

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Branch Secretary

D & M Corina
79 Shirley Avenue
Shirley
Southampton
Hampshire
SO15 5NH

(023) 80779057

Newsletter Editor

Vinay Shah
29 Heathlands Road
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO53 1GU

(023) 80261989

vvshah@clara.co.uk

Editorial.....	1
Announcements	1
Last Month's Meeting	1
Colour in my Greenhouse.....	1
Table Show – August	5
Snippets	6
Branch badge.....	6
Next Month's Meeting	6
Forthcoming Events	6

Editorial

It's hard to believe that Summer is almost over! At least the weather this weekend was quite pleasant. The temperatures this year have not come close to reaching last year's record levels but we've had a reasonable mix of sun and rain in the past month.

In the conservatory, the plants I repotted earlier in the year are making good progress and I have been trying to do another 10 or 20 each weekend. I also have the habit of pulling off and potting on young plants and offsets so I always end up with space problems – not only is the original plant in a larger pot, there are usually a few extra pots to try and fit into the same space as before!

Some of my mesembs are in flower (Lithops and Pleiospilos) and the Conophytums also seem to be growing well, having survived several years of relative neglect. They are next on my list of plants to examine and repot.

Announcements

Several members from our Branch attended the BCSS National Show at Spalding. It was the first time I had been to a National Show and it was certainly very interesting. The range of plants on display was excellent and I particularly liked the groups of themed collections. There was a separate marquee for plant sales offering an excellent selection of plants, certainly the best that I've seen. For those who missed out, our Branch website features a set of digital pictures which I took at the event.

Our display at the Visitor Centre of the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens (formerly known as the Hillier Arboretum), in Ampfield attracted good interest over the two days, although the garden centre was quieter than it might have been earlier in the year. Hilliers were pleased with our efforts and have invited us to stage another display.

Some of you may recall that Margaret Corina missed the last meeting due to illness. She has relayed the following message: *"Thank you all very much for the card and your good wishes during my recent spell in hospital. I am pleased to say I have recovered and am feeling much better."*

Last Month's Meeting

Colour in my Greenhouse

The August talk was given by Colin Jewell from Exeter, who kindly offered to stand in when our original speaker had to cancel due to other commitments.

Colin mentioned that Hampshire was "foreign territory" for him – he gives some talks in his own locality, but once a year he tries to go further afield. He mentioned that he was not a professional grower nor speaker nor photographer but he took interest in the hobby 22 years ago (in 1982) when he saw a flowering cactus plant in a 2" pot at the Devon County Show. He bought the plant and now has one of the largest collections of cacti and succulents in the South-West, with around 2500 plants. He has two 18' x 8' greenhouses for cacti and an 8' x 6' greenhouse for succulents.

We started with a slide featuring a cartoon "Mr Prickles". While Colin described the plants on the slides, his son Ronnie controlled the projector. First we were given a general look around the greenhouses (and outside). Colin mentioned that he could grow a large variety of plants outdoors due to the mild weather in Exeter. He also stated that he did not like small plants in small pots – his interest was in growing large plants and showing them at events!

When working, he used to be a long distance lorry driver, and this enabled him to get around to nurseries all over England, Scotland and Wales.

The first plant we saw was *Mammillaria rhodantha* which was around 35 years old, and a plant he had acquired from Ken Scales. Many of his plants were in 2 foot or 2 foot 6" bowls, and the size and weight posed difficulties when trying to get them in and out of the greenhouse.

Next was a *Cleistocactus*. This was part of a collection of plants which he had obtained from a chap in Exeter who had given the plants a free root run and had consequently found them to grow too large. Colin had put the plants into pots but eventually had to give them away, and they now decorate the foyer of one of the Exeter University buildings. At least he could still go along and see how they're doing.

On one side of the greenhouse we could see a single-headed *Notocactus magnificus*. This plant had grown to around 30 inches in height. Next was a silhouette of a branching *Cleistocactus*. He didn't know the name and the picture was too dark to enable anyone in the audience to attempt to identify it.

He had various plants of *Mammillaria pilcayensis* and while some were single headed, others had gone on to form huge plants. *Borzicactus aureispinus* had golden spines and orange flowers, and *Aporocactus flagelliformis* forms red flowers – both make beautiful displays suitable for hanging baskets.

An *Echinopsis* hybrid which was 2" when bought had now grown to 3 feet. It started flowering 2 years ago. One of the heads in the clump was variegated. Last year the plant produced a good cluster of flowers; the flower tubes were 8 inches long and the flower heads were 6 inches in diameter. To cap it all, the flower was highly scented.

He also likes growing Stapeliads. They need good air circulation and the plants colour up well in the sun, so he tended to grow them on the top row of the greenhouse.

Another specimen grown from a tiny plant was *Echinopsis (Lobivia / Trichocereus) huascha*. *Mammillaria magnimamma* had been grown from seed and was now in a 2ft 6" pan. In the background was an *Aloe aristata* in a 3 feet pan, in full flower.

When you run out of room in the greenhouse, you have to go outside. There was a large specimen of *Agave victoria reginae*, some 2ft 6" across and about the right size to flower. He wasn't really looking forward to this since Agaves die after they flower. A large *Agave filifera* was also being grown outside and we saw another *Cleistocactus*.

Colin mentioned that due to their climate, plants could be grown outdoors virtually the whole year around. He stated that plants left out in the winter flowered a month later than plants in the greenhouse, but the flower colours were more vibrant. We saw more photos of *Trichocereus*, and *Opuntias* in his front garden. Colin mentioned that these outdoor plantings confirmed to some of his neighbours that he really was mad!

We now moved to slides of individual plants and saw a shot of *Cleistocactus strausii* in flower, and a close up of its spines. His *Echinocactus grusonii* was a 3 headed plant from one root stock - one of the heads had stopped growing while the other two continued. Afterwards, a new growth emerged on top of the third head.

His plant of *Ferocactus wislizeni* had flowered for the first time 2 years ago. Until that moment, he had never seen one in flower before. He mentioned that if you take photos of a *Ferocactus*, then do try and mist the plant first and then wait a couple of minutes since the spine colours intensify when they absorb water. *Ferocactus hamatacanthus* was in a 2 foot bowl, and grown into a 6-headed plant. The plant bore yellow flowers and we saw close ups of the spines and flower.

Colin mentioned that if you used terracotta pots, when you water the moisture goes to the sides of the pot and all the roots follow to the sides. Then, heat can cook and kill the roots so they'll just come off when you repot the plant. His suggestion was to use a plastic pot as a liner inside terracotta pots.

He mentioned again that he didn't really like small plants but he does have a few small ones to fill in the gaps between the larger plants. *Matucana intertexta* was in a 4 inch pot and it forms red flowers throughout the season.

Another interesting group is *Echinofossulocactus (Stenocactus)*. The plants have wavy ribs and impressive spines. The featured plant had white spines and white flower with maroon red stripes. He wasn't sure of the species names but David

Neville mentioned no one else agreed either. Another *Stenocactus* had flowers with a purple midstripe. It was 15 inches high and a plant he had grown from his early days.

He mentioned his truck firm was situated next door to Ralph Northcott's nursery – so he used to buy several plants each week and that's how the bulk of his early collection was accumulated. But at that time he didn't know what was what, or how big some of the plants would grow.

The next slide featured *Neoporteria multicolor*. The featured plant had lost its roots last year, but it is slowly recovering. The long spines increase the apparent size of the plant by a full inch, and a close up showed the purple buds coming through the white spines. *Neoporteria subgibbosa* has pink/yellow flowers and *Neoporteria rupicola* had rounded pink flowers.

Thelocactus matudae had a field collection number of Lau 744. *Thelocactus bicolour* had magenta flowers, *Thelocactus lloydii* white flowers and *Thelocactus buekii* purple flowers. A group he doesn't like is *Turbincarpus*. He had obtained *T. pseudomacrolele* since he had been told it was a choice plant but he was wondering whether there was any point in growing them, since they were the same size as 10 years ago! We also saw *Turbincarpus polaskii*. One he can live with is *Turbincarpus klinkerianus* – its white flowers contrast well against the dark plant body.

We now moved on to the genus *Astrophytum*. A plant of *A. myriostigma* had 3 yellow flowers, and we also saw *A. asterias* in flower. He mentioned that Bob Franks in Exeter used to have a beautiful collection of *Astrophytums*, all grown from seed. *A. capricorne* has long spines and an *A. ornatum* had 2 large yellow flowers. We also saw a specimen of *A. myriostigma* which he christened variety "Up the Creek". The main plant had terminated its growth and three heads had emerged from the growing point, and all were now sizable.

At this point Colin stated that he didn't like square pots – after all, there aren't any square plants, are there? "What about *Astrophytum myriostigma* v. *quadricostata*?" asked David Neville. That was one plant that Colin didn't have.

Gymnocalycium horstii was in a 10 inch pan, and we saw close ups of the body and flowers. *G. tillianum* has magenta flowers. His example of *G.*

hyptiacanthum was fast growing and it produced masses of yellow flowers from each head. We also saw *G. friedrichii* which has pale pink flowers. *Neochilenia dimorpha* (now called *Eriosyce heinrichiana*) had red and yellow flowers.

Now to the plant which he saw at the Devon County Show and which made him take up the hobby - *Notocactus tabularis*. It was the yellow flower on the top which made him buy it. He grows a lot of *Notocacti* and several are now in 2ft or 2ft 6 pans. *N. concinna* has a different flower form and is pale yellow, *N. rutilans* is quite nice with pink/yellow and overall, *Notocactus scopia* is even better with yellow flowers and nice spination. He has several different forms of *N. scopia*. A plant of *N. submammulosa* had produced a beautiful display of 16 flowers – just one more flower would have formed a perfect canopy without any gaps.

He had managed to find a *N. uebelmanniana* for a low price in a shop where they had no idea what they were selling. It had gone on to produce a display of over 10 flowers. *N. roseoluteus* produces silky pink and yellow flowers and his plant was beginning to form pups around the base.

He has two examples of *N. leninghausii* which look just like twins. They come in handy when he needs similar sized plants to create a balanced display. The flowers are yellow, with white stigmas. *N. herteri* has beautiful pink flowers but suffers from corkiness at base. The plant could be sunk down in chippings but one would eventually end up needing a very deep pot. Maybe it would be better to cut off the lower part of the stem and attempt to re-root it.

N. magnificus is a stunning plant with golden hairs along the ribs and the name is well chosen. The plant we had seen earlier was featured again. It had not pupped until very recently and had put all its energy into one head, consequently reaching a height of 2ft 6". He noticed that some buds sat there for a full 12 months before developing into flowers.

Colin has 73 different forms of *Chamaelobivias*; when Westfields closed down, he went down and got examples of most of their plants. These tended to be named after people or the flower's colour. He leaves them outdoors in winter and all came through. They flower about a month behind the ones grown under glass, but the flower colours are richer. The body forms vary a lot and you can get

short fingered plants or those with an open growth. Some of the examples we saw were “Alba”, “Iris Myers” (yellow), “Shot Scarlet” (magenta), “Gwendoline” (orange) and “Mr Francis” (yellow). The one he considers the best is named after Ralph Northcott and called “Ralph’ Orange” - it has cup-shaped orange flowers.

When we restarted after the break, Colin mentioned that a couple of people had asked him questions and he wanted to share the answers with the rest of the audience. Does he use any heat in the greenhouse? The answer is no – being in the centre of Exeter, he appears to be particularly well sheltered. [Ed - The same advice does not apply to us in Southampton!] How did he water his plants? For a normal watering, he just watered everything from the top and everything got treated the same. If he’s feeding, then he waters plants individually, around the base of the plant, and this takes much longer – 7 or 8 hours for the whole collection.

For compost, he mixes his own using three ingredients – John Innes No.3, multipurpose compost and grit, using the same amounts of all three by volume. He also uses 6mm grit as a top dressing for visual impact. The feed he uses is Chempak number 8 which is well balanced (12.5-25-25), but anything low in nitrogen will do - even tomorite is OK.

Back to plants, with *Oroya peruvianus*, the deep red buds made him think he would get vivid red flowers. But this colour is only on the back of the petals and the flowers are actually yellow and pink. The flowers are stunning and the centre of the flower looks like it is on fire.

His plant of *Epithelantha micromeris* had now formed a crest. With *Lophophora*, he is surprised (or perhaps not!) on how people take such an undue interest in the plants as he doesn’t see anything of particular significance. We saw *L. williamsonii* and *L. echinata* v. *diffusa* with a flower $\frac{3}{4}$ inch across.

Colin mentioned that he had started off with *Notocactus* earlier in the talk and this genus is now lumped with *Parodia*, although he has not changed the labels on his plants. His *Parodia chrysacantha* was now 8 inches high and we saw a close up of the flower and spines. *P. microsperma* was obtained from Ken Preston-Mafham and it had red flowers. We also saw a collection of *Parodia* plants showing a variety of plants with orange, red and yellow flowers.

Apart from *Chamaelobivias*, he had also acquired many *Echinopsis* plants from Westfields. The plant bodies are not anything special but the flowers are very nice. The flower forms vary tremendously – the flower tubes can be very short or long. The flowers open late in the afternoon and some are scented, but sadly they only last one day. We saw peach, pink and red flowered hybrids.

Echinocereus berlandieri has large showy flowers as with much of the genus. *E. polycanthus* is really nice with bright red flowers. We also saw *E. scheeri* v. *koehresianus*, and *E. scheeri* v. *gentryi*. The latter has a naked body with very short spines, and large pink flowers. It grows corky at the base and looks very untidy out of flower. Ivor Biddlecombe mentioned that with *Echinocereus*, the flower buds burst their way through the epidermis and this leaves scars on the plant. *Echinocereus leonensis* (*Echinocereus pentalophus*) has long spines and frilled magenta flowers. He found *E. subinermis* difficult to grow. After the winter rest period, it doesn’t seem to want to start growing again, but eventually it does bear nice yellow flowers with green stigmas.

Lobivia ferox v. *longispina* has red flowers. He has some large pans of this genus and we saw *Lobivia bruchii* with 2 flower buds. Last year it had produced nine flowers in a ring. The red flowers contained lots of anthers.

He likes rebutias and has 200 plants of rebutia and allied genera. *Rebutia muscula* has orange flowers which are set off well by pure white spines. The cultivar “Apricot Ice” is a nice hybrid with pale orange flowers. Others we saw were the Westfield hybrids Red, Orange, Yellow and White. *Rebutia espinosae* featured 20 pink flowers and *R. marsoneri* had yellow flowers. *Rebutia kieslingii* has orange red flowers. *Sulcorebutias* are related and some have multicoloured flowers. *S. mizquensis* had magenta flowers and *Sulcorebutia verticillacantha* v. *aureiflora* (from Lau) had red/yellow flowers.

Trichocereus is more his style of plant. *T. schickendantzii* had huge white scented flowers and flower for the first time 2 years ago. An unknown species had a white flower when viewed from the side, but pink from behind. It amazes him how the plants can support flowers of that size. *Trichocereus trichosa* had white flowers. It had been in a bowl which he tried lifting by the edge. However, the edge came away and he ended

up with the plant all over him! Always take care when handling old pots!

Trichocereus huascha v. *rubra* (*grandiflora*) had orange/red flowers and v *aureiflora* had yellow flowers. The plants like room to grow and sprawl along the ground. He hoped to cross these varieties to get an orange flower, but hasn't managed to get flowers at the same time yet.

Next was a *Mammillaria pilcayensis* in a 3 feet pan. This is a cliff dweller in the wild and it forms a circle of flowers around the stems. *M. matudae* also reached 3 foot across. He didn't have a pan big enough so used a water feature as a 3foot pan. However, trying to get it through a 2 feet-wide doorway resulted in an accident and the plant is now in pieces.

M. bocasana rubra has hooked spines hiding behind the wool. He also has seven pans of *M. bombycina* ranging from 1 foot across to 2' 6". We also saw *M. elongata*. He tries to keep the plant heads within the boundary of the pan, otherwise it's very easy to damage the plant when it's being transported around. Then followed *M. viereckii*. The final cactus to be featured was a smaller specimen of *M. pilcayensis*, but still featuring 100's of magenta flowers.

Colin also grows a mix of succulents but spends less time on them. The meeting had run so he had to hurry through this last set of slides. *Lithops pseudotruncatella* is the first to flower each year. *L. hookeri* has yellow flowers and we also saw *L. fulviceps lactinae*, and *L. bromfeldii mennelleii*. *L. julii* has nice markings and white flowers.

He also likes growing plants from the *Asclepiadae*, although the flowers tend to very smelly due to the need to attract flies for pollination. *Duvalia radiata* had brown flowers with star shaped lobes. *Orbea verrucosa* had larger flowers which are star shaped and speckled brown/white. *Huernia hystrix* had frilly flowers. *Stapelia flavirostris* caused a stir at one of the county shows as its flowers started to open and release their powerful odour. The flowers are again star shaped, and brown and hairy. *Orbea ciliata*'s flowers are quite large and are cream in colour.

Stapelia variegata is good for a hanging basket. If the centre of the plant dies back, he just folds the hanging stems back into the centre of the basket. *Piarranthus decorus* has 5 lobed star-shaped brown/yellow flowers. *Stapelia grandiliflora* has

large flowers and in a breeze the hairy filaments in the flower wave round. In *Stapelia maculosa* the flower lobes fold back to closed position

Nopalxochia phyllanthoides produces pink flowers and is considered one of first members of the group of plants labelled "orchid" cacti. It is an epiphytic plant with long strap-like leaves. Other epiphytes include *Schlumbergera* (Christmas Cacti) and *Rhipsalidopsis* (Easter Cactus). We also saw *Hattiora salicornioides*. We finished the evening with a slide of an air plant, *Tillandsia argentea*, in flower.

To summarize, this was an enjoyable talk. It was nice to see a large variety of plants and to experience Colin's enthusiasm for growing these specimens on to such large sizes.

Vinay Shah

Table Show – August

These were the placed entries in the August table show.

	Cacti – Mammillaria Group	Succulents – Euphorbia Group
Open	(1) I Biddlecombe Mammillaria lenta	(1) B Beckerleg Euphorbia obesa
	(2) B Beckerleg Mammillaria compressa	(2) P Clemow Euphorbia obesa
	(3) P Clemow Mammillaria bombycina	(3) -
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg Mammillaria theresae	(1) I Biddlecombe Euphorbia suzannae
	(2) I Biddlecombe Mammillaria carmenae	(2) B Beckerleg Euphorbia mosaica
	(3) T Grech Mammillaria rhodantha	(3) P Clemow Euphorbia canariensis (?)

Ivor Biddlecombe

Snippets

Branch badge

I was recently contacted by an enthusiast (Mark Stevens) from New South Wales, Australia who read the article in the June BCSS journal about cactus society badges.

Mark is interested in acquiring our NCSS Badge and is willing to provide an Australian badge in exchange. I believe supplies of our badge have run out, but if you have an example of the badge which is surplus to requirements, do please let me know.

(for those of you interested in badges, do visit <http://www.cactus-mall.com/badges>)

Vinay Shah

Next Month's Meeting

Next month's meeting will take place on October 5th and will feature a Mesemb workshop which will be run by Suzanne Mace. **Suzanne has requested that branch members bring to the meeting any mesembs which they are having difficulty growing, or which require attention or identification.**

The October Table Show will feature the **Gymnocalycium Group** (Cacti) and **Mesembs excluding Lithops** (Succulents).

The Gymnocalycium group consists of Gymnocalycium, Brachycalycium and Neowerdermannia.

The Mesemb family is large and includes over 120 genera, the names of which are listed in the Handbook of Shows. Lithops are not allowed this month, but plants belonging to the Argyroderma, Cheiridopsis, Conophyllum, Faucaria and Nananthus subgroups are allowed.

A reminder for Committee members that there will be a Committee meeting on September 20th.

Forthcoming Events

Fri	17 th	Sep	Isle of Wight	"A Trip Around my Greenhouse" – Malcolm Pym
Sat	18 th	Sep	Portsmouth	"Deserts of the South West USA" – Malcolm Pym
Mon	20 th	Sep	Southampton	Committee Meeting @ 79 Shirley Avenue
Sat	25 th	Sep	Banstead	Mesemb Study Group Event: Banstead, Surrey
Sat	2 nd	Oct	Portsmouth	Autumn Show, Deverell Hall, London Road, Purbrook
Sun	3 rd	Oct	Birmingham	Birmingham Branch and Haworthia Society Show
Tue	5 th	Oct	Southampton	"Mesembs in the Flesh" – Suzanne Mace
Sun	10 th	Oct	Oxford	Oxford Branch - Autumn Succulent Show (Speaker: A. Mitchell)
Fri	15 th	Oct	Isle of Wight	"Echeveria Species" – John Hughes
Sat	16 th	Oct	Portsmouth	"Mesembryanthemums" – Suzanne Mace
Sat	16 th	Oct	High Wycombe	Convention @ Great Kingshill (Speakers: M. Singh and R. Maijer.)
Tue	2 nd	Nov	Southampton	"Holly Gate Cactus Garden" – Terry Hewitt

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