

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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## Editorial

After a rather dry April, we have had a few showers of rain in recent weeks – something that the garden plants – and the weeds – have been waiting for! Anyway it's nice to see everything looking green and lush.

In the conservatory, I've continued to have flowers on Rebutias and Mammillarias and also on Gasterias, Aloes, Haworthias and Echeveria. Most things seem to be coming into growth and I've also started feeding the plants. There are several "plant invigorator" products out there and I've recently applied some "Envii Deep Rooter" to all the cacti and succulents since it is supposed to encourage root growth – we'll see what happens!

## Announcements

The branch put on a display at Sparsholt College in the middle of May. The weather held out and there was a good amount of interest in our stand, and we also did reasonably well with plant sales.

We are delighted to report that 3 new members have joined the Branch in recent weeks - notification has been received by our Secretary David Neville that the following people have joined: Robin Caddy from Southampton, Michelle Phalp from Bournemouth, and Sarah Longbottom from Fair Oak. We hope that they will be able to come along to our monthly meetings and participate in our activities.

Forms for car-sharing to attend 3 external events - *South West Cactus Mart* (June), *Oxford Show* (August) and the *Southern Area Show* (August) are on the front table – please write your names on these

if you would like to attend any of these events and need a lift – or if you plan on going and can give others a lift.

William Moore from Bournemouth has been in touch with the branch - he has a 2 metre high cactus which he no longer wants! Anyone willing to offer it a good home can get further details from David.

The free plant that the branch distributed at the last meeting was *Echeveria cuspidata* v. *zaragozae*. If you missed the meeting and did not pick up a plant, please check with David, he may have some spares left over.

## Last Month's Meeting

### Cultivation & Propagation Workshop

David said spring has arrived and hopefully everyone was busy repotting and sorting out their plants. Geoff Penrose said he had not started watering yet - he had been away and he usually waits until May anyway. David asked if anyone had any major problems? In his greenhouse the spiders had produced cobwebs on some of the plants. And we did have some severe frosts during the winter - although some members claimed we had not! David said he had flown to Naples at the turn of the year, hoping it would be warmer than here - but it turned out to be their coldest winter for 42 years! And just last week, he had to help his dad cover up plants due to some sudden frosts in late April.

David introduced Adrian who was going to talk about greenhouses. Adrian told us that it was impracticable to bring the greenhouse to the meeting, so he had a think about what to really talk about. He had wanted to grow some seeds in the greenhouse rather than using artificial lighting as he has done in previous years, so he wanted to know more about the light levels in his greenhouse. He had intended to put the seedlings in the north-facing side and also lower down. He could already tell it was duller inside the greenhouse compared to being in the garden. He mentioned he has bubble wrap in place throughout the year since plants can burn if there's strong sun in the early spring months. He decided used a light meter to check the light levels.

This was a unit where the sensor could be placed remotely from the meter itself and it had three ranges to allow it to cover a wide range of light levels. It measured the light in units of lux (lumens per square meter). [The light meter was a Digital LUX meter, model LX 1010B, purchased from eGadgetland via Amazon for £17.75]. Outside the greenhouse, the meter read 100,000 lux in direct sunlight and 60,000 on a bright day where it was partially cloudy. Inside the greenhouse, he was horrified to measure the light level as "only" 30,000 lux. He concluded his greenhouse is very dirty and he intends to clean it, although in reality all his plants are growing well. The bubble wrap was certainly one of the factors. Although that light level might be OK for the seedlings, what about the other plants he was growing in there? Well, they all seemed to be doing OK. He decided to do some additional tests with different types of bubble wrap and mesh, to see how much they would attenuate the light level by. Coarse bubble wrap is the best for insulation, and it attenuated the light by 15%. Fine bubble wrap attenuated by 10%. Coarse mesh which was very open had 50% light attenuation, and fine mesh was worse, with 57% attenuation. Some thinner mesh was noticeably better, with 11% attenuation. He also considered the condensation which you get when you place a pot in a sealed bag and although he didn't measure this, he estimated that it might amount to around 10%.

David Neville said he has bubble polythene up 12 months of the year and he also uses "Cool Glass" to coat the glass through the summer months. This combination would cause even more attenuation than Adrian had measured, but all his plants were growing well.

Tom Radford asked Adrian what the illumination level was under the fluorescent lights in the light box that Adrian had shown us in previous years. Adrian did not have the figure at hand but said it was quite low. After the meeting he confirmed that the light level was 6,000 lux, at a distance of 6" under the twin tubes - so this is a lot lower than the reading in the greenhouse, and yet Adrian had successfully used the box to raise many seeds.

Tom Radford asked whether people had any experience of using LED lighting? For plant growing these often consist of blue and red LEDs. Is the UV content important? David said that comparing plants grown under glass versus polythene, the latter have better spines. Peter Down mentioned that Bill Greenaway in Cornwall used to grow his plants in poly tunnels and these had some of the best spination he'd seen. David said he shades his plants from April to the autumn with the Cool

Glass, and all his sales plants are grown with Cool Glass and additional shading inside. And the Dutch nurseries he visits all use shading. If you drive around Holland at night, you see many of the greenhouses lit, usually with a yellowy light.

Adrian mentioned that he's recently bought a garden water pump to pump water out of a water barrel. It's made by Hozelock and can pump to a height of 2.5 metres. It can be connected to a lance. If the water runs out, it shouldn't cause a problem (some pumps can burn out). There's a filter built in to the unit and it does need to be primed. It is mains operated. Bruce said he uses something similar. Richard White had brought in a solar powered water pump which claimed to be able to pump to a height of 5m but it had a low flow rate and was designed to be used for trickle rate watering.

Now it was time for me (Vinay) to talk about electronic items that might be of use to growers. Richard had brought in a selection of electronic items as well. A couple of parameters which are important for growers are temperature and humidity, and there's quite a selection of devices which can measure these. I started with a small meter which was solar powered and which displayed the current temperature along with the minimum and maximum values recorded. It did not need any batteries since it contained a rechargeable battery which was kept topped up by the solar cell. Unfortunately while using this meter, I found that if you placed it where the sun shines on the solar cell, the sensor warms up and gives a false (high) reading of the temperature - so it needs to be placed where direct sun won't fall onto the sensor. David also mentioned that the temperature readings taken at a window may not be representative of other parts of the room.

Next was a small meter made by Chinese company Digoo (Model TH1130) and which was claimed to be the smallest temperature and humidity meter you can get. Its size was 57mm x 44mm. It uses a lithium coin cell for the power source and has a magnet on the back which allows it to be placed on a magnetic surface. The meter costs around £3-£4. The meter is simple to use, with only one button, which changes the temperature reading between centigrade and fahrenheit.

I mentioned that all the meters tend to have liquid crystal displays (LCD) - these are clear when viewed from front on but some are not good when viewed at certain angles. The actual quality of the LCD varies as well. This can pose a problem when you buy things by mail order because you don't really know how clear the display will be until you actually receive the unit.

Next was a meter (model HC520 - £5 on Ebay) which also measured temperature and humidity - however this unit was also capable of recording the minimum and maximum values. These values were automatically reset once a day, and the min/max values could be viewed by pressing a button. Richard White had brought in a similar unit, except that it had a larger display, meaning that it displayed the current and minimum and maximum values all the time, so the latter could be viewed without having to press any buttons. David said having the min/max capability is really valuable. Richard said his unit cost around £12 on Amazon. I had also brought in a similar unit - but it only displayed the temperature in integers, whereas Richard's unit displayed it to 0.1°C.

The next meter (model TA298) was larger and had an exceptionally clear display. It showed the humidity and internal and external temperatures (measured via a sensor attached on a 1.5 metre lead), along with the current time. Buttons on the unit could be pressed to retrieve the min/max values. It also only used a single AAA battery to operate, so it should be cheap to run. This meter was purchased for only £4 on Ebay - but I noticed some sellers charge as much as £12 for the exact same unit.

Next was an old style meter with two metal prongs which was capable of measuring 3 things - the light level via a solar cell, the soil pH level and also the soil moisture content. Unusually, this meter didn't need any batteries - for light intensity, the solar cell would generate electricity and the metal electrodes are made of different metals and this sets up a chemical reaction (like a battery) which provides a current for the meter for the other measurements. The pH range was limited to 3 to 8, which is somewhat limited but might be OK given the typical pH of soil samples. This meter cost £4 on Ebay. David said for plants in deep pots he uses a similar meter to check the moisture level - it's hard to check the moisture any other way.

It was time to review some of the items Richard had brought in. First was a mains power meter. You plug this into a mains outlet and then plug the equipment whose power consumption you want to check into the socket contained in the meter. The meter will tell you how many watts the equipment is drawing. It is useful for checking the power consumption of various electrical items around the house.

Next was an electrical power socket controlled by a thermostat. A LED display showed the temperature setting. Most thermally controlled sockets come on when a temperature falls below a certain level, but this unit could operate the socket when a

temperature either rose or fell through a threshold. This means it could be used for turning on a fan if the temperature gets too high. Another unit from Richard had two power outlets - one of these was controlled by a thermostat and the other was controlled by a timer. Richard had used this to control a propagator. It also had different temperature thresholds for day and night so it would be used for seedlings, which often prefer a lower temperature at night. This unit was more expensive than the previous unit, and Richard said it cost £35.

Next was an electronic pH meter which could measure the pH level of liquids. A few years ago, Keith and Kathy Flanagan had told us how they had visited Elton Roberts in California, and he used to acidify his water since most plants prefer slightly acidic soil conditions. This meter would allow you to check the acidity of the water prior to watering. You could use either vinegar or citric acid to acidify the water, and Richard had also brought along some phosphoric acid. The pH meter costs around £5 on Ebay. The meter can be calibrated by using buffer solutions which have a known pH value, and of course pure water should read as pH 7.0. Adrian mentioned litmus paper - this can still be obtained, however its accuracy is probably limited to ~0.5pH because it relies on comparison with a colour chart. We attempted to test the pH meter - in Miracid the meter initially read 7.4 but settled at 7.0 - Richard mentioned that although this form of Miracle Gro is suitable for acid loving plants, it's not necessarily acidic. A sample of water from Richard's de-humidifier read as 7.3.

Next was a TDS meter - "TDS" stands for total dissolved solids, so it's a measure of the ionic content of the water, quoted in parts per million. The measurement is usually obtained by checking the solution's conductivity. You can also get Electrical Conductivity (EC) meters which give a readout of the electrical conductivity (in microsiemens per cm) but the relation between TDS and EC is usually just a constant multiplier which assumes that the ionic content in the water is common salt. On Ebay, a TDS-only meter costs around £3 and a TDS/EC meter costs around £6, but the former is really all that you need. Completely pure water should give a TDS reading of zero. On the Internet, articles suggest that the upper limit of TDS of water for human consumption should be 500, but the UK water authorities tend to assess each potential metal contaminant individually rather than quoting an overall number. In my case, my tap water at home registered 280ppm and water from my water filter (with a month old cartridge) registered 180ppm. So one could potentially use those readings to assess when the filter cartridge was no longer effective.

Richard had brought in some water samples which we tested. Water from a dehumidifier gave a reading of 31, so it was quite pure. His tap water registered 274 and he mentioned the water in Fordingbridge is supplied from the River Avon and Salisbury Plain.

Both the pH and TDS meters are quite useful things to have. Richard mentioned that if you start with water which has a high TDS value and add feed, that will push up the TDS number even higher and then the plants may not be able to use the feed effectively.

The final unit I described was an Oregon Scientific BAR208HG weather station. The unit comes with a remote temperature / humidity sensor and you can position this many meters away. The unit is capable of monitoring up to 3 of these remote sensors. The main unit also receives the atomic time signal so it sets the time automatically and corrects itself for summer/winter time. Adrian asked about the range of the remote sensor, and for this unit it was 30m but there are alternative units which can use sensors at a range of up to 100m. An LED on the main unit comes on if the external temperature sensor detects temperatures which are freezing or lower - but it's not an audible alarm so you wouldn't notice it if the temperatures fell to zero while you were sleeping. This unit sells for £60 from Argos, but you can buy similar units from Aldi or Lidl for £20-£25. These alternative units tend to use the German atomic time signal but it's usually possible to set them up to display the correct time for the UK. I personally didn't consider this Oregon unit to be worth £60 - there are quite a few complaints about it on Amazon and the battery cover on the external sensor didn't seem very weather resistant – but I actually only paid £24 for it as a "refurbished" unit on Ebay. Mike Shaw said he had got a weather station unit from Lidl a few years ago and was very pleased with it.

We started the second half of the meeting by discussing a couple of plants that members had brought in. Michelle had brought along a cactus which she had been given by a friend around a month ago. She had repotted it, but she wanted to know what was wrong with it, since the stems were not the usual green colour you would expect. David said it was a Trichocereus, and it appeared that the plant had suffered from damage by red spider or had been scorched. Michelle said that when she repotted it, she had removed some bad stems but the roots were fine. David said the plant would eventually produce new heads where the old ones had been cut and the new growth should be fine. When the plant is ready to flower, it should produce nocturnal flowers which are usually larger than the ones produced by Echinopsis. Next, Alec

Mant had brought in the large Trichocereus cutting which Bruce had sown off for him at the last cultivation meeting. This top cut had now formed a callous over the cut and David said this was now the right time to plant it and root it down. David did notice 2-3 brown spots on the stem and he wasn't sure why these had formed. Was it possibly dried blood from when Bruce had been trying to cut the head from the main plant?

Next was Bruce to talk about seed raising. He mentioned that he usually sows 2 batches of seeds, the first in early March and the rest 2 weeks later. He puts the pots in polythene bags - previously he used to sow in small pots held in a tray, with a sheet of glass on top - but those dried out too much sometimes and the poly bags give better control overall. He sows in a propagator set to 20°C and shades the seedlings from direct sun. The propagator has an auto vent on top. He sows in a gritty compost - his usual mix for plants is 40% grit, 30% peat, 30% John Innes, but he adds extra grit for the seed sowing mix, and the soil is probably 55% grit. He also tops the surface with fine grit or sharp sand. In the past he hasn't sterilised the soil but he tried it this year, by "cooking" the soil for 2 minutes. However, there was still green growth on some of the pots, so it wasn't successful. Geoff Penrose said that the ideal microwave cooking time is 2 minutes for 2 pounds of soil, and you have to check the temperature with a thermometer to ensure that it's reached 180°F.

Cheshunt compound was useful to protect against damping off of seedlings, but it's banned now. Ivor said he's tried all sorts of different growth mediums - clay, vermiculite, perlite, grit - but he still gets the algae. Michelle said she waters with de-ionised water and that works for her. Ben suggested that an alternative to Cheshunt compound is Bayer's Fruit and Vegetable Disease Control which is a copper based powder and is used to prevent damping off. Unfortunately this has recently been withdrawn from the market.

Bruce said he leaves cacti seedlings in the poly bags until August, and then he opens the bags and lets the plants harden. For succulents, it varies, depending on his experience with the genus. Some people leave the plants in the bags for months and other take them out sooner. He mentioned that he had tried planting 3 different lots of seed this year and had experienced mixed results. With seeds from his own plants, all 8 lots produced seedlings. With Kohres seed, he also had 100% success with 7 lots. However, with society seed, he only had partial success, with 2 out of 5 batches producing seedlings. He did manage to get some

Cleistocactus to germinate but unfortunately they succumbed before they grew to any size.

Adrian said he had been trying growing seeds in pure cat litter, and pure vermiculite and the results seemed quite good. Dot had tried fine pumice, obtained from Ikea. This is sold in 3 litre (2kg) bags for £2.50. David mentioned that plants grown in these inert materials would need feeding to survive. Adrian asked when should you start feeding seedlings? Bruce said it depended on the temperatures - he would wait until temperatures get up to 10°C and higher, otherwise a combination of cold and wet can lead to rotting. If the seedlings were on an indoor windowsill, the temperatures would probably be OK. Compost will have some feed mixed in with it, but pumice won't. Bruce said he did add feed to his gritty mix. Paul Maddison said he used a seed compost initially and he then moves the plants to a potting compost which will have more feed in it.

David Neville started a discussion on insecticides. Unfortunately, there's not much to choose from these days. There are lots of ready-to-use squirty bottles of pre-mixed insecticide you can get, but this would be an expensive way of treating a large collection – besides that, using a spray won't deal with root mealy bug – for that you need a concentrate which you would mix up and apply to the soil as a drench. He did have some precious stock of dimethoate left over, but it was quite old and he wasn't sure it was as effective as it once used to be. In the past you could buy insecticides like Murphy's Systemic and Sybol, but these have long been banished from the stores. He did find some old bottles in his shed but these were over 6 years old and he wasn't sure how good they would be.

In his greenhouse he found various versions of Provado - the original formulation contained imidacloprid (a neonicotinoid) - and currently there is an EU moratorium on these due to the potential effect on bees. The chemicals were banned for 2 years from 2013, and the ban was not lifted in 2015. David said someone had told him it had been proven that these chemicals don't affect bees but he had not read that. After the ban, Provado replaced imidacloprid with thiacloprid - but this was also been withdrawn – in addition, people said it was not as effective for mealy anyway. The latest formulation of Provado uses deltamethrin, which is a man-made variant of pyrethrum. With the original Provado you could buy ready to use as well as concentrate forms and Mike Shaw said there was also a granule form for wineweevils. David said the latest formulation (deltamethrin) no longer claims to be effective against mealy bug. Provado with a different

formulation which could handle red spider was also sold as an aerosol but this is no longer available. David said he had burnt the leaves of a plant when using the aerosol – it's best to apply in the evenings and at some distance from the plant.

We discussed some of the other insecticides that had been brought in. Ivor said the red spray bottle was obtained from the £ shop and it mentioned it was a pest and spider mite killer. These are usually based on fatty acids. David said he wasn't sure they worked but Ivor said he had used it and it had killed mealy. It's a contact insecticide and the soap affects the mealy's protective coating. David asked whether the soap affected succulents and Echeverias? Ivor said he had tried it on Aeoniums where he gets the most mealy bugs and it had worked on those plants without any ill effects.

Doff Universal Bug Killer had been bought by David as a ready-to-use spray for £2.95 from "In-Excess". It uses natural pyrethrum/pyrethrins but David said he had not used it yet since he hadn't seen any mealy bugs yet. Adrian offered to provide some! David had also got some commercial strength pyrethrum on Ebay for £40. In the past it used to be a yellow gloopy liquid but this was a white liquid. It sounds expensive but it is a concentrate and goes a long way. Whilst in the shed he had also found some "Bug Clear". The concentrate lists mealy and scale insect but not red spider, whereas the ready-to-use spray lists all three. For most people it's mealy and root mealy which is the problem and to get rid of the latter you really need to saturate the soil with an insecticide in a trough.

Bruce said he has some old malathion and he uses fairy liquid as a wetting agent, but it might be the latter which is more effective - because of the age of the malathion! David went on to mention "SB Plant Invigorator" – a relatively new substance but which has quite a few people recommending it, including Gillian Evison from Oxford, who is one of the best cactus and succulent growers in the country. She said it's fantastic for mealy and red spider, and she uses it on all her caudiciforms. It is available at garden centres and online. The description says it's an environmentally friendly pesticide and growth stimulant - and David said the bottle mentions "physical mode of action" without specifying what that meant! Pests will not become resistant to it and it helps prevent chlorosis, and helps leaf colour and vigour. It controls whitefly, aphids, spider mite, mealy, scale and mildew and is non-toxic. Suzanne Mace also recommends it. A 500ml bottle of x100 concentrate costs around £15 on Amazon and Ebay. It is available in 250ml and 500ml sizes and there is also a ready-to-use spray available. There is also a 1

litre bottle of x500 concentrate available for around £40. Alice said it is used with nematodes because it won't harm them. Ben said Wisley use it, as a fertilizer, insecticide and fungicide all rolled in one. David said it's certainly something to look out for and try. Whether it was effective as a drench or just a spray, he didn't know. Ben said that with Provado, there's usually a limit on how many times a year you should use it - you have to allow some time between application and having an effect - but with SB, there is no limit.

David said dimethoate is still sold commercially, but it is only sold in 5 litre size, and there are all sorts of controls on who it can be sold to (the buyer needs to have the correct licences and special training). And it can't be transported in a normal car, and needs to be stored safely.

*Diatomaceous earth* was something Ben had mentioned in his talk earlier in the year, where it was used to control aloe mites / aloe cancer in South Africa. David had got a pack of it from Ebay for a few pounds. It is typically used for killing lice and mites on poultry and is also fed to horses and cattle for worming. People use it in their diets as well. There are different grades available, and this cheaper form was not suitable for human consumption. It is a sedimentary clay / powder and it supposedly works by chafing insects to death. People use it for mealy and other things but it has to be in contact with the insects. David asked if anyone has used it? Alice said she tried using it for spider mite by brushing it onto plants but it didn't seem to work for her. David said he would try it. The label said it kills fleas, mites, ticks, ants, cockroaches, bed bugs, beetles slugs, snails, and any pests with a waxy exoskeleton. For horticultural use, it can be mixed with compost / soil. It also "protects and provide essential trace elements and absorbs moistures and nutrient and releases to plants when needed". David said his purchase was a marine sediment from Denmark which looked like fine silica. Ted said it looked like "Fullers Earth". Alice wondered if it would be effective for root mealy - when repotting plants wash the roots and dip them in the diatomaceous earth?

Neem Oil was mentioned and Alice said she had used it and it worked for red spider and also got rid of 95% of her mealy bug. Miranda said she had tried it on a house plant and it had got rid of red spider mite.

Before moving on the final topic for the evening, David said Ben had a question about watering. "Does anyone check the water level of their plants before watering?" Most people didn't seem to.

However Michelle said she does use a moisture meter to check some of her plants. Ted said the moisture probes didn't work well for plants in really gritty composts. Peter Bircher said he lifted his pots to gauge how dry they felt, based on the weight - he said he doesn't have a large number of plants to check!

Now it was time to discuss some of the plants handed out by the branch in previous years. One of the first the Branch had given out was *Echeveria lilacina*. Ivor said the plant he had brought in was a cutting from the original plant, which had died. Mike Shaw said his plant was a 3rd generation offset from the original plant. It seemed to have pink leaf edges, which David thought was unusual. Bruce's plant was beautiful, it was grown quite hard and was flowering nicely - David said the flower spikes tend to be less spindly if the plant is grown hard. Ted Smith's *E. lilacina* had marks on the farina, and he said this had been caused by watering with Provado mixed with fairy liquid. It may colour up better later in the year, but once the farina is gone, it won't reappear on the leaf, so you would need to wait for new leaves to form and replace the old ones.

One of the other plants given out a few years ago was *Mammillaria albilanata*. David said it is usually single headed in habitat but Ivor's plant had several heads. Ivor confirmed that the plant had been attacked by a slug which had eaten the centre and this eventually caused the plant to form multiple heads. Ted said he had grown the plant from seed and some of the seedlings from that went on to form multi-headed plants.

*Mammillaria microhelia* is related to *M. elongata* and it's a plant which was handed out a few years ago. There are 2 flower colour forms - pink and yellow green - and the plants were given two names (*M. microhelia* and *M. microheliopsis*) but the two are just flower colour variants. It's not easy to grow a good specimen good, but a large clump looks good.

*Euphorbia obesa* was handed out last year and some of the plants were still in the original 2 inch pots. One was pale and tapering and David said it was probably not getting enough light. If the plants are grown in more sun, they can develop some beautiful markings on the bodies. He picked out Alec's and Tom's plants as being good examples. They do vary slightly in form, not all of them get good markings and good shapes. David identified a couple of the plants as females due to the flowers having the 3-lobed stigma - he mentioned that the females are usually the nicer looking plants. Michelle said it was

her plant that David had described as tapering and she mentioned that she had bought another one from Stuart Riley and it was a better shape, even thought it was being grown in the same place as the tapering plant.

*Mammillaria glassii v. ascensionis* forms white tufty mounds when grown well. It is beautifully flowered and has decent sized rose-pink flowers. One specimen David highlighted was not getting enough light - it was not tight and compact. The plant is not difficult or rare, but you don't often see nice sized clumps of it. Some of the Rebutias handed out last year had gone on to form nice sized clumps and they were flowering well. They are easy to grow and form a compact mounded clump.

*Frithia pulchra* was handed out 2 years ago. It is a fairly fast growing plant which is capable of flowering in just a year when grown from seed, and it will go on to form a spreading clump. How they look depends on how they are grown, and he compared two plants which had been brought in - one had large green leaves and the other had grey leaves in a tighter clump. If you were to change the growing conditions, they will change their appearance. With most mesembs, you have to be careful with the watering but Frithia is one of the rare exceptions - you can almost water it all year round. It grows in wetter areas and at some distance from the other mesembs. You rarely see big clumps of it, but Jim Roskilly once had a nice 6" plant, which always did well in shows.

Vinay Shah

## Table Show Results

There were 11 entries in the May table show, and 8 entries for "Plants in Flower".

	Cacti – 3 Cacti	Succulents – 3 Succulents
Open	(1) I Biddlecombe	(1) I Biddlecombe
	(2) T Smith	(2) M Stevenson
	(3) M Stevenson	(3) -
Intermediate	(1) I Biddlecombe	(1) B Beckerleg
	(2) B Beckerleg	(2) I Biddlecombe
	(3) T Radford	(3)

### Cacti/Succulent in Flower

(1) T Radford <i>Echinocereus</i> sp.
(2) B Beckerleg <i>Pelargonium oblongatum</i>
(3) B Beckerleg <i>Mammillaria laui</i>

Ivor Biddlecombe

## Books and things

Foxgloves have taken over from the spring flowers in the garden – they're weeds that I can't quite bear to pull out. Unlike, for example, *Oxalis corniculata*. I seem to have the National Collection of weedy Oxalis, but the identifications here are tentative. If anyone knows better, please let me know! *O. corniculata* is, according to the RHS web-site, the small creeping one with green or purple-tinted leaves, yellow flowers and exploding seed-pods, which grows happily outdoors, especially in summer. In the conservatory I have what I think is *O. pes-caprae* (known in America as "Bermuda Buttercup"), the one with semi-succulent leaves and thick tap-roots which reminds one that the South American root vegetable oca is an Oxalis (*O. tuberosa*). It doesn't produce seed but still seems to get around the greenhouse, presumably by means of its little bulbils.

I also have lots of Rebutia and Echinopsis species and hybrids which are flowering their socks off. I did read somewhere that plants often flower better when they are running out of nutrients and think they are about to die. Time for re-potting!

## New books in the library

A new book has been added to the branch library: “*The Genus Ceropagia*” by Dennis de Kock (2017), published by John Pilbeam, 60 pp. A rather slim book, in the Pilbeam style, and with a purple cover if you’re looking for it. There are 354 colour photos of Ceropagia species (sometimes several for a single species) in alphabetical order, with brief notes on each. There is no overview of the classification or assistance with identification (so you’ll have to go through all the pictures if you have a plant to identify), but there are two pages of bibliography providing references mostly to the original descriptions of species. Probably this is a reflection of the general lack of knowledge of the genus. What I suspect will be of most interest to readers, apart from the illustration of the sheer variety of forms, is the five-page section on cultivation and propagation. No excuse for not growing a few species!

## Read All About It!

Our speaker for today’s meeting is Chris Evers from Croydon who will talk about a visit to the Western Cape Province of South Africa, which as usual doesn’t help me to suggest books from our library which might be related to his talk! However, we have a couple of general books which cover a wide range of succulents, and perhaps more relevant are Doreen Court’s book “*Succulent Flora of Southern Africa*” and several books on succulent groups found in the Western Cape, including Lithops, Conophytum, other mesembs, stapeliads, Crassula, Aloe, Gasteria, Haworthia, etc. Although the genus Ceropagia, as described in the book mentioned

above, is found in South Africa, I suspect most of the species are from further east rather than from the Western Cape.

*Richard White*

## Next Month’s Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on July 4<sup>th</sup> and will feature Graham Evans who will be talking about Gymnocalyciums. David says he is a very good grower, and the “In Person” reference in the talk’s title means that he will be bringing along some live exhibits!

The July Table Show will consist of **Gymnocalycium** (cacti) and **Stapelia** (succulents), along with “plant in flower”. Please note that members can submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

The table show classes use the classifications from the *Guide to Shows 10<sup>th</sup> Edition* (contact me if you don’t have a copy of this).

The *Gymnocalycium* group includes *Brachycalycium*, *Gymnocalycium* and *Neowerdermannia*.

The *Stapelia* group is very large and includes subgroups such as *Caralluma*, *Echidnopsis* and *Hoodia*. It includes plants from *Caralluma*, *Duvalia*, *Huernia*, *Orbea*, *Piaranthus*, *Stapelia*, *Tavaresia*, *Echidnopsis*, *Hoodia*, *Larryleachia*, *Psuedolithos* and *Trichocaulon*.

## Forthcoming Events

Sat 10 <sup>th</sup> Jun	Isle of Wight	Cactotherapy - Gordon Rowley autobiographical compilation
Sat 17 <sup>th</sup> Jun	Portsmouth	Lime Loving Cacti (John Watmough)
Wed 21 <sup>st</sup> Jun	Portsmouth	Visit to Kathy & Keith Flanagan's Collection
Sat 24 <sup>th</sup> Jun	Southampton	Branch visit to South West Cactus Mart, Portishead, Bristol BS20 7DD
Tue 4 <sup>th</sup> Jul	Southampton	Gymnocalycium in Person (Graham Evans)
Sat 8 <sup>th</sup> Jul	Isle of Wight	Slide Show – SW USA by Keith Grantham (#2)
Sat 15 <sup>th</sup> Jul	Portsmouth	The Elton Roberts Collection (Kathy Flanagan)
Sun 23 <sup>rd</sup> Jul	Southampton	Garden Party - hosted by Alice Jankovec, West Moors, Dorset
Tue 25 <sup>th</sup> Jul-	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ New Forest Show, Brockenhurst
Thu 27 <sup>th</sup>		
Tue 1 <sup>st</sup> Aug	Southampton	Cultivation Masterclass - Composts, Repotting & Watering
Sat 12 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Isle of Wight	Open Evening at Robin & Joan Goodridge (Members only)
Sat 12 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Southampton	Branch visit to Oxford Branch Show - Old Mill Hall, Grove, Wantage
Sat 19 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Portsmouth	No meeting

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

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