to flower that day, she'll take it into work, otherwise she might miss the flowering altogether. This usually incites a lot of comment from people at work. A question from the audience asked if any of these hybrids are scented. A couple are, but in general they are not.

"Cassandra" is magenta and orange. *Trichocereus* hybrid "Apricot Glow" is a Mark Dimmit hybrid which is a spectacular mix of yellows and oranges and salmon pink. She won this on the German Ebay site and it was a lower price due to being a tatty plant but it's grown out quite well. She bought an un-named hybrid because she liked the colours. The German Ebay is flooded with these, a lot of growers will list their plants on there in the summer months. We saw one from the UK hybridizers Manor Farm

called "Carousel". If you look on Ebay you'll see a lot of plants which tend to look the same, but there are some particular ones which people watch out for. There was one called "Julie" that she just had to buy. She mentioned she didn't have any sale plants at the meeting today because she had sold all her spares last year, but if anyone is interested in anything of hers, do get in touch with her.

Bob Schick named a lot of his hybrids after people he knew, and then he used some random names - the featured plant with red flowers was called Samurai. *Echinopsis subdenudata* cv. Tufty has a scented flower. She won *Echinopsis schickendanzii* in a raffle and "Madame Pele" was in flower at the same time so she cross pollinated them. She got some seeds from this. When you grow multi-generic hybrids from seed, there is so much variety possible that you really have to grow on all the seedlings to see what they're going to produce. A comment on the Abbey Brook website says that over the years they have flowered 150,000 seedlings and only 110 were thought to be good enough to be named. We saw a few more plants from Southfields - "Bourne Cheer" has a orange/red flower along with a *Rebutia* hybrid "Pink Perfection" and *Echinopsis* "Blaze". You can't go wrong with the *Rebutias* if you like a lot of flowers. There were 129 Schick hybrids originally and a few more have been added recently. The original ones were imported years ago when there weren't the strict plant movement regulations of today and since they propagate readily, you can usually source them from the UK or Europe. Next was possibly a hybrid of *Echinopsis ancistrophora* ssp. *arachnacantha* - she never seen it with this particular coloration - it was a plant she got from Anne Adams.

We saw a few of her plants all out in flower at once - these were mostly the *Lobivia* hybrids. Another one from the UK hybridizers is "Bilsdale Flame", and this was easy to get on Ebay. We saw a few more on her desk at work. Andreas Wessner does his own hybridizing and he is a German nurseryman. He has fantastic plants but is hard to get hold of him because he travels and is away for extended periods. Other people sell his plants on Ebay as well. *Echinopsis* "Royal Red" was a plant she sneaked in from the United States.

*Lobivia jajoiana* is a very popular species plant for hybridizing because of the black throat. However, seedlings doesn't always germinate very well and the plants produced can also be sterile which means they can only be propagated via offsets. We saw some more of Andreas Wessner's hybrids and also more by another German hybridizer which go under the "Mex" grouping. Wessner's *jajoiana*-based

hybrid "Anemone" is one of her favourites and she actually took a plant of this with her when she went for a weekend break - the plant was in bud at the time and she would have missed the flower otherwise! We saw a couple of different Mex hybrids, including "Bob Marley". The flower looked a little tatty because it was the first flowering, but it should improve over time. She had a plant of *Mediolobivia* "Eos" and it has an interesting habit - the first flowers in the season are regular peach coloured but the second set have darker coloured red streaks on the peach petals. She is always asked for offsets of it but the plant has not obliged as yet, so her friends will have to wait. Each flower looks completely different. Could it be some sort of virus, like with Dutch tulips? David Neville said he had seen pictures of this illustrated in a book somewhere.

She mentioned there's a good Facebook group for the *Echinopsis* hybrids - last time she checked there was 507 international members - you have to ask permission to join. It is quite good for IDing plants and arranging swaps. The German Ebay site is good as well - but just check that the seller will post to the UK and will accept Paypal because it's difficult or expensive to send cash or do bank transfers. Another site is the *Echinopsis* gallery <http://echinopsis.eu/> - where people post their pics and ask for IDs. A friend of hers in Sweden has also produced some beautiful hybrids.

She showed us web pages featuring Andreas Wessner's plants and he has produced some wonderful plants. As mentioned earlier, he can be difficult to get hold of, but it's worth pursuing. *Hildewinteria* is now a popular plant for hybridizing and she's collected a few hybrids. The addition of this species adds some nice orange and red shades. One of the plants she has seems to mark up badly wherever it's flowered and this seems to happen to everyone who's grown it. "Humkes Röschen" and "Helms Neue" are two of the *Hildewinteria* hybrids she's tried. The next plant she showed she had nicknamed "Smiler" due to a strange double growth at the top of the plant which made it look like a green muppet! It actually went on to grow another stem out the side. "Andre Mora" is sought after by collectors - it has two tone flowers with pale inner petal and red outer petals. Most of the *Hildewinteria* crosses will droop over and are suited to grow in a hanging pot but one she has named "Humkes kleine Gelbe" grew straight up - it did not show any signs of producing any other stems and grew to a height of 2½ feet and then it decided to flower in a spectacular burst, forming a total of 35 buds and opening several buds at a time. We saw some pictures of it in full flower.

A questioner from the audience asked if there was a problem with temperature? Julie mentioned that the Schick "Anemone" was perhaps more tender than others, but on the whole, most are quite hardy. She finished with a plant from a totally differently family - a rose - *Rosa grandiflora* cv "Rock N Roll" which is spectacular patchwork of red and white. She said that if she could figure out how to hybridize it with an *Echinopsis*, she'd be able to retire!

Vinay Shah

## Branch Committee Meeting

A Branch Committee meeting was held on 13<sup>th</sup> March.

There was some discussion about the Cultivation Workshop which we will hold in May. We will again have the plant swap, so members should bring in their plants and seedlings, for exchange & sale. David would write up his thoughts in the April newsletter (see page 6)

In May we will also take part in Sparsholt College's Countryside day. We need around 4 people to man that event and it seems like we will have enough volunteers.

Ian Acton has donated a book on Aloes to the branch library. Richard will be producing an updated list of the library's books to take account of the new titles acquired in the last few years, and this will be put up on our website.

Alice has re-instated our Facebook page and she will keep it updated with up and coming events.

After a bit of arm twisting, Bruce Beckerleg said he may be in a position to host an Open Day, he will let us know in the coming weeks.

Vinay Shah

## Cultivation Meeting May 2017

Our meeting in May will be a special practical evening which we are calling a 'Propagation and Cultivation Workshop'. We have held similar evenings for the past few years and they have proved to be very popular with members. The aim is to cover a broad range of topics relating to our hobby, with practical demonstrations generating widespread discussions from which we all hopefully learn more about the ways in which we all grow our plants. The meeting will also incorporate, for the third year in succession, a Swap Table for cuttings and seedlings. If you have spare and spare cuttings

and seedlings please bring them along to the meeting so that you can swap them with other members. We will supply bags and paper labels so that you can identify your new acquisitions.

We have come up with a wide range of topics to cover and discuss.... let's hope we manage to get through most of them!

Adrian Bailey will lead a discussion on greenhouses, which we hope will cover how members approach such issues as linings, heating, shading etc.

Bruce Beckerleg will lead a discussion on raising plants from seed. If you have sown any seeds this year please try to bring some trays of your seedlings along so that other members can see how you approach this engrossing part of our hobby,

In recent years the branch has distributed a range of free plants to members, so that we can compare our differing results, and discuss our successes and failures. Please bring along the plants that you have received from the branch so that we can discuss how they have grown and developed since acquisition. The plants handed out in previous years include: *Echeveria lilacina*, *Mammillaria albilanata*, *Mammillaria microhelix* (2013), *Mammillaria glassii v ascensionis* (2014), *Frithia pulchra* (2015) *Euphorbia obesa* (2016). David Neville will lead a discussion on the results that we have all achieved. And we will also be distributing another free plant for all those people attending the May meeting – that's another good reason to be there!

Vinay Shah will be talking to us about some of the electronic and digital devices that are available to greenhouse owners and plant growers, If you use any such gadgets why not bring them along so that we can learn about the benefits and drawbacks of each.

If you have any problem plants please bring them along for a diagnosis! Whether plants are doing something peculiar, or are simply not doing as well as you might have hoped, we can hopefully help you to grow them better in the future by discussing what might be wrong with them.

Richard White will help us wade our way through the various additives and supplements that are offered to growers to improve their plants. Have you tried using different fertilizers with differing results, or used fulvic or humic acids? Maybe you have tried adding vinegar to acidify the water, or have added Epsom Salts? Have you tried adding soft soaps or detergents to the water? And have you

experimented with the use of SB Plant Invigorator? Bring along any of the things you have tried and we will try to determine the benefits and drawbacks of each.

Pests are a problem for all of us at one time or another. I will talk about what pesticides and insecticides are currently available on the market, and lead a discussion on the best options. If you have discovered something that seems to work for you, please bring along a bottle or canister to show our members,

I hope that this list of topics will inspire you to think about related matters that you would like us to discuss at the May meeting. Please bring along anything that relates to any of these topics and that will help to stimulate discussion and help inform us all.

We look forward to sharing all our experiences on this wide range of subjects, and hope that you will all bring along related items to promote wide-ranging discussions, along with the plants that you have received from the branch in recent years so that we can discuss those too.

*David Neville*

## Books and things

Now it's definitely Spring and just about the opposite of everything I said in my previous "Books and Things" in the November 2016 newsletter now applies – the Spring Equinox has come and gone, the clocks have gone forward, Easter is on the way, my ash trees have little bunches of flower buds (their leaves come later), daffodils, tulips and other spring bulbs are in flower and other plants in the garden are definitely bursting into growth. The *Erysimum 'Bowles Mauve'* has resumed flowering and attracting butterflies again. In the conservatory, the *Cleistocactus colademononis* I mentioned last time has just opened the first of this year's bright red flowers. The winter-flowering bulbs are mostly drying up and will need tidying up, so that I can see the cacti underneath! (Well, I did once read that some succulents can be scorched by bright April sunshine after a winter of British gloom, so you could say that I'm taking precautions.)

### ***New books in the library***

Turning, as I should, to the Branch Library, I have a couple of additions to report, which you can borrow from the Library table, if no-one else has beaten you to it.

We discussed two new books at the recent branch Committee meeting, and they have been duly added to the branch library. These are:

**“Guide to the Aloes of South Africa”** by Ben-Erik van Wyk & Gideon Smith (1996), Briza Publications, Pretoria, 302 pp. Because of its date, this book does not include the recent changes in Aloe names, but there are many colour photos of them in habitat. A few pages of general introduction, include uses and cultivation, are followed by two-page spreads of 125 species, with text on the left, including a small distribution map and sometimes cultural hints, and two to four colour photos on the right.

**“Epiphyllum”** by Frank Süpplie (undated), E.P.R.I.C. (publisher), 80 pp. This is mostly a picture-book of Epiphyllum hybrids, without any text about each one. However, there is a small amount of text in English and German, including a page and a half on cultivation. Short sections in the book illustrate and name some new hybrids, document those created by Joyce Carr, and illustrate some but by no means all botanical species (i.e. not hybrids) in the genera Disocactus, Epiphyllum, Heliocereus, Nopalxochia, Selenicereus, Trichocereus, Werckleocereus, Wilmattea and Wittia, in other words all those things which are too untidy for most true cactophiles to cherish.

The “Epiphyllum” book is the first of a series; there are two later “Epiphyllum” volumes, one on Rhipsalis and Lepismium, and one on Schlumbergera by the same author and in a similar style, but we do not have these in our library (I have acquired copies from the author’s stand at successive BCSS National Shows). The last two benefit from having rather more text, the “Rhipsalis and Lepismium” book promising to be quite useful to those rare Rhipsalis enthusiasts.

**Read All About It!**

Our speaker for today’s meeting is Ben Turner, whose talk is entitled “The Huntington Desert Garden and LA County Arboretum & Botanic Gardens” which again doesn’t give me much of a clue as to which books from our library you might want to read in relation to his talk. However, he will be talking about a number of Aloes and Agaves, for which we have several books in the library. We do of course have a variety of books on cacti in general and on specific genera, so have a look for anything which piques your interest after listening to his talk.

*Richard White*

**Table Show Results**

There were 24 entries in the March table show, and 6 entries for “Plants in Flower”.

	<b>Cacti – Opuntia</b>	<b>Succulents – Haworthia</b>
Open	(1) G Penrose Puna bonnieae	(1) M Stevenson Haworthia truncata
	(2) I Biddlecombe Opuntia molfinoi	(2) I Biddlecombe H. bolusii var aranea
	(3) B Beckerleg Opuntia sp.	(3) B Beckerleg Haworthia reinwardtii f. kaffiridriftensis
Intermediate	(1) I Biddlecombe Tephro. geometricans.	(1) B Beckerleg Haworthia maughanii
	(2) M Fox-Rousell Pterocactus kunzei	(2) G Penrose Haworthia scabra
	(3) T Smith Opuntia clavarioides	(3) B Turner Haworthia glauca

<b>Cacti/Succulent in Flower</b>
(1) B Beckerleg Crassula suzannae
(2) G Penrose Aloe “Red Dragon”
(3) I Biddlecombe Schlumbergera sp.

*Ivor Biddlecombe*



## Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and it will be a Cultivation & Propagation Workshop. See Page 6 for additional details.

The May Table Show will consist of **3 Cacti** (cacti) and **3 Succulents** (succulents), along with "plant in flower". 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 table show classes use the classifications from the *Guide to Shows 10<sup>th</sup> Edition* (contact me if you don't have a copy of this).

## Forthcoming Events

Sat	8 <sup>th</sup>	Apr	Isle of Wight	Ramblings in NE Mexico (Chris Davis)
Sat	15 <sup>th</sup>	Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Auction
Tue	2 <sup>nd</sup>	May	Southampton	Cultivation & Propagation Workshop, demonstrations and discussions
Sat	13 <sup>th</sup>	May	Isle of Wight	What I Did Last Winter (Paul Klaassen)
Sat	13 <sup>th</sup>	May	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Sparsholt College - Countryside Day
Sat	20 <sup>th</sup>	May	Portsmouth	Succulents & Cacti with Altitude (Terry Smale)
Sat	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Summer Show at Christ Church Hall, Widley, PO7 5AU
Tue	6 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Southampton	South Africa #1 (W. Cape) (Chris Evers)
Sat	10 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Isle of Wight	Cactotherapy - Gordon Rowley autobiographical compilation
Sat	17 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	Lime Loving Cacti (John Watmough)
Wed	21 <sup>st</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	Visit to Kathy & Keith Flanagan's Collection
Sat	24 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Southampton	Branch visit to South West Cactus Mart, Portishead, Bristol BS20 7DD

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

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/southamptonbcsc>