

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

After a patchy performance during most of April, the weather finally improved in time for the bank holiday weekend. In the last month, we've had decent amounts of rain interspersed with some sunny days and my outdoor plants in the garden have grown well – as has the grass on the lawn!

Several of my cacti started to bloom in April, with Rebutias, Mammillarias and Gymnocalyciums all being early flowerers. There's also a large bud forming on an Epiphyllum – this is a plant which I haven't looked after very well, but it managed to put out some new growths at the end of last year, and these have given the plant a new lease of life. Towards the end of last year, I split up some overcrowded clumps of Haworthias and Aloes, and the resultant plants are now looking much healthier and happier. Quite a few of my other plants would probably benefit from similar attention!

Announcements

It is sad to report that **Terry Hewitt**, a good friend of our branch, passed away on 20th April after suffering a heart attack. Terry ran the impressive Holly Gate Cactus nursery and plant collection, and he was a regular speaker at our branch; indeed his last visit to us was only a few months ago, in November.

Fresh Acres Nursery will be holding an Open Evening starting at 6:30pm on Monday June 13th, with plants available at sale prices. The nursery is situated at Walberton (between Chichester and Littlehampton). I'll include a map next month. A number of our branch members are likely to

attend this event, so if you want an evening out and would like to share a lift, please let one of the committee know as soon as possible.

There will be a **Cactus Auction** on Sunday May 15th, where plants belonging to the late Roy Boniface (a Gymnocalycium specialist who also grew other genera) will be sold and auctioned. Plant sales will commence at 9:30am and the auction will start at 11am, at 21 Forest End, Waterlooville (PO7 7AB). Forest End is the last turning on the left on the A3, going north from Portsmouth and immediately before the first Waterlooville roundabout.

At the end of the month, the Branch will again be putting on a display and plant sales at the 3-day Garden Market at the **Whiteley Village Shopping Outlet**, which is signposted from Junction 9 of the M27. If you have some spare time that weekend, please do come along and lend a hand. The shopping outlet has over 45 stores selling branded goods at discounted prices.

If you want to enter the Cactus & Succulent Show at the Southampton Festival (end-June), please pick up a schedule from the front table. There is an entry fee of 50p per plant but the prize money is quite generous.

Finally, our stocks of **seed** are running low after the Spring Garden show at Romsey. If you have harvested surplus seed from your plants, please pass these on to Ivor Biddlecombe.

Last Month's Meeting

There were no *Plants of Interest* last month, although there was still plenty to discuss during the break because Stirling Baker had brought along an impressive collection of Haworthias. Some of the emelyae / picta types were really spectacular, with the multicoloured leaves looking like they were studded with jewels. There were also a number of interesting hybrids and variegated plants.

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

Interesting Haworthias

This was a two-part programme featuring plants in the first half and slides in the second. Stirling opened his talk by quoting a definition of (Haworthia) species by Bruce Beyer [from *Haworthiad*, the journal of the Haworthia society] which he, and most of the audience, found incomprehensible! Bayer is probably the current authority on the genus, and his system of nomenclature is generally accepted.

There is considerable variation in Haworthias, plants of the same nominal species vary widely over their range and this has led to a proliferation of names. [See postscript 1] Stirling had brought along 'typical' examples of plants that were 'accepted for the name' as he put it. Not all Haworthia species were covered, only those that he thought were worth growing. The plants were discussed in 'groups' based on growth forms rather than the botanical divisions. As most of this text is discussing one genus, I shall imitate Stirling and omit the 'H.' and just give the species names in the account below.

Probably most people in the audience had hoped for lots of tips on how to grow Haworthias, but Stirling did not spend much time on this topic. His basic tips were to grow in bright light (to get good colours) but not full sun all day, and give as much air as possible – alpine house treatment! Most Haworthias tend to grow early in the year. Best to repot into one's own compost, in a deeper pot where possible. This enables you to check the roots and remove any dead ones. Current wisdom states that Haworthias 're-root' every year. There has been much written about composts for Haworthias, and in the past a heavy soil-based mix was advocated, but current ideas favour a lighter mixture containing (expanded) pumice for drainage, and even growing in the completely artificial medium Seramis [see BCSS Journal 19(3) 2001 p.158]. Suggested mode of propagation from seed was to sow about 10 seeds on the top of seed compost in a 2" square pot, cover with a sprinkle of silver sand, water from the bottom with hot water and enclose the pot in a polythene bag. Keep the seedlings growing on in the shade.

Cuttings are not theoretically possible for the stemless species but it is possible to cut the

centres out of the plants and hope that new rosettes are formed from the stump. Plants cannot be grafted. Many species will propagate from leaves, and the stemmed species can have the tops re-rooted (hormone rooting powder and bottom heat recommended). Otherwise plants can be split up into the offsets and started again – often a good idea for old plants.

If you are a real enthusiast (or a masochist!), then read onotherwise go to end!

First plants out of the box were the group with somewhat incurving, soft tufted leaves edged with 'bristles', typified by *arachnoidea*, a variable, slow species; a good form of this is *scabrispina*. Although the leaves are soft, this group of plants can withstand drought (by closing up the rosette) and strong light (the bristles filter the sun). All are slow growers, usually solitary for their lifespans with us! Other familiar species in the group are *bolusii* and its var. *aranaea*, and var. *palmiana*(?) which looks like *arachnoidea*; then *nortieri*, difficult, keep cooler and out of the sun; and *semiviva*, an autumn grower. Next came *mucronata* and its var. *morrisiae* and the similar *habdomadis* var. *inconfluens*. Lastly, the really choice species: *lockwoodii* needs no introduction but Stirling reserved the term 'gems' for the small soft leaved species *pulchella* (the original form, very slow, 15 to 20 year old plant still in a 2 3/4in. pot), *pubesens*, *archeri* (now in with *marumiana*) and *archeri* var. *dimorpha*. Although larger and easier to grow, *cooperi* and form *venusta* were included in this group. With all of the above, there are many clones around and it is best to choose a good one. A general hint on cultivation was that if the rosette is tightly closed, give a drink, if open, do not!

Probably the most popular group are the flat-leaved retusae types, typically the *emelyae-picta* complex. There are lots of forms and varieties, e.g. *emelyae* var. *major*. Need to buy these "on sight" to get good forms. A clumping species is *pygmaea* and *pygmaea* var. *argentea maculosa* (but some are wrongly named, '*splendens*' now regarded as *magnifica splendens*); choose good leaf markings. *H. comptoniana* is now regarded as a variety of *emelyae* and can grow quite large; it appreciates some shade. For *mirabilis*, the var. *badia* is the best, and var. *buekmannii* clumps well but then falls to bits, so start again! *Bayeri/uniondalensis* is liable to burn if kept too sunny. Other popular species in this group are *maughnii* (which can get quite big) and *truncata*, which really need no introduction, but others are

less common such as *pygmaea* (var. 'Frosty Top' is nice) and *springbokvlakensis* (remaining small) and *bruynsii*. (The latter is still rare in collections – perhaps due to its high price, difficulty of propagation and slow growth; most plants offered recently are most likely to have been micropropagated.) Last in the group is *tesselata*, a good grower – there are some good small clones and the cv. 'Lady Gray' is recommended.

On to the 'hard' leaved ones. *coarctata* (esp. a small form var. *bellula*) and *reinwardtii* are common, but some forms are difficult. Some plants of this group develop 'stems' which are sometimes spoilt by leaves part way up dying back. Stirling said that the cause of this is unknown. Many of this group develop pretty tubercles, often white and pearlescent, giving rise to good markings. One of the potentially tallest species is *pumila*, but *minima* belies its name and is certainly nowhere near being the smallest Haworthia. For *minima*, the var. 'Bryan Makin' is a fine form. Slow and more choice are *sordida* and its var. *lavrani* (possibly the same as *sordida* var. *agavoides*) and *scabra*, but *scabra* var. *morrissiae* is easier.

Haworthia is a genus that lends itself to hybridisation, but Stirling warned against any old hybrid – they must have some merit to be retained as many are not worth growing. Joyce Coccoza is among those who produce many attractive hybrids, in addition to her excellent drawings of Haworthias. The Japanese also produce many fancy varieties. Many such crosses were shown: for example *maughnii* x *badia* (a good show plant), *arachnoidea* x *truncata*, (several variations) and *herbacea* x *emelyae*, perhaps the best known of Joyce's crosses.

At the start of the second half, which was a slide programme, Stirling showed variegated forms of many of the species discussed earlier. [*magnifica*, *venosa* (unstable), *limifolia* (stable), *cymbiformis*, *retusa*, *viscosa* and *maughnii*. Here Stirling sneaked in *Gasteraloe* x 'Green Ice', a very attractive plant with possibly a variegated *Gasteria batesiana* somewhere in its lineage. The feeling here is that one either likes them or hates them! Some further hybrids were shown here, repeating some we had seen as plants in the first half, plus *pygmaea* x *paradoxa* (often different names, same cross), *comptoniana* x *springbokvlakensis* (reasonably quick growing), *limifolia* x *striata* (not easy) and *correcta* x *springbokvlakensis*.

Returning to 'pure' plants we heard that *badia*, with thick leaves, is difficult to get to 'sit' on the compost, a miniature form of *coarctata*, one of the smallest rosettes with *parkiana* (slow, can be difficult), *pubescens* (nice), *habdomadis* var. *inconfluens* keeps a tight rosette, *maraisii* (now under *magnifica*) and the *lockwoodii* trio referred to in the first half, and *schuldtiana*. Nice veining is possible on *correcta* (although this tends to lose leaves and often pulls itself down into the soil). At this point Stirling gave the Haworthias a rest when he showed a few slides of some other succulents, the most exciting of which was *Muiria*, followed by some *Anacampseros* and *Avonia*, *Ariocarpus*, *Brachystelma*, a *Lithops* and a lovely *Crassula mesembryanthemopsis*.

Back to the evening's main topic. We moved on to *splendens* x *badia* crosses, small plants, several clones, will colour up well in good light but keep the roots cool. Next, *koelmaniorum* and some of its hybrids, *pulchella* var. *globifera*(?), *semiviva* (small and variable), *mcmurtryi* (some consider a var. of *koelmaniorum*), *tesselata* (various patterns, some good, some named) and others seen earlier as plants.

Postscript 1. Hobbyists new to Haworthias need not fret too much about identifying their plants. Although the taxonomy of Haworthia is the subject of often acrimonious debate, it is mainly the retusae types which cause problems; probably a good 60% of the species are fairly readily identifiable in the newer books, e.g. Bayer's 'Haworthia Revisited'.

Postscript 2. I apologise for breaking my own rule that the scribe should not write a blow-by-blow account of a talk. Perhaps that's because I am a Haworthia enthusiast! You have the option to skip the 'heavy' bits. And I leave the flowers on my plants, although this is more through laziness than intention (unless I'm trying for seed).

David Corina

Table Show – April

There were 15 entries in the April table show.

	Cacti – Opuntia Group	Succulents – Haworthia & Gasteria Groups
Open	(1) B Beckerleg Opuntia invicta	(1) P Clemow Haworthia truncata
	(2) J Roskilly Opuntia sp.	(2) P Clemow Haworthia nigra
	(3) J Roskilly Opuntia platyacantha	(3) B Beckerleg Haworthia correcta
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg Corynopuntia (Grusonia) bulbispina	(1) J Roskilly Haworthia sordida
	(2) P Clemow Opuntia microdasys	(2) P Clemow Haworthia pumila
	(3) J Roskilly Opuntia (Tephrocactus) molinensis	(3) J Roskilly Haworthia truncata

Ivor Biddlecombe

Next Month's Meeting

Our next branch meeting will be held on June 7th, and will feature Terry Smale who will talk about the Cacti of Northern Mexico.

The June table Show will feature the **Parodia** group (cacti) and the **Crassula** group (succulents). Please note that members are allowed to submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

The Parodia group contains *Parodia*, *Brasilicactus*, *Brasiliparodia*, *Eriocactus*, *Malacocarpus*, *Notocactus*, and *Wigginsia*.

The Crassula group is large and contains several subgroups (Adromischus, Aeonium, Echeveria, Sedum and Semperivium). Hence it includes many genera, such as *Adromischus*, *Bryophyllum*, *Cotyledon*, *Crassula*, *Kalanchoe*, *Rochea*, *Tylecodon*, *Aeonium*, *Greenovia* and *Monanthes*, *Echeveria*, *Dudleya*, *Graptopetalum*, *Pachyphytum*, *Tacitus*, *Sedum*, *Sempervivum* and *Jovibarba*.

A reminder for Committee members that a **branch committee meeting** will be held next week, on May 9th.

Forthcoming Events

Mon 9 th May	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Fri 13 th May	Isle of Wight	Pre-show preparations @ Peter Collard's
Sat 21 st May	Portsmouth	"Three Men and a Condor, Part 1" – Eddy Harris
Sat 28 th May–	Whiteley	Display and Plant Sales @ Garden Market, Whiteley Outlet
Mon 30 th May		Shopping Centre (J9 of M27)
Sat 4 th Jun	Isle of Wight	Isle of Wight Branch Annual Show – Church Hall, Town Lane Newport
Sat 4 th Jun	Portsmouth	Summer Show – Wickham Comm. Hall, Dairymoor, Wickham
Tue 7 th Jun	Southampton	"Cacti in Northern Mexico - Part 1" – Terry Smale
Sat 11 th Jun–	Ampfield	Display and Plant Sales @ Sir Harold Hillier Arboretum, Ampfield
Sun 12 th Jun		
Mon 13 th Jun	Sussex	Open Evening @ Fresh Acres Nursery (6:30pm)
Fri 17 th Jun	Isle of Wight	"Succulents around Vanrhynsdorp" – Derek Tribble
Sat 18 th Jun	Portsmouth	"Anacampseros and Avonia" – Derek Tribble
Sat 25 th Jun–	Southampton	Display and Plant Sales @ Southampton Festival,
Sun 26 th Jun		The Common, Southampton
Fri 1 st Jul	Southampton	Branch Annual Dinner @ The Clump Inn, Chilworth (provisional)
Tue 5 th Jul	Southampton	"Argentina 2004" – Peter Down & Geoff Card
Sun 10 th Jul	Southampton	Members Open Day @ The Corinas (provisional)
Fri 15 th Jul	Isle of Wight	"Alpines in Chile" – John Hughes
Sat 16 th Jul	Portsmouth	"Galivanting in Northern Argentina/Chile" – Malcolm Pym
Tue 26 th Jul–	New Forest	Display and Plant Sales @ New Forest Show, Brockenhurst
Thu 28 th Jul		

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