

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

After a long dry spell, the weather has finally relented and over the past few days, become slightly more comfortable. Having had very little rain over the preceding weeks, the recent rainfalls are welcome.

Plants which have flowered for me recently include rebutias, mammillarias, notocactus and gymnocalyciums, along with succulents such as echeveria, Tacitus bellus, haworthias, aloes and gasterias. I think the prolonged spell of hot weather was stifling some of the plants in the conservatory – when the weather is too warm, the plants just tend to shut down and stop growing. In habitat, the plants would probably experience equally hot conditions but I think they cope better due to cooler nights, free air flow and a larger root run.

Announcements

The **Annual Branch Dinner** was held last Friday at the Luzborough House. Everything went well and a total of seventeen people attended, which is the highest I can remember for quite a while.

Last month's speakers (Keith and Kathy Flanagan) mentioned that although their talk only featured pictures of Mammillarias, they do grow many other things, and branch members were more than welcome to **visit their collection**. A date has now been arranged – this coming Saturday (**11th July**, 2pm – 5pm). Their address is 20 Poultons Road, Overton, RG25 3NA. Directions and maps are

available from the front table. Although it's a relatively short distance (around 20 miles north-east of Winchester), it make sense for members to car-share with anyone who lives close to them.

Later this month, the branch will be taking part in two events. On the weekend of 18/19th July, we will have a small stand and sales table at the **Solent Fuchsia Show** which will be held in Titchfield. Later in the month, we will take part in the **New Forest Show**. Although members of the committee have been assigned for these events, we would of course welcome branch members to add their plants to the display or just come along and help. For further details of these events, please get in touch with David Neville or Ivor Biddlecombe.

Last Month's Meeting

Plants of Interest

Ivor had brought in some *Plants of Interest* for the July meeting. I was somewhat late for the start of the meeting so missed what Ivor had to say, so here are just some brief notes on what was on the table.

There were pictures of Echeveria and Sempervivums growing in Ivor's back garden. – at one point last winter, these were completely covered by snow. Despite this, the plants had survived, which shows that Echeverias are surprisingly hardy. Ivor had brought in the Echeveria plant featured in the picture.

The other plants on the table seemed to be a mixture of unusual or odd plants. There were various examples of Astrophytums - apart from *Astrophytum asterias* and *Astrophytum myriostigma* with pink flowers, there were Japanese cultivars with nice body markings – these were named *Astrophytum* cv. "Onzuka" and *Astrophytum* cv. "Hanozama".

There was also a *Gymnocalycium stellatum* with offsets growing around the base – one of these happened to be a cristate. Another unusual plant was a graft where the lower section, perhaps some sort of *hylocereus*, had decided to throw up a three-edged leaf.

Plants from our Collection

At the start of the talk, Kathy mentioned they had all sorts of plants in their collection and had also amalgamated their individual collections. Keith tends to look after the Mammillarias and Agaves, and she looks after the South American plants and the coryphanthas, astrophytums, sulcos, haworthias, lithops. Overall, they grow a great variety of things. However, most of their slides are of Mammillarias. Although in recent years they have built up a collection of digital images, they haven't yet got a digital presentation put together. So although the talk was titled "Their Collection", in reality it would mainly feature Mammillarias.

Keith stated he started the hobby 20 or so years ago, and now it's a complete obsession. He found it amazing how many different varieties of a particular plant you can find. Mammillarias these days are less fashionable than they used to be, and Keith felt there was a complete lack of interest as people seem to go for more exotic "stuff" these days.

The Sonoran plants in the Macrothelae group are tough hardy plants which are very reliable. Following the harsh winter last year, he also found the Baja plants to be very tough. *M. johnstonii* is a coastal plant from Sonora, and it's a cracking plant which can be pink or cream flowered. *M. fredudenbergii* is yellow flowered and was introduced by Reppenhagen in the early 1980s. The tubercles can bleach in strong sunshine.

M. aureilanata prefers a clay pot - and has a turnip-like root. The flowers are white with a pink midstripe. Keith mentioned some species are tender near the neck and he grows these with an upper dressing of around $\frac{3}{4}$ " of quick drying clay soil. Plants such as this, and also *M. guelzowiana* and *M. bocasna* form a collar of the old growth near the neck, and this should be peeled off when you repot.

The next slide featured *Mamillopsis senilis* with over 40 red flowers. Keith said a lot of people have trouble flowering this - some people say it needs a cold spell, but he believed it needed as much winter sun as possible - his plants tended to produce flowers on the south facing side. Next was *M. hertrichiana*, from Sonora. This has pink flowers and some forms have quite long spines.

Keith mentioned that some of their bigger Mammillarias get put outside in the garden in the summer. These tend to flower a little later than the ones left in the greenhouse. We saw a tiny *M. magnimamma* in a 2 inch pot - the early spring

growth is very attractive, but the spines are quite brittle. *M. napina* is a cracking plant with strong pink flowers which are larger than the plant body. It needs a slightly deeper pot.

Next was an extreme spined form of *M. mystax* which he found quite appealing - it had been grown from a special batch of seed from Doug and Vivi Rowland. Another plant from Sonora is *M. miegiana*, although there's some debate about which group it belongs in. It has shell pink flowers and was in flower now. We saw the hook-spined form of *M. uncinata*. The species is variable, with spines varying from being full fish hooks to just a minute tip. These will go down to minus 2°C or 3°C without marking. *M. rekoii* v. *leptocantha* is nice when young but it starts to lean over as it ages. *M. coahuilensis* is part of the Heyderi complex and the featured plant was 2" across. It also forms tissue under the soil and can eventually get to 4" across. It flowers in early spring and the flowers are fragrant. We also saw a regular form of *M. mystax* with normal length spines and with a ring of flowers. These can flower twice, once in early spring and then again in midsummer.

One of the earliest flowering examples is *M. weingartiana* which has very heavily fragrant flowers. You have to be very careful with the watering, since it makes a lot of tissue under the ground. It has a parsnip type root which can break the pot. Keith said he has lost a couple plants of this and believes it was due to the root puncturing itself as it broke through the pot.

M. pseudoperbella is in the Leucocephalae complex and comes from Queretaro in central Mexico, although it's not been located recently. *M. albilanata* is a reliable flowerer and is a charming plant which can progress into a bowl, given time. *M. elongata* is an old favourite - 12 varieties/forms are documented, but in habitat (around Pachuca), he only found one form, with golden yellow spines. *M. pilcayensis* is attractive when young but it also leans over as it matures - this suggests it must be a cliff dweller. Even if you try and correct this, the plant prefers to hang down. *M. viperina* has cerise coloured flowers and there are various forms with different spination. Growing in a 3" pot, he rarely had it completely in flower - the heads always seemed to want to flower in turn rather than together.

M. longiflora from Durango is highly variable and has light pink flowers. Removing the floral remains can damage the tissue and cause infection to spread into the plant. Even without this worry, this plant always seems to be an annual for him. We also saw a

three headed plant of *M. spinosissima* at Derek Bowdery's. It has small magenta flowers. Next was a 10" bowl of *M. geminispina* ssp. *leucentra*, from Queretaro. The western form of this goes under the name *M. albata*.

Next was a handsome form of *M. gigantea* with ginger red spines and yellow flowers. It has a brief flowering period but you do tend to get three or four rows of flowers. His plant is now 20 years old. *M. melanocentra* has lovely pink flowers and is short spined. It comes from Nuevo Leon. There is also a long spined form which has large fruits like chilli peppers. His plants were in 26cm bowls, having been repotted last year. They can mark up in the winter but are utterly reliable for flowers. The new growth is red-pink. Subspecies *rubrograndis* was found by Lau (L1226) as a relatively recent discovery. Lau gave seed to Southfields in early 1980s and this produced quite variable offspring. It doesn't mark as much as *M. melanocentra* and it can form buds by Christmas. The ones in habitat have white flowers with pink edges, but the ones in cultivation are selected and have cerise-pink flowers. It flowers in early April. *M. bocensis* v. *rubida* does mark in the winter but it has nice pastel yellow flowers. The bodies take on an attractive purple tinge early in the year.

Another form of *M. multiflora* called *M. stampferi* is a high altitude plant with short spines. He used to grow it in an unheated greenhouse - but now is more cautious and uses a heater. We saw the normal form of *M. gigantea* with yellow flowers. An old favourite is *M. perbella* - this plant had 8 heads. In habitat the spines are pure white. It needs as much light as possible and will dichotomize or even trichotomize, although it's very slow. We saw a woolly form of *M. lloydii*, grown from Steven bract seed. It had ice white flowers, although there is sometimes a slight tinge of yellow in the flower. Capillary action sucks up moisture and can make the base of the plant dirty.

M. boelderliana was discovered in 1984 from one hillside in Zacatecas. It makes a huge taproot below the ground and is best grown in long tom pots - the roots are like a parsnip. Another Reppenhagen plant is *M. durangicola*, from Durango. It has bronze flowers and the petals reflex if there's a lot of sun. We also saw a form of *M. magnimamma* which goes under the name *M. zuccariniana*. Keith mentioned that Fitz Maurice has stated there's something like 152 described varieties of *M. magnimamma*!

M. microhelia is attractive especially when young. *M. beneckeii* f. *multiceps* is difficult - it's a plant which you'll lose if you water it - or if you don't! It

comes from a hot area, and he tends to lose it after the summer months. In habitat, it grows over a large range and the flowers are very nice.

M. bombycina has pink flowers. These days, people don't seem to enter large bowls of this in shows like they once used to. It wasn't rediscovered in the wild until a few years ago. *M. grusonii* has flowers with reflexed petals. The yellow flowered *M. macdouglii* is in the Heyderi group. *M. gummifera* has striped flowers with green stigmas, and forms red berries. We also saw *M. heyderi*.

M. hemisperica grows as flat as a pancake when resting. *M. wildii* has soft tissue under the ground and is easy to lose with soft rot. *M. zahrenirana* has bronze flowers. The long spined form of *M. hahniana* goes under the name of *M. mendeliana*. It has deep pink flowers and long black central spines. *M. pottsii* is found in Northern Mexico and Southern US states, and it has reddish bronze flowers.

M. parkinsonii has long white spines. The flowers can vary from yellow to pink. We saw a form of *M. elongata* with white flowers and *M. candida*, where the flowers are yellow/cream initially but then switch to pink. *M. longimamma* is a member of the dolichothele group. The flowers have a citrus scent. *M. melaleuca* is solitary and also has yellow flowers. *M. baumii* has reflexed flowers with a lemon scent. They are soft bodied plants which can mark up easily. *M. carretii* has white flowers which are also lemon scented. These are tricky and easy to lose. *M. surculosa* has tissue below the soil and has yellow flowers with green anthers, and again a lemon smell. *M. heidiae* always looks nice with pale yellow flowers but it tends to go downhill after 3-4 years. *M. zephranthoides* has white flowers. *Cochemia posegeri* has "pillar-box" red flowers. Birds can easily snag themselves on the mass of hooked spines. We saw a white flowered form of *M. gatesii* and an example of *M. prolifera*.

We saw a mound of *M. schwartzii* with 50 pink flowers - this was the hooked spine form. *M. albicoma* has the tricky tissue under the soil - his plant was 20 years old and he grows it in a clay pot. *M. giselae* is a recent discovery and quite a quick grower - it has white or cream spines. *M. weingartiana* is one of the first to flower and it has small perfumed magenta flowers.

M. orcutti has dark green bodies and magenta flowers amongst white wool. *M. marcosii* has white flowers. *M. luthyi* is another recent introduction - it is easy from cuttings, and forms a napiform root. The flowers are a spectacular combination of pink and

white with yellow anthers, and they are large enough to hide the plant bodies. We also saw *M. herrerae* v. *albiflora* and *M. herrerae* proper with pink flowers. This is another plant whose spines draw up moisture from the soil causing discoloration of the lower part of the body.

Mammillaria sanchez-mejorada was thought to be form of *M. lloydii* or *M. sempervivi* but is recognised as a species since 1992. We saw a 10 inch pan of *M. zuccariniana*, followed by *M. picta* and *M. grahamii* v. *oliviae* with short central spines, the red spined *M. marcosii*, and *M. duoformis* with cerise flowers. *M. spherica* has yellow flowers. He had been growing *M. melaleuca* for 20 years and it had remained solitary. On to *M. sheldonii*, which has attractive pink flowers which are perfumed and appear 2-3 times a year. Keith advised watching out for Western Flower thrips which live on the pollen and then attack the plant's growing point.

M. blossfeldiana is from Baja, and has a golden appearance. It is easy to grow from seed which can be sprinkled around the neck of the plant. The flowers can have rounded or pointed petals, and he described the pink/white combination as "pyjama striped". *M. halei* is a Cochemiea and not easy to flower. We again saw *M. senilis* with the intense red flowers and *M. schwarzii*. A side view of an unpotted *M. albicoma* showed the tissue growing below the neck of the plant. We also saw *M. lutheyi*, a cutting of which formed a root within a year.

Mammillaria multidigitata comes from an island in Baja. *M. capensis* is rarely seen these days. It's a member of the Ancistracanthae and both straight and hooked spine forms exist. The stigma in the flowers is beautiful. *M. cerralboa* has flowers with a brick red stigma and takes around 3 years to produce seed pods. *M. estebanensis* is sometimes considered a form of *M. dioica* and has flowers with a green stigma. The flowers of *M. albicans* have a cerise stigma. *M. neopalmeri* comes from the San Benito islands of Baja and has flowers with a green stigma. We also saw the white flowers of *M. zephyranthoides* – these can have a faint midstripe.

M. baxteriana comes from Baja. *M. pacifica* is perhaps a form of *M. nana*. *M. lindsayii* is highly variable, and has yellow flowers. *M. marksiana* comes from Durango and a ring of yellow flowers forms on the stem.

Mammillaria brandegeei usually has short spines, although ssp. *lewisiana* has longer spines. *M. peninsularis* forms stout berries. *M. petrophila* is somewhat tender. A form of *M. lasiacantha* goes

under the number "SB500" and it has a feathery edge to the spines – the featured plant was one inch across. *M. pectinifera* is pink flowered but yellow flowered forms also exist. *M. laui* ssp. *subducta* has magenta pink flowers. We also saw a pink-flowered *Coryphantha*.

An example of *M. sempervivi* was beginning to dichotomise and it must have been quite old. We saw a form of *M. stella* with no central spine – he found this amongst a group of seedlings. *M. elongata* had pink flowers and red spines. *M. humboldtii* is a choice species and we saw an example with a ring of flowers. *M. jaliscana* is nice when young. *M. perezdelarosae* has attractive spination, and we saw another choice species, *M. hernandezii*. This can form buds at Christmas time. We also saw *M. bombycina* with bifurcated spines, and a form of *M. albilanata* which has cerise flowers. Keith said this would go on to fill a bowl in 10 years.

M. nana has yellow flowers and he grows it in a clay pot. *M. crucigera* is one of his favourites – it has neat spination and is very slow and just can't be rushed. The spination of *M. huitzilopochtli* var. *niduliformis* is not quite as tidy as the original species. *M. haageana* had a coronet of red flowers around the stem – he's seen large bowls of this grown in the USA. *M. saboe* has attractive pink flowers, which are large for the size of the plant. We saw *M. supertexta* with white and black spines and cerise flowers, and another example of *M. lutheyi* showing the dark flower buds prior to opening. We saw a few more varieties of plants and ended with some examples of *M. carmenae* x *M. laui* crosses which have recently been developed on the continent.

Overall this talk was a good reminder of the variety of plants that can be found in the genus *Mammillaria*, and Keith's enthusiasm was obvious.

Vinay Shah

Snippets

Ian Acton has been kind enough to submit a couple of articles for inclusion in the newsletter, here's the first of them:

Some Traditional Uses for Aloes

Mention aloe to the average person in the street and they will probably think of *Aloe vera* which has found recent application in western culture as a cosmetic product and for similar uses. This aloe was first described as growing in the Canary Islands, although its distribution may have been wider. It is now widespread around the Mediterranean, in the West Indies and Central America, as well as being cultivated commercially in East Africa, India and China. The only traditional use in these areas is a source of income for farmers in rural communities.

Cape Aloes or Bitter Aloes is a different matter. This is extracted from *Aloe ferox*, which is a native of South Africa. The product is used in traditional medicine as a purgative and to "purify the stomach", although much is now exported to Europe.

Aloe dichotoma from Namibia and the Northern Cape area of South Africa grows into a tree with hollow stems and branches which resonate when tapped. These were utilised by the native San people for making holders for their arrows, hence the Afrikaans name Kokerboom, or 'Quiver tree'.

Aloe esculenta from southern Angola, northern Namibia and Zambia is called 'mandopo' in the local language. This is a spiny and strongly growing species which is planted to make natural fences to contain cattle and keep animals out of gardens. It is doubly useful, as leaves are placed in the drinking water of cattle as a time-honoured cure against tick infections.

Numerous beliefs and superstitions are attached to *Aloe variegata* which is endangered in habitat although often despised in cultivation as being common. Indigenous people in Namibia hang plants inside the huts of young women, and if the plants flower, it is believed the women are fertile and will bear many children. At the other end of the life span, plants are sometimes grown on graves to guarantee eternal life.

Ian Acton

I had saved over the following article from last month's newsletter (although it did accidentally appear in last month's index!). It was prompted by a discussion with Margaret Corina. It seems likely that Provado and similar insecticides will be banned because of the affect on bee populations.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/sep/29/endangeredspecies.wildlife>

Soil Association urges ban on pesticides to halt bee deaths

The Soil Association has urged the government to ban pesticides linked to honeybee deaths around the world.

The chemicals are widely used in UK agriculture but have been banned as a precaution in four other European countries. Last week the Italian government issued an immediate suspension after it accepted that the pesticides were implicated in killing honeybees, joining France, Germany and Slovenia.

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Germany suspended sales of the pesticides in May after 700 beekeepers along the Rhine reported that two-thirds of their bees had died following the application of clothianidin. In France, imidacloprid has been banned on sunflowers since 1999 and as a sweetcorn treatment since 2003, after a third of honeybees were wiped out.

...

Beekeepers worldwide have reported catastrophic losses of from 30% to 90% of their honeybee colonies during the last two years. Two-thirds of all major crops rely on pollination, mainly by honeybees.

The Guardian

Next Month's Meeting

The next meeting will be held on August 4th and will feature Alice Vanden Bon (from Reading branch) and she will be talking about the succulents of South Africa.

The August table show will consist of the **Mammillaria group** (cacti) and the **Mesemb Group (excluding Lithops)** (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 **Mammillaria** group contains 13 genera, including *Mammillaria*, *Bartschella*, *Cochemiea*, *Dolichothele*, *Mamillopsis*, *Mammillyodia* and *Solisia*.

The Mesemb family is large and includes over 120 genera, the names of which are listed in the Handbook of Shows. Lithops are specifically excluded, but plants belonging to the *Argyroderma*, *Cheiridopsis*, *Conophytum*, *Faucaria* and *Nananthus* subgroups are allowed. Some of the more common eligible species include: *Argyroderma*, *Gibbaeum*, *Pleiospilos*, *Cheiridopsis*, *Conophytum*, *Ophthalmophyllum*, *Faucaria*, *Glottiphyllum*, *Lampranthus*, *Trichodiadema*, *Aloinopsis*, *Fenestraria*, *Frithia*, and *Titanopsis*.

A reminder for committee members that a committee meeting will be held on Monday 20th July, at Peter Down's (24 Brackley Way, Totton)

Forthcoming Events

Fri	17 th	Jul	Isle of Wight	Basic Botany for Cactophiles (Mal Weobley)
Sat	18 th	Jul	Portsmouth	Euphorbias for You (Dr Gillian Evison)
Sat	18 th	Jul-	Titchfield	Display / Plant Sales @ Solent Fuchsia Show, Titchfield Community Centre
Sun	19 th			
Mon	20 th	Jul	Southampton	Committee Meeting (@ 24 Brackley Way)
Tue	28 th	Jul-	New Forest	Display / Plant Sales @ New Forest Show, Brockenhurst
Thu	30 th			
Tue	4 th	Aug	Southampton	Succulents of South Africa (Alice Vanden Bon)
Sat	15 th	Aug	Portsmouth	No meeting
Fri	21 st	Aug	Isle of Wight	Open Afternoon @ Robin Goodredge, Coverack, East Cowes Rd
Tue	1 st	Sep	Southampton	Cacti & Succulents from A to Z (John Ede)

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