

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

June 2014



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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>
Branch Minishow .....	1
Results .....	2
<b>Bookwork Corner .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Forthcoming Events .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Next Month's Meeting .....</b>	<b>6</b>

## Editorial

Despite claims that Spring this year has been warmer than average, it hasn't felt like it. The weather has continued to be a mixture of sun and rain which is excellent for plants in the garden. Unfortunately, it's also excellent for weeds too!

A few more genera are flowering for me, including some of the cacti which I got from ELK last year. I had thought they might be too small to flower so this was a pleasant surprise. The current weather also seems to be favourable to Haworthias and some are showing some good growth and developing nice colouring too.

## Announcements

Several of our members travelled to the **Haverling Cactus Mart** last month and I think most people found some interesting plants to buy – I came back with a couple of trays of plants.

The **branch display at Sparsholt** went well. The weather was reasonable and we had good interest in our stand, although due to organisers having re-arranging the layout of some the other activities, there were less people walking by along the path next to our display.

Coming up this month are **visits to Wisley** (15<sup>th</sup> June), **the Maces** (22<sup>nd</sup> June) and the **Bristol Cactus Mart** (28<sup>th</sup> June). Please add your name to the lists on the front table if you are planning to attend any of these events so that we can finalise arrangements for lifts.

For the Wisley Event, we are hoping that entrance will be free since members of RHS-affiliated

societies are allowed one free visit to Wisley per year. We are not sure how our membership will be validated, but I would suggest that you bring along a copy of the journal cover sheet, showing your membership number.

For the visit to Suzanne and Tony Mace, they will accept visitors from 2pm. There is parking for 3-4 cars in their drive, additional paid parking in a field down the road (signposted Gardens Open Parking) and also some parking in Deaks Lane just before the mini roundabout – although if there is cricket on, that may be used up.

Next Saturday (7<sup>th</sup> June), **Portsmouth** will be holding their **Summer Show**. The venue is their usual meeting hall in Cosham.

The BCSS recently published the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Guide to Shows*, and as part of our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and we will be handing out a free copy of this to all our regulars.

## Last Month's Meeting

Last month, as a continuation of the series of plants we've handed out to members to cultivate, David handed out plants of *Mammillaria glassii* v *ascensionis*. If you were absent last month, please collect your plant today.

### Branch Minishow

David explained that during the first half of the meeting, everyone would have a go at judging the plants and in the second half, he would explain how he would have judged each class.

The procedure to follow was to fill in the results on the form on the back of the newsletter, where there was space to write your results and also space to write down the Judge's view. Once you had assessed the classes, copy your results to the smaller marking sheets and then hand those over to Vinay who would average all the audience results. The averaged results for the group would be commented on by David in the second half of the meeting. There was a question from the audience – whose view was correct? The audience - but just for this evening!

David went on to say that there are qualified judges in the society and those who read the journal will know that the BCSS arranges an annual Judge's Course. You have to pay to attend but it's a nice social event and there are some good lectures during the event. He attended annually for 20 years and will also be going this year. Not many people from this branch have attended in recent years, but Geoff Card and Ivor Biddlecombe have been in the past, as had Geoffrey Penrose. In previous years, the branch had a number of qualified judges. It's a really enjoyable weekend. There are some tests at the end if you want to be assessed as a judge, but these are optional and you can attend just to learn more.

When judging, the first thing to look is to look at the class description. For example, for Echinopsis, the *Guide to Shows* lists a whole series of genera that are allowed in the class, so for Echinopsis, plants from the Echinopsis, Lobivia, Acanthocalycium and Psuedolobivia genera (and some others) would be allowed. First you have to determine if the entries comply with the class. He could see that one of plants in front of him was not eligible. It's no good looking at the name labels - as a judge you have to know the plants, and have a fairly good general knowledge, because it is possible that novices may have labelled their plants incorrectly. It's down to the judge to check that the entries are all from the right genera, and disqualify those which aren't.

You then need to check the entries against any pot size limit. With open classes there's no limit. However for the Echinopsis class, the condition was that the plants did not exceed 5 inches. Most judges carry a measuring tape or callipers to allow them to check any plants they think are borderline. If the pot does exceed the size it will be disqualified and deemed NAS (not as scheduled). The measurement of importance is the widest dimension inside the pot's rim. Some people under-pot their plants and if a plant is excessively under-potted, the judges may take a dim view of that since it is not in keeping with the spirit of the show.

After this, it comes down to the condition and maturity of the plants. In a limited pot size class, you are looking for species which are mature within the indicated pot size. A really easy plant in a 5 inch pot would be beaten by a slower growing plant in the same sized pot. The condition is also important. If a plant was slow growing but was tatty or showing damage, especially to the newer growth, judges may ignore it and choose a younger plant in better shape. You have to weigh this up and it is down to the judge's opinion and the competition on the day.

In the Gymnocalycium group, the entries require two plants. This makes things more difficult. You may have a strong mature plant paired with a young fast growing plant. And the bigger the number in the group, the harder it becomes. You can have classes with 4 or 6 plants per entry. So the judge needs to know the genera and which species choice or miniatures versus the fast growing or more robust types. Some Gymnocalyciums like *G. ragonesei* will never outgrow a 3.5" pot - others like *G. monvillei* or *G. multiflorum* can produce big clumps leading to a giant plant in 10-15 years. So *G. ragonesei* is suited for the limited pot size class, and *G. monvillei* is better in an unlimited pot size class.

Evidence of flowering is an attribute which doesn't mean much on the day of the show, because plants flower at different times in the season. What you looking for is good healthy plants in good condition. The plants should be coming into growth at this time of the year, and you should be able to spot a plant that is not doing so well.

After this explanation the members were let loose! A total of 23 people handed me their marking sheets, which is a record. I struggled to enter all the data (23 marking sheets each with 30 plant choices and a few NAS's = 700 items of information!) into my computer within a reasonable amount of time, however I was able to hand David a summary of the audience results a few minutes after he started his discussion of results.

## Results

Overall, there were a total of 64 entries in the 10 classes.

### Class 1 – Mammillaria Group - 2 plants, 4"

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	NAS
Judge	C	F	H	-
Audience	C	F	H	-

David didn't measure any of the pots but they all seemed to be eligible. He didn't find any NAS entries. He had placed in first a really good plant of *M. albilanata* which was 10-15 years old with a plant resembling *M. parkinsonii*. Second was another *M. albilanata* paired with *M. lenta* which was offsetting nicely - this is a tricky plant to grow. Third was another *M. albilanata* paired with *M. nejapensis*. The latter dichotomises and eventually splits into more heads, forming a large clump. Both plants were several years old. Other entries included a *M. plumosa* and *M. bombycina* pairing, but both those are immature and can grow much larger. *M. carmenae* can get to football size and will offset,

and *M. laui* v. *laui* will go onto make multi-headed clumps.

The audience had picked the same order of plants, as David so things were off to a good start!

#### Class 2 – Parodia Group – 2 plants, 4"

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	NAS
Judge	F	C	H	E,M
Audience	C	H	F	E,M

Entry E contained only one plant – so it was deemed NAS. Entry M did contain two plants - but both were Neoporterias. One was labelled as a Neoporteria and the other had a nasturtium label! They were nice plants but were not eligible for this class. David had placed the remaining 3 entries in order F, C, H, and the audience had chosen C, H, F. Entry C contained a *Notocactus scopia plumosus* which will go onto make big clumps and he had placed other plants which remain solitary above it.

#### Class 3 – Gymnocalycium Group – 2 plants 5"

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	NAS
Judge	F	D	C	E
Audience	C	F	A	E

Entry E was NAS because only one plant had been entered.. He had chosen F, D, C. F contained *G. monvillei* which can get bigger, but also *G. spegazzinii* which was probably 20 years old and in good condition.

Entry D contained *G. ambatoense* which is a weak spined plant and had not been presented that well, with no top dressing, but it was a pretty old plant. He had placed C third (the audience had placed it first) and this consisted of *G. quehlianum* and *G. castellanosii*. They were in good condition but they will get bigger. The audience had also picked Entry A, but he thought one of the plants looked tired.

#### Class 4 – Rebutia Group - 1 plant 6¼"

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	NAS
Judge	D	M	F	-
Audience	D	A	C	M

Entry D was a nice clump of a sulcorebutia. M was a Weingartia and although it was unexciting looking, it is slow and was probably at least a decade old. It stays solitary for a long time. Choosing third was more difficult but he had picked a plant of *R. perplexa* despite the heads had some

marking on them – it was lovely plant with pink flowers. The other candidates were a *Mediolobivia* which looked rather stressed, entry A was a beautiful *S. rauschii*, but a slug must have got to the plant recently and had eaten some of the heads, and a hybrid cultivar called “Bojangles” was not particularly large.

#### Class 5 – Echinopsis Group - 1 plant, 5"

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	NAS
Judge	F	C	M	H
Audience	F	H	M	H

Entry H was an *Echinocereus* which is not allowed in Echinopsis, so this entry was NAS. David's ordering was F, C, M. He had placed C which was a slow growing *Trichocereus* with a brown mark ahead of entry M which had a few cobwebs and some brown marks. Some members of the audience had placed H, but it was ineligible.

#### Class 6 – Any Cactus

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	NAS
Judge	B	K	F	-
Audience	F	C	K	-

David said there were some lovely plants in class 6, including some he did not recognise, so they must be from some of our newer members.

A plant of *Lobivia ferox* (*L. leucantha*) was an absolute cracker. Ben said he had got the plant from Ciprian and it might originally have been Dave Philip's. It is a very slow growing plant which was marked around the base but it was very old.

Entry C was a *Melocactus* – this looked very nice, but you can buy these at a decent size fairly easily, and Ivor admitted he had got it from Lidl's 3 years ago. David said they are grown in Spain or the Canary Islands.

A plant labelled as *Mammillaria bocensis* was actually *Mammillaria laui* v. *dasyacantha*. It is a fast growing plant. The Denmosa can get to 6-8 feet tall, but this still quite was an old plant and it was full of buds.

*Mammillaria guelzowiana* was offsetting well and it would be a cracking plant when in flower. It is a difficult plant to grow to any size. M. plumosa was nice and in good condition and growing well but it can get really big. A nice clump of *Gymnocalcium bruchii* was cristate round the back - it will get a lot bigger and is easy. *Astrophytum ornatum* gets a

brownish / purple colour at the base as it ages – it was another very old plant.

*Ferocactus fordii* is one of the smaller growing Ferocacti and it will flower at grapefruit size, and it was showing buds – it is a miniature from Baja, California. Next was a small growing *Mammillaria magalaniai* – it doesn't get a lot bigger – and it may never outgrow a 3½" pot. Geoffrey said he got a first it with once at Luton Branch a few years ago, and David said it had done the same this evening. Coincidentally it was the same judge!

A short spined *Echinocactus grusonii* was looking a little yellowish - when in full health it is usually a little darker green than that. It was a nice plant and growing nicely in the middle. *Turbinicarpus swobodae* is one of the newer and trickier plants of that genus in cultivation, but it will get larger. Next was some "lawn trimmings" – it was a *Rhipsalis*, and David said several species are being grown as house plants in Holland. Angie had bought it in Ikea earlier that day!

David said this was a complete mixture of plants and this makes it difficult to judge. Some shows have a mixture of cacti and succulents in the same class, which is even harder.

He had placed entry B (the *M. magalaniai*) first, K (the *Echinopsis/Lobivia*) second and F (the *Astrophytum*) third. The audience wasn't too far different, but they had also placed the *Melocactus*.

David said there was really nothing wrong with any of the plants here - none were badly marked, all were in good condition and all were healthy.

#### Class 7 – Crassula Group - 1 plant 6¼"

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	NAS
Judge	E	M	F	-
Audience	F	E	M	-

Crassula includes all the subgroups such as Sedums, Tylecodons, Crassula and Adromischus, He had placed entry E - *Adromischus marianae* f. *herrei* first. It is a difficult plant to handle, the leaves are attached very loosely to the stem. There are lots of different forms with different leaf colours, and this one was very red. Second was entry M, which was a *Tylecodon ventricosus*. He had placed entry F - Crassula "Celia" third. This has hybrid vigour and is a cross between *C. suzannae* and *C. mesembryanthemopsis*. It forms a beautiful dense mound but botrytis can be a problem in the winter months. The audience's picks were F, E, M.

The entered Sedum was a nice plant - but there's no particular skill involved in growing it, and against some of these other plants it won't rate well. *Adromischus cristatus* was still a small plant and it was a small leafed form - it will get bigger in due course and does not have the age/maturity to compete against the other plants. The *Crassula hystrix* would also get larger in due course.

#### Class 8 – Haworthia Group – 2 plants, 4"

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	NAS
Judge	F	E	M	-
Audience	F	M	E	-

Entry M consisted of two plants of the same species – and there's nothing which says they have to be different. He had placed entry F (*M. truncata* + *M. maughanii*) first. – the maughanii is really slow growing and rarely makes much of a clump. Second was entry E – *H. scabra*, which is a difficult and slow growing plant which was very healthy and showing lovely colouration and *H. pubescens*, which is one of the miniatures of the genus – this was one of Margaret Corina's plants. Third was entry M which consisted of two plants of *H. asperula*.

#### Class 9 – Euphorbia Group - 1 plant 5"

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	NAS
Judge	F	C	E	-
Audience	F	E	G	

All the plants entered were Euphorbias and within the size limit. *Euphorbia stenoclada* was labelled as *E. onoclada* can grow to 6 foot high - use it if you have a shortage of barbed wire or razor wire! A plant of *E. obesa* looked a bit knackered – although it was still growing, it did not look as plump and vibrant as it should do.

David placed Entry F first, this was *E. mosaica* which comes from Somalia or Ethiopia - it is a slow growing plant. Second was entry C – an *E. suzannae* and third was entry E – *E. decaryi*. There are fast and slow growing forms of this. Entry G, which the audience had placed third, was a fast growing Euphorbia which might only be a couple of years old from seed. David said Mark Jakins had claimed he had seen that plant growing outdoors in a garden, but David didn't believe that would be possible. Ben mentioned there were other similar looking plants and the outdoor plant might have been *Colletia cruciata* from the Rhamnaceae family, which looks very similar.

**Class 10 – Any Succulent**

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	NAS
Judge	F	L	C	-
Audience	B	K	F	-

One of the entries in this class was *Lewisia cotyledonis*. The genus *Lewisia* is mentioned in the Guide to Shows, but not all *Lewisias* are succulent or eligible. Similarly there are *Euphorbias* which are not succulent, and which would not be eligible. If someone entered a *Poinsettia* (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) it would just be ignored. This plant even had a notocactus label in it. He didn't NAS it but didn't place it either.

Another entry was *Aloe somaliensis*. This doesn't get huge, but it offsets and can form a small clump. Beautiful markings and different forms exist. A very slow growing and choice miniature was *Avonia herreana* – this genus is related to *Anacampseros*. It will get bigger eventually, but it is hard to differentiate the species. Paul Klaassen had been discussing the genus and said Gordon Rowley also agreed it was difficult to identify them,

Entry C- *Haworthia bolusii* – was not exciting, but it was an old plant and he had placed it third. *Euphorbia valida* and another pot of the same species with bigger heads both had the characteristic remnants of the dried inflorescences on the body.

*Echeveria* "Ebony" is a very eye catching plant - but it is a form of *E. agavoides* and is one of the easiest and hardiest of the *Echeverias*. Down in Cornwall, he has seen plants of this growing outdoors in people's front gardens. He didn't place it because it wasn't that old.

A plant labelled as *Sedum furfuraceum* was actually a mesemb of some type. Even though he didn't know which genus it was, he could tell it was an old plant and he placed it second.

*Agave guadalajarana* is pretty with incurving rosettes of leaves, but it was not that old or difficult, and also had a damaged leaf in the centre.

He placed one of the *Euphorbias* first, the mesemb second and the *haworthia* third. The audience had placed the *Agave* which was beautiful, but it's not a slow growing plant. The audience also placed the *agave* and the same *Euphorbia* as David.

So there was quite a difference in the results here. If you had another judge here, some of the results would be different, and some would be the same.

When you have a mixed bag of plants like this it is particularly difficult.

I didn't get a chance to mention this during the meeting, but the following people whose choices came closest to David's assessments were Bruce Beckerleg, Sue Wilson, Ben Turner and Peter Down.

Vinay Shah

## Bookwork Corner

The cacti are still flowering their socks off in the greenhouses with *rebutia*, *mammillaria* and *lobivia* especially good at the moment. The flower beds in the garden are doing well with this combination of warm weather and rainy nights. The bearded irises are throwing up plenty of flowers this year after a few dismal seasons and look particularly lovely with the other iris species and alliums, with pinks just coming into flower.

The starling fledglings and adults have more or less vanished from the gardens as they spend most of the time foraging in groups down on the marsh. However the garden is filling up with comical baby house sparrows!

It never ceases to amaze me how rapidly the year rolls along, the spring flowers are now a distant memory and the hogweed, dog roses, red campion and elder are beginning to dominate the hedgerows. These flowers are signs of summer along with all the trees now fully in leaf.

Do take time to look at the donated books for sale on the library table, these include: *Cactus Lexicon* (Backeberg 1976); *The Mammillaria Handbook* (Craig 1979); *The Encyclopaedia of Cacti* (Cullman, Gotz & Groner 1986); *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Cacti* (Innes & Glass 1991); *The Cactus File Handbook 2- Rebutia* (Pilbeam 1997); *The Cactus File Handbook 6- Mammillaria* (Pilbeam 1999) and *Cacti for the Connoisseur* (Pilbeam 1987).

## 'ENJOYED THE LECTURE? THEN ENJOY THE BOOK!'

### May

I think we all enjoyed the mini show in May, hopefully it has inspired you all to learn a bit more about your favourite species. Take a look at one or two of the following books; **Cactus File Handbook 6 – Mammillaria** (Pilbeam); **A**

**Collector's Guide – Gymnocalycium** (Pilbeam) and **Gymnocalycium** (Charles); **Crassula** (Rowley); **The New Haworthia Handbook'** (Bayer) and **Haworthia and Astrolaba – a Collector's Guide** (Pilbeam)

### June

This month we welcome Stuart Riley to intrigue us with 'new cactus and succulent hybrids'. Which is fine but what books can I possibly suggest for this talk? So with a bit of guesswork on which species I know are popular for hybrids, especially for the splendid flowers, I will recommend the following books. The popular Rebutias are fabulous for the flowers which often completely hide the plant and come in such a huge range of colours so do take a look at **Cactus File Handbook 2 – Rebutia** (Pilbeam). For succulents perhaps have a look at Echeverias which produce such a vast range of hybrids giving such a range of leaf colour and form. The book for these is **The Genus Echeveria** (Pilbeam) which has such splendid photographs. All these books can be found in the **Featured Book Corner**, so do come over and have a look!

*Sue Wilson*

## Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be on 1<sup>st</sup> July and will feature a talk by David Minion on Nevada.

The June Table Show will consist of the **Echinopsis** group (cacti) and the **Gasteria** group (succulents). Please note that members can submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

The Echinopsis group includes *Echinopsis*, *Acanthocalycium*, *Acantholobivia*, *Chamaecereus*, *Lobivia*, *Pseudolobivia*, *Soehrensia* and *Trichocereus*.

The Gasteria group includes *Gasteria*.

For committee members, a reminder that a branch committee meeting will be held at Dot's on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> June.

## Forthcoming Events

Sat 7 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	Summer Show at St. Colman's Church Hall, Cosham, PO6 2JJ
Sat 14 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Isle of Wight	Epiphyllums (Carl Bullock)
Sun 15 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Southampton	Branch visit to RHS Wisley & Mammillaria Society Event
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	Echinocereus (John Pilbeam)
Sun 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Jun	Southampton	Branch visit to Suzanne & Tony Mace's Collection
Tue 24 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting @ 79 Dilley Lane
Sat 28 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Southampton	Branch visit to Bristol Cactus Mart, Portishead, Bristol
Sat 28 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	Display / Plant Sales @ Hayling Island Horticult. Society Show
Tue 1 <sup>st</sup>	Jul	Southampton	Nevada (David Minion)
Sat 12 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	Isle of Wight	What I Did Last Winter (Paul Klaassen)
Sat 19 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	Portsmouth	Propagation of Cacti & Succulents (Tony Roberts)
Sun 27 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	Southampton	60 <sup>th</sup> Anniv. Garden Party - hosted by Alice Jankovec, West Moors, Dorset
Tue-29 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ New Forest Show, Brockenhurst
Thu 31 <sup>st</sup>	Jul		
Tue 5 <sup>th</sup>	Aug	Southampton	Around the Shows (Trevor Wray)
Sat 9 <sup>th</sup>	Aug	Isle of Wight	Open Evening at Peter & Jan Collard's
Sat 16 <sup>th</sup>	Aug	Portsmouth	No meeting
Mon 25 <sup>th</sup>	Aug	Portsmouth	Display / Plant Sales @ Emsworth Horticultural Society Show

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

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