

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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## Editorial

The weather has started to warm up and a number of my cacti are currently in flower – several Mammillarias and Rebutias and surprisingly, *Hildewinteria (borzicactus) samaipatanus*. The latter usually flowers in late summer so it has obviously been confused by the recent weather and temperatures. A couple of weeks ago, I went up to the Zone 9 convention at Hardwicke, along with Peter Down and Tony Grech and got some new plants there, including some Echeverias, a couple of which are in flower now.

## Announcements

The **Havering Cactus Mart** will take place at the usual venue (Dukes Halls in Hornchurch, Essex) this coming weekend (10<sup>th</sup> of May). Admission is £1 and at least 14 nurseries will be selling plants there. Portsmouth Branch will be running a coach up to this event.

Mark and Rebecca Jakins are planning to hold an **Open Day** this weekend, also on the 10<sup>th</sup> May. They live in Hedge End, about 3 miles east of our meeting hall. Visitors will be welcome between 2pm and 5pm, and refreshments will be provided.

Portsmouth Branch will be holding their **Summer Show** on June 7<sup>th</sup>, and schedules are available from the front table.

Please note that this year we will not be taking part at Whiteley's Garden Event in May.

## Last Month's Meeting

The talk in April was given by Terry Smale. He mentioned that the last time he had visited our branch was for Steve Hammer's visit in March last year. His talk was going to be about one plant family - the Mesembryanthemaceae - which is a big group containing 1800 species. Three other people who had contributed to the material were Andy Jones who had taken pictures in Steve Hammer's greenhouse in California, Chris Rodgers and John Trager.

The Mesembryanthemums are considered either to be a family in their own right, or part of the Aizoaceae. The name means mid-day flower and this is derived from the fact that many of them shut their flowers at night and open them again in the late morning. The order Caryophyllales contains Aizoaceae, Cactaceae, Portulacaceae, Didiereaceae and also Caryophyllaceae which contains dianthus (carnations). Interestingly, it is the first three of these families in which the majority of succulent plants have developed.

It was in 1753 that Linnaeus invented the modern binomial naming system, where plant names consisted of a family name and a species name. Only a few dozen mesembs were known at that time - the Cape Colony had been founded around a hundred years earlier, and only a few of the plants from the Cape had been sent back to Europe. It was early in the twentieth century that the work of NE Brown, Louisa Bolus and Gustav Schwantes started to develop the classifications which we are so familiar with now.

Most of the cacti are stem succulents, but most of the mesembs are leaf succulents. A few do store moisture in the roots but usually the water storage tissue is in the leaves. There is a large variation in the family. Most are perennial but some like the Livingstone Daisy are annuals. There are some which are large shrubs and others which are tiny ground hugging plants. Some are widespread but a lot of the plants in the mesembs are very restricted in their distribution and some are only known from

one colony, e.g. just one hilltop. Many are therefore endangered.

The seed pods are hygrochastic - in other words, they respond to water/rain - they are closed when dry but release the seed when wet. The only exceptions are *Carpobrotus* and *Apatesia*. The seed capsule structure is important in plant classification. We saw a slide showing two *Dinteranthus* capsules - one open, one closed. The capsule persists for 6-12 months and there can be as many as 5000 seeds in one capsule. The number of seed chambers in the different genera tends to vary from 4-20. *Dinteranthus* seeds are particularly small and easily dislodged by a raindrop. Some genera release the seed only after a second shower.

Next was a technical slide charting the evolution of the Aizoaceae. The family tree was obtained by looking at the DNA sequences in different plants. By examining DNA changes, the idea of a "molecular clock" is established - and the more the more mutations there are, the older the plant. Mesembs formed 25-26 million years ago, which is short in evolutionary terms. The Aizoaceae separated out early and a large number of mesembs evolved 5 million years ago. This is also when the Western part of the cape started to have a Mediterranean climate. The plants are found mainly in South Africa, with some occurring in neighbouring countries such as Namibia and Botswana. A few like *Delosperma* stretch up through East Africa and there is even one in the Yemen. There are also a couple in Australia and some *Carpobrotus* have naturalised in many parts of the world.

In South Africa, some of the plants get a winter rainfall, others receive a summer rainfall, and others in intermediate regions get rainfall all through the year. One needs to have some knowledge of this if we want to grow them successfully. He mentioned that he had put symbols on each of his slides to illustrate this. Those which get rain all through the year have a tendency to pack up growing in the cool part of winter and in the heat of the summer, so they tended to be spring and autumn growing. What he does with plants which completely dry up and sheath their new leaves (such as *Conophytums*, some *Mitrophyllums* or *Monilarias*) is to leave them dry until the late summer. For other plants, he does give them some water in the summer.

Cacti can be fed a lot but this is not advisable for mesembs. Phostrogen is suitable, but keep the amount of feed much lower. He uses a loam based compost such as John Innes #2 mixed 1:1 with 4mm

grit, and does any repotting early on in the particular growing season. Winter growers need maximum brightness in the winter, but some of the winter growers like *Conophytums* do need some shade too. When it comes to sowing seed, for winter growers he tends to wait until January and uses temperatures of 8-20°C. Seeds of summer growing plants like *Lithops* can be sown in the spring, using temperatures in the 15-30°C range.

We started with some slides showing the terrain and type of vegetation - there were shrubs of *Lampranthus* growing in sandstone hills at Clanwilliam, then the clay soil and quartz pans of the *Knersvlakte* up to the Orange River, and the hills of metamorphosized granite in Namaqualand.

We moved on to some slides of the plants. *Aspazoma amplexans* has frilly white flowers. Next was a *Mesembryanthemum guericchianum* with some rather strange flowers. With everything split away, *Mesembryanthemum* itself is left with the annuals and bi-annuals - but there still some nice plants left, such as the ice plant - *Mesembryanthemum crystallinum* which now grows in a wide range of countries. One of the most popular of the primitive mesembs is *Phyllobolus resurgens*. In the summer it goes right down to a caudex below ground. In autumn new growth starts to grow, and elongates and it flowers in the spring. Another *Phyllobolus* had frilly white flowers with hundreds of slim petals.

*Prenia sladeniana* has white flowers and is not cultivated much. It has pinkish leaves. *Psilocaulon* is a stem succulent and it has small rudimentary leaves. It is very common and hence a plant which one tends to ignore in habitat. *Sceletium joubertii* is more interesting. once the leaves die off the veins which ran through the leaves are left as a skeleton round the base. Terry mentioned he had raised a batch from seed and selected the most compact one. The plant body contains alkaloids and can lead to a psychoactive effect like *Lophophora* - he has never tried it but apparently eating the leaves can lead to a mild high.

On to the *Ruschiodia*. *Carpanthea pomeridiana* is winter growing in the wild - but in England you can sow these in the spring and it will flower in the summer and die in autumn. It has orange flowers and is monotypic. *Dorotheanthus bellidiformis* hybridises and you can get colour schemes which you'll never see in the wild. It is another winter grower which reverses its growth pattern in this country. *Conicosia elongata* has long and narrow leaves, and orange flowers, and might be worth

growing outdoors on the south coast here.

*Carpobrotus acinaciformis* with magenta flowers was shown growing in the Halkidiki peninsula in Greece. It is a widespread plant and a troublesome weed in the Lizard peninsula in this country. He tried growing *Lampranthus* outdoors and failed but it should be possible to grow it here on the south coast. It can form a shrub a couple of feet tall. Cuttings should be taken in the summer and these can be grown on and planted out in April - they should flower the same year.

In the *Ruschia* group of plants, *Antimima* has leaves which sheath over in the summer. The plant grows only a few inches tall and flowers profusely in February. It has a wide colour range and can be propagated by cuttings. *Antimima fenestrata* is one of the few plants that grows on the limestone outcrops in the Knersvlakte - the others tend to grow in quartz pans. *Ruschianthus falcatus* has falcate leaves and is a monotypic species from southern Namibia. It flowers in the spring and the yellow flowers each last a month. Some *Delospermas* grow high in the mountains and are cold tolerant and hardy, and hence used by alpine growers in this country. *Delosperma esterhuyseniae* is named after Elsie Esterhuysen who was 4 foot 6 inches tall but an eager collector of plants from the mountains in the Cape. It is a small plant which is only an inch or so tall but it flowers all summer.

*Delosperma sphalmanthoides* is another alpine one which grow in cold mountains near Sutherland where it can reach -10°C or -15°C on winter nights. It flowers in March. He planted it outside but lost it over the winter for some reason. It tends to be one of his best sellers because people tend to kill it off - either by keeping it too hot or watering it too much. Next was a picture of a spectacular group of *Drosantheum speciosum* plants flowering in a garden at Worcester. The flower colours ranged from yellow through orange to red. The plants can form mounds 2-3 feet tall. The species name has the same origin as *Drosera* - the leaves of the plant have dew-like papilla. This was clearly visible on a closeup of *Drosantheum striatum* which has white flowers with a magenta midstripe. Cuttings should be taken in the winter for flowers in the next summer - this was a good plant for summer bedding or a rockery. *Trichodiadema densum* when out of flower looks like a *dolicothele*, but the hair tufts on the ends of the leaves are not areoles. It remains quite small and compact.

*Trichodiadema bulbosa* forms a caudex which takes a while to develop. It is best raised from seed rather

than cuttings. If you want a nice caudex, keep it below ground until it's grown to a decent size and you want to display it. Another species *T. decorum* has orange flowers and is grown for summer bedding. *Astridia herrei* is only found in the Richtersveldt and Namibia. It is a slow growing shrub with lovely red flowers and contrasting grey leaves, well worth growing.

*Schlechteranthus maximiliani* grows in the Southern part of the Richtersveldt. The flowers hark back to primitive plants. *Monilaria* has a peculiar growth habit - each year it produces two pairs of leaves which are quite different from each other. First there is a little globular leaf pair, and then when the rains come, the tiny leaves open up and allow a longer leaf pair to develop. *Mitrophyllum* is another genus which does this. Three species of *Oophytum* grow in the quartz in the Knersvlakte. The quartz forms a cool microclimate, with heat radiated away by the white quartz. There is a difference in the leaves between the resting summer pair and the growing winter pair. *O. nordenstamii* has white flowers and *O. oviforme* has pink flowers - the latter was pictured in Steve Hammer's collection in California.

*Dracophilus proximus* comes from a small group which occurs from the Northern Cape to Namibia. The plants tend to trail around and are not suitable for growing in pots. The name means "dragon lover" due to the original specimen being found on "Dragon Hill". It is closely related to *Juttadinteria*. The pink flowers had stamens with yellow anthers and the plant bodies were nicely coloured - again photographed in Steve Hammer's greenhouse. *Juttadinteria deserticola* has white flowers and greyish leaves and is found near Luderitz. *Ebracteola fulleri* is from the Northern Cape and Southern Namibia. It is quite low growing. The name means "without bracts" so technically it is named incorrectly. Whenever he's found it, it's always been in flower. Margaret Corina mentioned she had one which was very tolerant.

*Malephora crocea* has red daisy flowers. The name is derived from the greek for arm-pit! It is a small shrubby plant which flowers well as a bedding plant. *Jensenobotrya lossowiana* is from Namibia, right on coast between Walvis Bay and Luderitz. It hangs on cliff like bunches of grapes. The name botria comes from greek (bunch of grapes). The leaves were flaccid and wrinkled. It forms small daisies flowers like the type you would find in your lawn. *Faucaria* are summer rainfall area plants which he rests in the winter. Although widespread in cultivation, they are rather endangered, e.g. *F. tigrina* is in danger from the expanding town of Grahamstown. The illustrated

plants were *Faucaria militaris* and a splendidly coloured and marked *Faucaria tigrina* growing in Steve Hammer's collection in San Diego.

Glottiphyllums have green glabrous leaves which colour up red good light. *Glottiphyllum oligocarpum* is unusual in having white leaves and the white is not a farina. *Bergeranthus leightonii* has yellow flowers with slim petals - it is a summer grower from the Eastern cape and easy to grow. Stomatiums are closely related to *Faucaria* but mostly night flowering. They have strongly scented flowers. *Titanopsis* have encrustations on leaves and lizard-like skins, and the way that the pattern is impressed is used to distinguish the species. *Titanopsis hugo schlechteri* has yellow flowers and is a nice chestnut brown colour.

*Aloinopsis spathulata* comes from Sutherland and grows in cold areas. It has attractive magenta and white flowers. Terry mentioned that our speaker for next month, Gillian Evison, had a plant of this which was 12" across. The bodies of *Vanheerdea primosii* looks like a lithops but the flowers are orange/red and emerge on a stalk. It is quite tricky to grow and the picture was of Steve Hammer's plant. *Didymaotus lapidiformis* forms two little side shoots which produce the mid-purple flowers. It is very difficult to grow and hard to get the pink tinge on the plant bodies which occurs on habitat plants. *Gibbaeum* grows in quartz flats in the Little Karoo and is spring and autumn growing. There are several dozen species and it forms one leaf pair per year. Sometimes the leaf in a pair differs from the other.

*Gibbaeum cryptopodium* grows at soil level, and you can just see the leaf tips. It is highly succulent but not too difficult to grow. *Gibbaeum pillosulum* has hairs all over the body. *Gibbaeum nebrowniae* is named after N E Brown and is a hardy succulent which is easy to grow and flower. One snag is that it splits very easily if overwatered. He therefore grows it in a clay pot.

*Muiria hortenseae* is perhaps the ultimate mesemb. It is named after Dr Muir and his daughter Hortense. The leaves of the egg-shaped plant are almost completely fused and the picture was of Steve Hammer's plant. It is a challenge to grow it well in this country. The genus was created for just this one species but now there are thought to be 2-3 species.

*Vlokia ater* (ater mean dark) grows on top of a mountain in cold wet conditions. It is a tiny plant - the whole thing is an inch from top to bottom. It is self fertile and one needs to keep growing it from seed since it does not appear to be long lived.

Another plant from the little Karoo is *Cerochlamys pachyphylla*. This is monotypic and also known as the wax mantle. The normal flower colour is pink but there are some colonies with white flowers which he believes should be classified as a subspecies. For him, in this country, it flowers around Christmas time. From the northern mountains of the Little Karoo is *Bijlia tugwelliae*. It has whiteish green falcate leaves. The yellow flowers are present nearly all the time for him. From the Richtersveldt hails *Nelia pillansii*. This is a small stemmed plant which has flowers with masses of short petaloids running into the centre.

*Psammophora longifolia* is unusual in that it exudes gum on the leaf surface. In the wild it grows in sandy areas and the plant becomes encrusted in sand for protection. It is an easy plant to grow. *Cheiridopsis* is a highly succulent genera and some have two pairs of leaves which are very different. They predominantly have yellow flowers but *C. purpurea* is purple flowered. They are winter growers but most retain their leaves in the summer so he gives them some water in the summer. *Cheiridopsis peculiaris* shows the extreme of the two types of leaves and the plant also does a good job to mimic the chippings they grow in. It has one group of winter leaves and another group of summer leaves. In habitat the plants are an intense red/brown colour but it isn't possible to get that intensity of colouring here. It is however very easy to grow and flower and a very nice plant to have. *Cheiridopsis umbrosa* (means shade) has yellow flowers and grows in shady positions. *Odontophorus* is almost the same as *Cheiridopsis* but has teeth on the leaves. *O. herrei* has yellow flowers on tallish peduncles.

*Cephalophyllum fulleri* is found in Bushmanland and the featured plant filled a pan 4 inches across. It is quite floriferous. *Ihlenfeldtia vanzylii* is a recent separation from *Cheiridopsis*, based on seed capsule morphology. *Fenestraria aurantiaca* ssp *rhopalophylla* grows in sandy areas in Namibia and the Northern Cape, near the coast. The flower colour varies from yellow to white to orange. There is a cultivar by the name of "Fireworth" with orange red flowers which is found in the wild too.

Moving on to the genus *Conophytum*, he reminded us that he would be giving a talk on this genus at Portsmouth in May. They are winter growing plants and grouped into day flowering and night flowering types, the latter being nicely scented.

The Knersvlakte is plastered with plants of *Argyroderma*. It is difficult to tell the species apart and the picture featured plants with yellow, purple

and red flowers growing near each other. He knew that red conophytum flowers are produced by crossing yellow and purple flowered plants and wondered whether the same held true for *Argyroderma*.

*Diplosoma retroversum* is one of two *Diplosoma* species which grow in quartz patches in non-succulent wet areas. In the summer, the plant dies back to a resting phase. In the winter it grows pairs of pustulate leaves with magenta flowers in between. He has germinated seed and kept it going through the winter but was unable to revive it after the dormant period the next summer. *Schwantesia* is similar to lithops with regard to the seed capsule but the leaves are quite different. It comes from the Northern Cape and there are 6 species. In some, the leaves are shorter and stubbier than with *S. ruedebuschii*.

Now on to Lithops. Although a few grow in winter rainfall areas, most are able to adjust to being treated as summer growers. We saw a picture of four types - *Lithops dorotheae*, the pink bodied *Lithops optica rubra*, *L. gracidelineata* "Cafe au Lait" and *L. bromfieldii* "sulphurea". The pattern cultivars are very difficult to establish as true breeding strains, but *L. bromfieldii* "sulphurea" and *L. optica rubra* do come true from seed. The flower colours are predominantly yellow and white, but *L. verucosa* is variable and some clones can have red flowers.

*Dinteranthus* is similar to lithops but has 10-12 segments to the seed capsule, as opposed to Lithops having 5-6. They are summer growers and have tiny seeds. They tend to have yellow flowers in habitat, but there are white flower variants in cultivation and also a pink one has been introduced recently. *Lapidaria margarathae* is monotypic. It has yellow flowers and grows new leaf pairs on top of the older leaves, which are retained for 2-3 years.

From the Little Karoo, *Pleiospilos simulans* is often found in cultivation in hybridised form. It should have flat leaves and if the leaves are rounded or fatter it may be of hybrid origin. *Pleiospilos nelii* usually has yellow-orange flowers but there is a purple bodied cultivar called "Royal Flush" where the flower is also purple. There are three species of *Tanquana* which is named after the Tanqua karoo. They tend to have green bodies but the odd plant of *Tanquana hilmari* has ruby coloured leaves. *Tanquana archeri* is always green and gets some leaf stacking.

Frithia grows in the mountains near Pretoria and

there are just two species. All the other mesembs we had seen earlier in the talk produce leaves in pairs, but in *Frithia*, the leaves are produced singly and arranged in a spiral. When raised from seed you can see this clearly. This suggests it is well removed from the other mesembs. The two species are *F. pulchra* which has larger leaves and purple flowers, and *F. humilis* which has much smaller leaves and white to pale-pink flowers. In some of the colonies the flowers have a yellow centre. For him, they flower right through the summer.

Terry concluded by saying that this was a big family and there were many different plant forms to choose from. He hoped that his talk provided some information on some nice plants - and how to grow them.

Vinay Shah

**Table Show Results**

There were 20 entries in the table show at the April meeting.

	<b>Cacti – Rebutia Group</b>	<b>Succulents – Echeveria Subgroup</b>
Open	(1) P Clemow <i>Sulcorebutia mentosa</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Graptopetalum suaveolens</i>
	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Sulcorebutia rauschii</i>	(2) J Roskilly <i>Echeveria agavoides</i> cv. "Ebony"
	(3) P Clemow <i>Rebutia heliosa</i>	(3) J Burnay <i>Echeveria agavoides</i>
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Weingartia</i> sp. HS158	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Echeveria lauii</i>
	(2) P Clemow <i>Sulcorebutia tuberculata chrysantha</i>	(2) J Roskilly <i>Echeveria lilacina</i>
	(3) J Burnay <i>Weingartia</i> sp.	(3) T Grech <i>Crassula lactea</i>

Ivor Biddlecombe

## Next Month's Meeting

The next meeting will be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, and will feature Dr Gillian Evison talking to us about Euphorbias.

The June Table Show will consist of 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 Committee Meeting will be held on the 19<sup>th</sup> of this month.

## Forthcoming Events

Sat 10 <sup>th</sup>	May	Southampton	Open Day @ Mark & Rebecca Jakins
Fri 16 <sup>th</sup>	May	Isle of Wight	no meeting
Sat 17 <sup>th</sup>	May	Portsmouth	"Conophytums" – Terry Smale
Sat 17 <sup>th</sup>	May	Reading	"Ferocactus" – Derek Bowdery
Mon 19 <sup>th</sup>	May	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting @ 79 Shirley Avenue
Tue 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Jun	Southampton	"Euphorbias for You" – Dr. Gillian Evison
Sat 7 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	Portsmouth & District Summer Show, Wickham Community Hall
Fri 20 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Isle of Wight	"Bonsai" – Terry Evans
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	"South West USA" – Ian Woolnough
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup>	Jun	Reading	"Parodia" – Peter Down
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup>	Jun	Ampfield	Display/Plant Sales @ Hilliers Arboretum, Ampfield, Nr Romsey
Sun 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Jun		
Tue 1 <sup>st</sup>	Jul	Southampton	"Unusual Cacti" – Stirling Baker
Fri 11 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	Southampton	Branch Dinner – The Luzborough House

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