

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

The summer months have raced by. Although we have not had a long succession of hot and sunny days, I think overall the weather hasn't been too bad. Certainly looking at the devastation caused each year by hurricanes in and around the Bay of Mexico, we have to feel grateful that we do not experience such weather here!

At the start of August there was a second flush of flowers on several of my cacti, but the only one in flower at this moment is *Borzicactus (Cleistocactus) samaipatanus*. Amongst succulents, there is more activity with flowers on some Crassulas, Haworthias, Aloes, and several mesembs.

Announcements

The **Open Day** held at the Corinas' at the start of August was a successful event. Although I was unable to attend, I believe around 14 or 15 people took the opportunity to look around David and Margaret's wide and varied collection. I am sure people found plenty to discuss.

The **Summer Garden and Flower Show** was held at Romsey a couple of weeks ago. Peter Down was one of the first members to get there (to help with setting up) and he got a bit of a shock when he asked for directions to the cactus tent and was told that there was *no* cactus tent! It turns out that Roy Trickett had got this year confused with last year, when we skipped this event due to a clash with the date of the BCSS National Show.

After some frantic re-arrangement (and borrowing of tables from various sources), we were given half

the catering tent and the show was able to go on! Space was a little tight, especially for the show, but we managed to cope. At the end of the first day, it was all change as we dismantled the show and switched to a plant display. This went smoothly, the re-arrangement taking about an hour. Despite good weather, attendances were slightly lower than in previous years. Although it was very quiet after 4pm on both days, we achieved a reasonable level of plant sales.

Jim Roskilly mentions that his wife Bett is still poorly and is due to have some heart scans at the General Hospital during the course of this week. He also asked me to include these thanks:

Thank you for the card and kind messages on the occasion of our Golden Wedding. Also a big thank you from Bett for the lovely card and "Get Well" messages. Both were unexpected and much appreciated.

We are at the point in the year where the **Programme** of speakers for **2006** is being put together. If you have any favourite speakers or topics which you would like covered, please have a word with Margaret Corina (or any of the committee).

An ex-member, **Gordon Hawkins** (from Highcliffe) has contacted us to say that he has some old columnar cacti (maintained and flowering sized) which he can no longer tend. He wants a new home for them, and I have a phone number if anyone is interested.

Schedules for **Portsmouth and District Branch's Autumn Show** (8th October) are available from the front table.

Last Month's Meeting

Plants of Interest

Margaret had brought along a South African bulbous plant, *Scadoxus puniceus*, which had produced three flowering stalks, each bearing large red flowers consisting of hundreds of florets. The plant had been given to them by Dave Philips 15 to 20 years ago, and it had flowered regularly,

although feeding with Miracle Grow seemed to have given it a boost lately. Margaret mentioned that summer growers from this family seem to be called *Scadoxus* and winter growers are called *Haemanthus*. I found the following descriptions on the Internet :

- ?? *Scadoxus* has thin, glabrous leaves with a prominent midrib and a petiole-like base, while *Haemanthus* leaves are of heavy substance, often pubescent, and lack a noticeable midrib
- ?? *Haemanthus* forms a distinct bulb of leaf-base scales, while *Scadoxus* forms a corm- or tuber-like bulb structure
- ?? *Scadoxus* leaves grow from a pseudostem (false stem) formed from the bases of the leaves wrapped around each other, while *Haemanthus* leaves emerge from the bulb flat and parallel to each other
- ?? *Scadoxus* species occur in the summer rainfall areas, while *Haemanthus* species occur mainly in the winter rainfall area. Only a few *Haemanthus* species grow in the summer rainfall areas.

The remaining two plants had been brought in by Ivor Biddlecombe. Ivor mentioned that he was becoming an *Euphorbia obesa* farmer since he had a collection of several plants and some of these were setting seed 2 or 3 times a year which he had been planting. When ripe, the seeds are dispersed by an explosive mechanism, so he had devised an aluminium wire tent with nylon stocking as mesh to catch the seeds. Ivor said that he had repotted the spindly *obesa* seedlings sown earlier in the year and these had now developed into properly shaped acorn-sized plants.

Ivor's second plant was an *Euphorbia cylindrifolia* cutting, taken from a prize winning plant which had died. The stem had rooted, but he didn't know whether it would go on to grow a caudex.

The final exhibit was an album of photographs from Ian Acton, to go with the article which he contributed to last month's newsletter. He had been in Texas to visit his daughter and son-in-law, and he said he took away three memories in particular: seeing *Opuntia phaeacantha* growing in water, walking on beds of *Ariocarpus fissuratus*, and seeing *Lophophora williamsii*. He believes the latter is now virtually extinct in habitat because the American authorities have been systematically removing plants from the wild, because of its hallucinogenic properties. In the US, growers who have these plants tend to label them with a

different name to avoid drawing the attention of the authorities.

Thanks are due to David Corina for the following write-up of last month's meeting.

Madagascar '93

I am going to give the moral of this talk at the beginning instead of at the end. If you want to see the spectacular and intriguing endemic flora of Madagascar – go soon before it all falls under the plough (or disappears into the stomachs of goats). David Kirkbright's visit was a post-convention trip, starting out from Pretoria. So we started with a few shots of the gardens around the city and he found *Aloe pretoriensis* at its type locality, and an unidentified *Euphorbia* in the 'back garden' of the Government Building (of which the *front* gardens are very attractive). Pretoria also hosts the headquarters of the South African botanical society at the Botanical Gardens. There he viewed the Cole Lithops collection planted in type locality soil, with examples of *L. lesliei*, *olivacea* and *optica rubra*, and several *Hoodias* and *Aloe pachygaster*. The highlight here is the collection of Madagascan plants in the David Hardy house.

Then it was off to Madagascar. David Hardy was the 'leader' of the group; Hardy was (he died a few years ago, a sad loss to the succulent world) one of the foremost experts on Madagascan plants. Near their hotel outside Antanarivo, the capital, the first familiar plants were extensive hedges of *Euphorbia milii* v. *imperatae* (+close-up picture of flowers) – none too far from rice paddies! On to more interesting areas and the noting of a *Pachypodium rosulatum* v. *multiflorum* being used as a doorstep! More about Pachypodiums later!

Travelling to the interesting areas of the country, branching out after a flight to Ft. Dauphine (where at the time of their visit it was misty and cool) David noticed how the character of the vegetation changed, with magnificent stands of *Ravenala madagascariensis* giving way to alien *Opuntias* as one enters the drier areas. [David may have said where he was at this point but I did not make a note of it. Presumably on the south west coast, the drier part of the island.] *Alluaudia procera* was the first endemic succulent encountered in habitat, plants were up to 40ft tall, and in flower, accompanied by *A. ascendens*, with 'straight up' stems and *A. humbertii* which is a lower-growing scrambling species. Also in this area were *Kalanchoe beharensis* (which gets to be tree-like in habitat), the stick-like *Euphorbia phosphorea*,

and many examples of *Xerosicyos* species in flower (hardly dramatic!); *Xerosicyos* are mainly epiphytic plants.

For those who did not know David Hardy, David K. showed a picture of David H., pointing out a particularly nasty, irritating plant in the genus *Urticaria*. Nearby they found what was possibly a new species of *Ceropegia* and then discussed whether the *Operculicarya* plants here qualified as succulents. No matter, at least there were young plants around.

One plant difficult to miss is *Adansonia*, a genus of large 'bottle trees', and the related *Moringa*, both of which are held in reverence by the locals, even to the extent of routing what passes for roads around them. A scrambler, *Cissus quadrangularis*, occurs all up the eastern side of Africa as well as on Madagascar, and we saw what can happen when left to scramble freely – it would soon fill a greenhouse. At this point the group found their first *Pachypodium*, which was not identified, alongside *Agave sisalina* escapees from the fibre plantations. A much drier area supported *Euphorbia antso*, a shrub with attractive stems and *Aloe vaotsanda* in flower. These are tall plants and David did an 'Isaac Newton' and stood on someone's shoulders to get the photos (bearing in mind how tall David is!) Not many outsiders travel to this part of the island, so curious locals were often seen around the party.

Down to the beach, but not for a swim – instead to view *Delosperma* on the waterfront and nearby *Euphorbia stenoclada* trees. In a cleft in the rocks was the (in)famous *Kalanchoe tubiflora* in habitat (most would argue it is best left there!). The real purpose of the visit was an arduous climb up the cliffs to see plants of a short dwarf form of *Pachypodium geayi*. Another trip was to a secret location by a lake to see the only site of *Nepenthes madagascariensis*, a carnivorous plant. On again past scrub in what had been virgin forest but was now being burnt off to provide agricultural land, and yet more Agaves, to see *Aloe helenae*, more *A. vaotsanda*, and *Xerosicyos danguyi* in flower. A plant of *Ceropegia albisepta* was revealed only by the presence of its seed pods.

One cannot go around Madagascar without noticing (or hearing) the fauna and David showed us lizards, chameleons, tortoises, snakes and of course the lemurs, many of which are quite tame and come and steal your food! But back to the plants. In among the now familiar aloes was an *Uncarina* in flower, showing the spines which,

presumably, protect the flowers and fruit from browsing animals, and another *Kalanchoe beharensis*. We are now in *Pachypodium geayi* country, with many fine specimens up their full height of 25 feet accompanied by many *Adansonia za*, a distinctive species with its narrowing top to the trunk, and *Euphorbia onoclada*. Past the impressive Mahafadie tribal tombs, demonstrating the prowess and wealth of the incumbent, we reach *Aloe divaricata* and a much-branched *Pachypodium rutenbergianum* in flower. Nearer ground level were *Kalanchoe orgyalis* and a *Stapelianthus madagascariensis* under a tree.

On into more hilly terrain – where it is easier to photograph 'level' with the heads of taller plants such as the seed pods of *P. geayi* and the long, scrambling growth of *Cyphostemma laza*. Plants, other than *Pachypodium rosulatum* v. *gracilor* in flower, to be found in the weird landscape of the relatively barren Isalo Mountains, include *Aloe isaloensis*, *Kalanchoe synsepala*, a *Cynanchum* species, *Aloe imalotensis*, *Ceropegia dimorpha* with long flower stems, *Euphorbia milii*, *E. asaloensis* (a *milii* type), *Euphorbia* aff. *primulifolia*, which was excavated to reveal the large underground tuber (and then replanted!), and *Xerophyta dasylirioides*. David then braved a precipitous drop on a steep cliff to photograph *Pachypodium rosulatum* v. *gracilor*, uncharacteristically imitating *Gasteria rawlinsonii*!

Unusual palms also featured in David's travels, notably *Bismarckia nobilis* and *Chrysalidocarpus isaloensis*. During one of many unscheduled walkabouts due to regular transport breakdowns we saw areas of still virgin forest, and those scenes we expect to see in Madagascar but which are rapidly disappearing. Mature plants of *Alluaudia comosa*, with typical flat-topped shape, up to 18ft tall, *Euphorbia onoclada*, *Delonix floribunda* (flamboyant tree, flowering on bare stems), *Didierea madagascariensis* en masse and several in close-up, and an unknown *Euphorbia*. Near Tulear, a few plants of the eponymous *Euphorbia tulearensis* were found, a low growing species resembling *E. decaryi* but much less common and more difficult to spot.

Back to Antananarivo for the return flight, but first a brief visit to the Antananarivo garden designed by David Hardy where the intention is to maintain an area of natural vegetation of the area and also cultivate many of the plants from other parts of the island before much of the characteristic flora is destroyed. Our visit to Madagascar ended with something unusual in our talks – a brief but noisy

audio presentation. Prior to leaving, David had visited a forest in another, wetter area to see the indri, one of the many indigenous lemurs. He had recorded their calls on tape and played these back to the meeting. A very distinctive and disturbing racket! Some wag in the audience, who shall remain anonymous, suggested marketing it as a 'ring tone' for mobile phones (and make some money out of it as well!). So ended a pleasant glimpse of a fascinating island.

David Corina

Table Show – August

There were 10 entries in the August table show.

	Cacti – Mammillaria Group	Succulents – Euphorbia Group
Open	(1) B Beckerleg Mammillaria compressa	(1) P Clemow Euphorbia obesa
	(2) P Clemow Mammillaria bombycina	(2) B Beckerleg Euphorbia valida
	(3) R Courtney Mammillaria sp.	(3) -
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg Mammillaria lenta	(1) B Beckerleg Euphorbia mosaica
	(2) P Clemow Mammillaria rhodantha	(2) P Clemow Euphorbia quadrangularis
	(3) -	(3) -

Ivor Biddlecombe

Next Month's Meeting

Our next branch meeting will be held on October 4th and will feature Eddy Harris who will be delivering Part 2 of his talk "A Walk on the Wild Side". Presumably this will continue from Part 1 (which we heard in August 2004) and which covered some of his travels in South Africa.

The October table show will feature the Gymnocalycium Group (Cacti) and Mesembs - 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 Gymnocalycium Group includes *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*, *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*.

As discussed at the July Committee meeting, no committee meeting will be held this month.

Forthcoming Events

Fri 16 th	Sep	Isle of Wight	"Deserts of the South-West USA" – Malcolm Pym
Sat 17 th	Sep	Portsmouth	"Mesembryanthemums" – Suzanne Mace
Tue 4 th	Oct	Southampton	"A Walk on the Wild Side – Part 2" – Eddy Harris
Sat 8 th	Oct	Portsmouth	Portsmouth & District Autumn Show – Christ Church Hall, Widley
Sat 15 th	Oct	Portsmouth	"Cacti of Ecuador" – John Hughes
Fri 21 st	Oct	Isle of Wight	"Plants and Things Around the World" – Jean Ellis
Tue 1 st	Nov	Southampton	Zone 11 Quiz – hosted by Southampton Branch
Mon 14 th	Nov	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting (@ 79 Shirley Avenue)
Fri 18 th	Nov	Isle of Wight	Society Slides
Sat 19 th	Nov	Portsmouth	Annual General Meeting

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