

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

The weather has been a bit of a mixture over the past few weeks. I was surprised to see *Notocactus magnificus* in flower this early, although *Rebutias* and *Mammillarias* in bloom are to be expected. Many *Gasterias*, *Haworthias* and *Aloes* are also in flower, and most things have come into growth.

Announcements

Portsmouth Branch will be holding their **Summer Show** on June 3rd, at Widley.

The branch will be putting on a *display* at Sparsholt College on May 13th. We have enough people to man our stand, but this event is usually a nice day out for the family.

We have recently been notified of a couple of new members who have joined Southampton Branch. Neil Cotmore lives in Marchwood and Marcus Jones lives in Lytchett Matravers, Dorset. We hope that they will enjoy membership of the society and that they will be able to attend meetings and participate in Branch activities.

Forms for car-sharing to attend 3 external events (South West Cactus Mart, Oxford Show, Southern Area Show in June and August) are on the front table – please write your name on these if you would like to attend any of these and need a lift – or if you plan on going and can give others a lift.

Last Month's Meeting

The Huntington Desert Garden & LA County Arboretum

Ben talked about his visit to the Los Angeles County Arboretum and The Huntington last October. There are many places called Huntington in the US, so in Google you need to search for “The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens”. A map showed that the Gardens are located within the boundaries of Los Angeles, and just 5 miles from downtown Los Angeles - in San Marino, near Pasadena. The County Arboretum is located 2 miles further to the east. We saw a view of the San Gabriel Mountains, which are to the north east of Los Angeles. We also saw a couple of shots of some tall palm trees – these were *Washingtonia robusta*. The weather in California is of course amenable to plants like this!

The County Arboretum & Botanic Garden was founded in 1947, on a portion of Rancho Santa Anita. It is owned by the County of Los Angeles and covers 127 acres. The plants there are grouped geographically, with particular focus on South American, Australian, South African, Mediterranean and North American plants. Not surprisingly Ben mentioned his interest was in the *Aloes* and *Agaves*, but there was plenty of other things for him to see.

Arriving by taxi, the first thing he saw was the silk floss tree, *Chorisia speciosa*. He had really timed his visit just right, and these trees were in full bloom, with yellow, red, pink and white flowers. They are from the *Bombax* family (*Ceiba* is a relation) and it has a pithy succulent stem – it looks woody, but isn't. It was shame that there was some graffiti on the lower stems of the trees because the trunk is relatively soft. A close up showed the flowers to be quite exotic and there masses of them. Some of the plants had amazing buttressed roots. And some of the plants also had different stems – many were smooth but some had spines along the trunk. As these mature, they lose the spines from the lower sections.

The first proper succulent was *Agave vilmoriniana* with wavy octopus type leaves. Some of these had flowered in the previous season, and there were masses of pups growing on the old flower spike. He was tempted to take one off, but resisted the urge. We now saw a shot of the main cactus and succulent garden. There were remnants of a *Dasyliroton* flower spike / inflorescence - these plants are closely related to the agaves.

The Aloe collection covers 5-6 acres on its own, and we could see some volcanic pumice used on the ground. There was a little kitchen within the garden area. There is an educational and outreach element to the activities here. Also visible was a café – in this heat, you need frequent refreshments. The whole place was very nicely landscaped - a lot of thought been put into it. We saw an *Euphorbia* with a *Senecio* and *Crassula ovata* cv. “Gollum” growing alongside it. There was nice aggregate / stones around the plants.

The intensity of the light is much stronger than in this country and it reflected off the white leaves of *Agave ovatifolia*. This can be grown outside in the UK. The plant was not named and he asked the staff about it and they confirmed the name. It was getting close to producing a flower. A close up showed the pale leaves reflecting the light. Another one on the hardy side is *Agave parryi* v. *huahucensis* - he has it growing outside in this country, and he has not bothered with any special protection during the last couple of winters and it had come through OK. The form here was tighter than the normal form which tends to be flatter. Behind the plant was a red pile of earth and it looked like a termite mound. A hybrid *Agave* ‘Sharkskin’ is a naturally occurring hybrid between *A. nickelsiae* and *A. asperrima*. He had bought an example of it from Geoff Bowman at the last BCSS Convention in Leicester.

Next was *Opuntia santa-rita*. With circular pads, he found it interesting. *Opuntia littoralis* had a good amount of fruit on the pads. It is similar to *O. humifusa* which is found on the east coast of the USA, where they get incredibly cold winters. It survives the tough climate with no trouble at all. He had bought one from a Dutch grower at the National Show but the plant has shrivelled up and is not looking great. Alongside the *Opuntia* was *Puya venusta*. Next was a plant which he had labelled as a *Copiapoa* in his slides - but it was actually *Ferocactus glaucescens*, according to both David Neville and Paul Klaassen. This was followed by *Ferocactus gracilis* ssp. *coloratus* with some nice yellow fruits on it.

The different sections of plants were arranged by geography and we had just seen the North American section - it was now time for Madagascar.

A general shot showed there were *Pachypodiums*, *Alluaudia*, *Didiereaceae*, and some of the bigger Madagascan Aloes and also the caudiciform *Uncarina decaryi*. The plantings were well done. There were palms all over the garden but they had got the proper palms from Madagascar, including *Bismarckia nobilis* - one of his favourites. It has very silvery white leaves which reflected the bright light well. There was also an Aloe in the foreground. In the background he spotted a ratty looking conifer and this was one of the rarest in the world – it was the Clanwilliam cedar from South Africa, *Widdringtonia cedarbergensis*. It is incredibly rare with a very limited distribution.

We saw *Pachypodium lamerei* and *Uncarina decaryi* which had formed quite a big tree, featuring its characteristic yellow flowers. *Aloe suzannae* was nice - he had got one of these from Copenhagen Gardens, but it’s completely different so his might actually be *A. vaombe* or something else. The Tree Aloes have all been moved to a new genus (*Alloidendron*), but he hasn’t changed over to the new names as yet. We saw the start of the Aloe garden, which is one of the main things he wanted to see here.

Again it was nicely landscaped and most of the plants were labelled. *Dracaena draco* was planted en-masse and the trees were creating a really good effect. Next was *Aloe fibrosa* - something he bought from Rodney Simms when he gave a talk at the branch – it hails from East Africa. Next was a hybrid Aloe ‘Red Hot Chile’ (or should that be ‘Chilli’?). Tree aloes were growing in big clumps, and there was *Carpobrotus* on the ground, acting as ground cover. You see masses of this growing and flowering on the cliffs at Bournemouth, particularly Alum Chine. It grows on the sandy cliffs and actually does a good job of preventing soil erosion. It is also present in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. *Aloe nobilis* is considered to be a hybrid between *A. brevifolia* and *A. mitriformis*. It is quite common, and is a popular landscape plant - it does offset readily and goes on to produce huge clumps. *Aloe cameronii* was looking great, with intense red colouring to the leaves.

Euphorbia tirucalli had formed large shrubby trees. This might be the cultivar called “Sticks on Fire” which is a common landscape plant and which takes on a red coloration. We saw a view of the Canary Islands section, with *Euphorbias* and *Dracaena Draco* and *Echiums* and *Aeoniums*. The Arboretum

also has a wonderful tree collection, with many Eucalyptus and lots of other exotic trees. He could have easily spent a week here – but it was time to move on to the Huntington.

The Huntington consists of a library, art collections and the botanic gardens. It is a non-profit, collections-based research and educational institution which does outreach work with schools and academia. It was founded in 1919 by Henry Huntington, a wealthy railroad, utilities and real estate tycoon. The botanic gardens cover 120 acres, including the world-famous desert garden with more than 5000 species in 60 landscaped beds.

Ben first went into the European art gallery, and visited the British section. He was surprised by a relative - Francis Hastings, the 10th Earl of Huntington, who is one of his ancestors! He went upstairs to the other sections and saw painting by Van Gogh, Monet, Cezanne, Picasso and then “Salisbury Cathedral” by Constable. He apologised for the poor lighting on some of the photos, but art galleries are often like that. Other famous paintings here include “The Blue Boy” by Gainsborough and Lawrence’s “Pinkie”.

Thanks to David and Paul, Ben had been put in touch with Eunice Thompson in California, and she had arranged for him to see the ISI collection and also meet Karen Zimmerman. The International Succulent Introductions (ISI) is a plant distribution programme of the Huntington Botanic Gardens. It was established in 1958 and the aim was to propagate and distribute new and rare succulents to nurseries, collectors and institutions. Nothing is collected from wild populations.

A picture showed Eunice with Karen. Karen is responsible for producing the Aloe hybrids, carrying on the work of Kelly Griffin. Ben said she was wonderful to talk to, and he could have stayed there all day. He spotted John Trager walking through the glass house and managed to get a picture taken of himself with John and Karen. John was very friendly as well, although he usually is very busy – it’s a huge place to maintain with a large number of visitors and there’s a lot of work to do to maintain the desert collection. We saw Eunice holding some plants she had taken a shine to. Some of the plants are for sale, and some aren’t. Karen encouraged him to buy a couple but he resisted. \$20 was the starting price for most of the plants.

He was hoping to see Aloes here and he wasn’t disappointed. We saw pictures of a selection of the special plants. Some are named, some are unnamed but their parents are usually listed. We saw “Hybrid

no 4”, which was an offspring of A. “Secret Agent”. The Aloes we see for sale in this country aren’t as interesting as some of the new ones over there. Aloe Clone 18 was a cross between A. ‘Doran Black and A. ‘Wunderkind’. We also saw Aloe ‘Secret Agent’ which had pronounced teeth and red edges to those teeth. You see some fairly whacky names on the hybrids, to go with the fairly whacky plants.

More than half of Karen’s creations will go in the bin - she will only retain the best results from her crosses. We saw a plant which was more open and branching, and then a new species, which was first described in the BCSS Journal in 2014. It had been found in Eritrea by Giuseppe Orlando, at Mount Nabro, a volcano in the southern Red Sea area of Eritrea. It was named *Aloe montis-nabro* and it part of the *Aloe somaliensis* complex, with some incredible markings. He wasn’t sure if it’s available here and whether Stuart Riley has brought it back. Another plant from Niensi in Tanzania was *Aloe niensiensis* - this was featured in the March 2015 BCSS Journal and it’s a Len Newton plant. Len is co-author of the recent Aloe book, which is in the library.

Ben said he is a big fan of collecting different variations of a species such as *Aloe aristata*. He has several forms including the “Cathedral Peak” form. Here was a stunning variegated plant, with silvery variegation – he only saw one plant of it. He mentioned the San Marcos Growers website is a good reference for these new plants, as well as the ISI website. Kelly Griffin used to work for San Marcos Growers. Another nice plant was a hybrid with A. ‘Gargoyle’ - just look at the teeth. Another plant didn’t have teeth but had banding / ribbons along the leaf margin. We saw a hybrid of A. ‘Robin’ with prominent teeth and another nice big clump of a hybrid with silvery leaves. A lot of the parentage comes from the Madagascan aloe species. (*Aloe deltoideodonta* and *A. rauhii*) and they are also amongst the smaller growing aloes, helping to keep the size of the plant compact. Aloe hybrid No. 68 had teeth which had fused to form a pink band and it was due to be called A. cv ‘Ribbons’. Aloe ‘Brown Betty’ was a darker leaved plant with white splotches. Aloe ‘Jaws’ had shark like teeth along the leaf edge and Aloe ‘Candy Corn’ had an even red coloration across the leaf. Aloe *dorotheae* reminded him of a plant he had at home, except this one was variegated. A plant of the same kept in a shadier spot was greener and this allowed you to more clearly see the striations and variegation.

Next was a *Huernia* hybrid called ‘Fringe Benefit’. And then, a cactus cultivar with long spines - *Opuntia macrocentra* ‘Beets Me’. He wasn’t sure if

it was named after the beetroot colour of the pads or perhaps why you'd ever want to grow it. There were several *Opuntias* planted out but he considered this one to be the nicest. Next was a bulb which was an undescribed species of *Ledebouria* from Somalia. The blotches on the leaves and on the undersides of leaves and leaf stalks were really pronounced.

A number of plants have maculate leaves - Aloes and *Manfreda* too. We saw *Manfreda paniculata* with some purple splotches - he had bought some of these from Bob Brown in Worcestershire. Now for some agaves. *Agave victoriae-reginae* 'Alba Marginata' was very nice as was *Agave victoriae-reginae* 'White Rhino'. These were being grown in large numbers and were around \$20 for a young plant, which David thought was a good price considering how difficult they are to get hold of. And if you don't want a small one - get a larger one! We saw one growing in a tray - it seemed to have no roots but it was a stunning specimen, over a foot across. *Agave attenuata* 'Emery Stripy' is a well known variegated form with broad yellow bands in addition to the green. Normally you would grow these plants in a pot - but we saw *Agave lophantha* 'Quadricolor' growing on petrified wood. We also saw a group of *Agave filifera* 'Compacta' plants on sale for \$20. *Agave guiengola* 'Moto Sierra' is a Kelly Griffin creation, and the younger leaves have the more pronounced teeth.

Mangaves are hybrids between Agaves and *Manfreda*. There are a few in this country, but Karen had a vast number of hybrids. Most of them had some maculation on the leaves and Karen was selecting the best ones. Most of these have *Agave macroacantha* in the parentage and that mean the hybrids will stay evergreen - *Manfreda maculata* does die back in the rest period. And *Manfreda virginica* is perhaps as far away from a succulent as you can get in this genus. *Mangave* 'Bloodspot' had pronounced red leaf tips and this was growing in a small planted display area outside the ISI glass houses and tunnels. There were about 150 different mangaves out there!

Out in the raised bed to the utility car park, he found *Euphorbia horrida*, some mesembs and a couple of Aloes. He also saw *Euphorbia flanaganii* f. *cristata*. *Ledebouria revoluta* was suffering some leaf burn, due to the intensity of the sun. Heading for the desert garden, there was a nice intermediate area, featuring a café, a restaurant and a bookshop. Some exhibition rooms surrounded a plaza with containers of succulents. Some grass growing here had formed spectacular frothy pink-purple flower spikes - this was *Muhlenbergia capillaris* and it needs a long hot summer to do this. He saw some more agaves and

also the silk trees. The European Art Gallery is located at the former home of the Huntingtons. He saw *Aloe barberae* and some other tree aloes. We would visit the desert garden after the mid-meeting tea break.

The desert garden is one of the largest cactus and succulent collections in the world. It covers 10 acres, and has 60 landscaped beds. It was started in 1907-1908 when William Hertrich obtained plants from local nurseries, public parks, private residences and collection trips to the deserts of Mexico and the southwest USA. It now contains significant collections of *Agave* and related genera, *Aloe*, terrestrial Bromeliads, *Crassula*, *Echeveria*, *Sedum* and related genera, *Cacti*, *Euphorbia* and *Fouquieria*

He wandered in and it was like being on another planet. He mentioned that he had seen Monty Don's show "Around the World in 80 Gardens" which had featured the Huntington Gardens but being there was so much better. The first part covered the "old world" plants and included South African succulents, Aloes, Aeoniums and Euphorbias. There was a backdrop of palms as well, including the Canary Islands Date Palm, the Phoenix palm, and various hybrid palms too. If you go down from the main entrance and into the desert garden, there were lots of lovely big Aloes. The first plants were put here over a 100 years ago. John Trager is now responsible for the desert garden. You can take different routes through the garden - or if the sun is too much at midday, perhaps go and visit the art gallery and then come back out and see the plants later on. Lots of Aloes were in flower and there were also South African plants such as *Haemanthus* and *Boophone*. A tall plant was a *Fouquieria* or an *Alluaudia*? A *Cussonia* had formed a shrubby tree and there was also a cycad. There were vast groups of cycads in other gardens, and a few here in the desert garden. Ernst van Jaarsveld researched for his PhD here. *Aloe hardyi* has a lateral growth pattern - it is a cliff dweller and is used to growing over the edge of a cliff, so it is difficult to grow in a pot, but it was looking good here. It was in the shade and relatively green - in the sun it would have been redder. *Aloe* 'Rooikappie' (the name means Red Riding Hood) has bicoloured flowers and nice maculate leaves too. We saw some *Haworthias* growing in rock crevice - it was a nice recreation of the habitat and we could almost have been in South Africa. *Aloe brevifolia* and *A. humilis* are both dwarf species and the hybrid between them was quite nice. Next was a thin-leaved plant which he had brought in to a branch meeting earlier in the year - it was *Senecio* cf. *bulbinefolius* - with the cf meaning "confer" or "compare with". He had got an unnamed

plant of it from Hollygate, and he was pretty sure it's the same plant.

Next were a couple of Stapeliads in flower - these were perfect conditions for these plants. He wasn't sure of the species, but Tom Radford thought the first could be *Stapelia flavirostris*. The other had a deeper red coloured flower which was quite hairy - this might perhaps have been a form of *S. grandiflora*, which is quite variable. Moving on through the garden he came across single stemmed aloes such as *A. marlothii* and *A. ferox*. There were just the beginnings of the odd cactus in the "New World" world sections.

The cactus garden was something else. There were more examples of the silk floss tree in the background, along with an Australian Brachychiton tree with red flowers. There were some lovely ceroid cacti. A Cleistocactus was growing alongside a large yellow and green plant of *Aeonium* 'Sunburst' - this cultivar is easy to obtain over here. There were more columnar cacti at the back. He now came across large plantings of *Echinocactus grusonii* - huge numbers were planted out with other plants. It's the cactus that everyone knows! Mammillarias were planted out with them, as were Ferocacti. A Beaucarnea was in flower - it is related to the Agaves and has now been put into Nolina. At the back, a Fouquieria was in flower - you see this in many of the South Western states of the USA.

The Mammillarias and Echinocactus were looking good. There were some columnar cacti and a few choice Agaves, including *A. titanota*. One of the cacti had fallen over and was draped over a rock and growing horizontally. There were a few other things to note, including a white Chorisia, and the remnants of an Agave inflorescence. One of the *Echinocactus grusonii* had formed a large multi-headed plant and this was a like a sentry to an incredible selection of *Echinocactus grusonii* and *Agave parryi* inter-planted - the combination of the yellow spines and the silvery agave looked very nice. In other areas, with older plants, you could see some of them leaning into the sun, as they would do in nature. There were a couple of acres of this! He saw Beaucarnea, other Agaves, Cereus, and also big examples of *Dracaena draco*. In the lower part of the cactus area, there were big Yuccas and Fouquierias with flowers and also great big clumps of Puyas and other Bromeliads and Crassulas.

Puya coerulea v. *violacea* had thin silvery leaves which reflected the light. And there were a large number of 100-120 year old *Yucca filifera* plants here - this was one of the older Yuccas in the garden. *Yucca filifera* is one of the largest and fast

growing Yucca's - it branches after reaching a height of about 3-4 m and it can reach heights of 9m with a trunk 1.5 m wide. *Y. filifera* is not that hardy but it does form big trees eventually. A sign here said that a ring of these Yuccas was planted here in the early 1900s.

There were big inflorescences on Dasyliirions and Agaves, and there were also flower spikes on Yuccas and on the Dracaenas. In this area were some decent sized *Carnegiea gigantea* with Opuntia and more *Echinocactus grusonii*. Right at the far end of the desert garden and looking up the slope, you could see the tree Aloes and the Chorisia. He came across more Yucca again and nice big clumps of Puyas. *Stenocereus eruca* is the "creeping devil" and it's not easy to grow in cultivation - it does like to grow laterally. Here they were growing en-masse in an area covering several metres. There were some Dudleyas in the background, their leaves reflecting the light well. The light was getting lower in the sky and he managed to take a picture showing an interplay of light on the Ceroids and a Dasyliirion and an Opuntia. *Opuntia linguiformis* - nicknamed the Cow's Tongue caught his eye - the pads are shaped in an elongated ellipse and it is quite coarsely spined as well. There were lots of fruit on these plants. As he climbed back up the hill, he was able to take some nice shots. He took one last look at the Aloes before heading back to the motel. It had been an amazing couple of days for him!

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 19 entries in the April table show, and 10 entries for "Plants in Flower".

	Cacti – Rebutia	Succulents – Gasteria
Open	(1) T Smith Sulcorebutia xanthoantha	(1) G Penrose G. armstrongii x pillansii
	(2) B Beckerleg Suclorebutia hoffmanniana	(2) I Biddlecombe Gasteria sp. (variegated)
	(3) I Biddlecombe Rebutia sp.	(3) B Beckerleg Gasteria baylissiana
Intermediate	(1) T Smith Sulcorebutia glomerispina	(1) G Penrose G. carinata v. retusa
	(2) B Beckerleg Rebutia heliosa	(2) G Penrose Gasteria brachyphylla
	(3) T Radford Rebutia cv "Sunrise"	(3) T Radford G.nitida v. armstrongii

Cacti/Succulent in Flower
(1) B Beckerleg <i>Gasteria liliputana</i>
(2) I Biddlecombe <i>Crassula</i> sp.
(3) T Radford <i>Mammillaria carmenae</i>

Ivor Biddlecombe

This Year's Free Plant

Over the past 5 or 6 years the Branch has given a free plant to everyone who attends our meetings. Every now and again we ask members to bring their plants along to one of our cultivation meetings so that we can compare how they have grown, and we can discuss the differing results and hopefully all learn something from those people who have achieved the best results, and also too perhaps from those of us who have had less success.

The plant that we are distributing to everyone this year is *Echeveria cuspidata* var. *zaragozae*. This is a pretty small-growing plant that was formally described as recently as 2005, but which had previously been in cultivation for a few years under the name "Echeveria species from Zaragoza". Zaragoza is one of a couple of places where the plant has been found, usually growing on gypsum cliffs and canyon walls. It is a town and municipality in the north-eastern Mexican state of Nuevo Leon, and it's an area where a number of popular and well-known cacti can also be found. It has small rosettes comprised of dainty bluish leaves

which have a dark pointed tip. In habitat it is reported not to offset much, but in the more generous growing conditions found in cultivation, it tends to offset freely, forming a compact mounded clump. Flowers are pinkish orange, paler inside, and are generally few in number on each of the quite short flower stems.

David Neville

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on June 6th and will feature Chris Eyers who will describe his visit to South Africa. You might remember Chris spoke at our branch a couple of years ago, about a trip to Namibia.

The June Table Show will consist of **Parodia** (cacti) and **Euphorbia** (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 10th Edition* (contact me if you don't have a copy of this).

The *Parodia* group includes *Blossfeldia*, *Brasilicactus*, *Eriocactus*, *Frailea*, *Notocactus*, *Parodia* and *Wigginsia*.

The *Euphorbia* group includes plants from *Euphorbia*, *Jatropha* and *Monadenium*.

Forthcoming Events

Sat 13 th May	Isle of Wight	What I Did Last Winter (Paul Klaassen)
Sat 13 th May	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Sparsholt College - Countryside Day
Sat 20 th May	Portsmouth	Succulents & Cacti with Altitude (Terry Smale)
Sat 3 rd Jun	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Summer Show at Christ Church Hall, Widley, PO7 5AU
Tue 6 th Jun	Southampton	South Africa #1 (W. Cape) (Chris Eyers)
Sat 10 th Jun	Isle of Wight	Cactotherapy - Gordon Rowley autobiographical compilation
Sat 17 th Jun	Portsmouth	Lime Loving Cacti (John Watmough)
Wed 21 st Jun	Portsmouth	Visit to Kathy & Keith Flanagan's Collection
Sat 24 th Jun	Southampton	Branch visit to South West Cactus Mart, Portishead, Bristol BS20 7DD
Tue 4 th Jul	Southampton	Gymnocalycium in Person (Graham Evans)
Sat 8 th Jul	Isle of Wight	Slide Show – SW USA by Keith Grantham (#2)
Sat 15 th Jul	Portsmouth	The Elton Roberts Collection (Kathy Flanagan)

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

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