

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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### Editorial

The weather through August continued its rather indifferent form, so here we are, virtually at the end of the summer without really having had any prolonged warm spells. A few cacti managed to produce a late show of flowers last month, but on the whole most of the plants have decided the light hasn't been good enough to put on a concerted show. However, some of the mesembs are starting to show buds.

### Announcements

As announced last month, there is a change of speaker today, and we will be having a talk on the *Cacti of Rio Grande do Sul* from Brazilian cactus expert **Marlon Machado**. (Thanks are due to Paul Klaassen for arranging this.) Tom Radford's talk on Asclepiads will be given in March next year.

The **Branch Show and Display** which was held at the Summer Garden and Craft show at Romsey on 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> August went well, but attendances were disappointing. The number of people visiting the event appeared to be well down on previous years, and hardly any members (other than those on the committee) supported the event. For once, those of us helping at the event had little to do, so there was plenty of time to see the other stalls and attractions at the show. The Branch Show results are attached to the back of this newsletter.

**Oxford Branch** will be holding their Annual Show in association with the Haworthia Society, on 16<sup>th</sup> September, at Langdale Hall in Witney. Following the show, there will be a lecture (entry by ticket) by John Lavranos on "The Newer Aloes".

**High Wycombe** branch will be holding their biennial convention on 13<sup>th</sup> October at Great Kingshill Village Hall (Buckinghamshire). Tickets are £12 and include refreshments and lunch. The speakers are Nico Uitenbroek (Gringo's Hobby & Gringo's Dreaan) and Wim Alsemgeest (Agaves), and there will also be plant/book/sundries sales.

### Last Month's Meeting

#### Zone 11 Quiz

Last month, the Branch hosted the Zone 11 Quiz. This is an event which all the local branches try and support, and on this occasion we had a full complement of teams representing Southampton, Isle of Wight and Portsmouth. It was also nice to see that several members from Portsmouth and Isle of Wight had come along to support their teams.

Each team contained three team members, namely:

**Southampton:** *Peter Down, Ivor Biddlecombe and Bruce Beckerleg*

**Isle of Wight:** *Peter Collard, Robin Goodredge and Stephen Woods*

**Portsmouth:** *Cliff Thompson, Anthony Knox and Hannah Gardener*

David Neville started by explaining that there would actually be 4 teams participating in the quiz – the audience would participate as an extra team. Where teams were unable to answer a question, it would be passed on to the next team(s). Most of the questions would score 2 points, although some of the simpler questions were worth 1 point. The Mealy Bug trophy would be awarded to the branch with the highest score. Questions were to be asked in an anticlockwise direction in the first half and in a clockwise direction in the second half.

We started with a cactus question to get teams into the right mood. Which country did the following genera originate in? Discocactus (Brazil, also Bolivia according to Paul Klaassen in the audience), Copiapoa (Chile), Matucana (Peru), and Stenocactus (Mexico) Four correct answers meant it was a full scoring round. Next, the teams were

asked to name the only species in the genera *Leuchtenbergia*, *Carnegiea*, *Obregonia* and *Ortegocactus* and again all teams got full marks.

We moved on the first of the general knowledge questions, regarding mythology and the names of Greek and Roman gods and goddesses. The gods of war are Mars and Ares, the goddesses of love and beauty are Venus and Aphrodite, the gods of the underworld are Hades and Pluto and the gods of the sea are Poseidon and Neptune. Isle of Wight lost out and the audience picked up some bonus points. Next was a rather obscure question based on the BCSS Handbook of Shows, and some of the teams struggled. *Jatropha* is classified in the *Monadenium* group, *Begonia* and *Oxalis* are in *Peperomia*, *Adenium* is in *Pachypodium* and *Senecio* is in *Othonna*.

Back to general knowledge and some multiple choice questions about Giraffes. David joked that he knew Cliff was an authority on this subject and proceeded to ask "How tall does an adult male giraffe grow?" He was stunned to hear Cliff answer correctly (18ft) without even waiting for the 4 choices to be read out! The average lifespan is 25 years and the colour of their tongues is black. The final question required the audience to answer "how much sleep does a giraffe get in a day?" Mark Jakins suggested that larger animals needed less sleep, so 5 hours was chosen but the correct answer was 2 hours, as stated by the giraffe experts from Portsmouth. All the teams coped with the next question (Can you name two cacti genera beginning with the letters D/L/F/T?), and the scores at this stage were Isle of Wight 8, Audience 12, Portsmouth 12 and Southampton 14.

The next question tested the teams' knowledge of UK decimalisation. Portsmouth tripped up when answering "In which year were the first decimal coins introduced and in which year was decimalisation day?", but Stephen from the Isle of Wight picked up the points by stating 1968 and February 1971. He was also able to name the 3 old coins which continued to be legal tender after decimalisation (6d, shilling and florin). It was Southampton's turn to falter when asked how many portraits of the Queen have there been on our coins (5 was volunteered, and the audience guessed 3 but the correct answer is 4) but they fared better when asked which way will Charles' portrait face (left – it alternates for each monarch). The audience correctly answered how many decimal coins were in common circulation in 1972 (6) and in 2007 (8).

Continuing with general knowledge, the teams fared well with questions on South America regarding ancient civilisations, the countries bordering Argentina, the official languages spoken in South America and the names of animals related to camels. The next question on botanical terms required the teams to describe cordate (heart shaped), sagittate (spear/arrow head) scabrous (rough) and setaceous (bristle-like). The legal age for owning a credit card was 18, placing a bet was 18, standing in an election was 21 and working full time was 16. An update on the scores revealed it had been a good session for Portsmouth and the Audience, with the scores now standing at Isle of Wight 17, Southampton 18, Portsmouth 19 and Audience 19.

We moved on to chemical symbols for Gold (Au), Silver (Ag), Lead (Pb), Iron (Fe) and alloys and their composition. The metals in 18 carat gold are copper & silver, and those in brass are copper and zinc. Bronze contains copper and tin, and solder contains lead and tin (the newer lead-free solder contains tin, silver and copper).

The sporting knowledge of the teams was tested when they were asked to name the teams playing at the Emirates, Madejeski, Reebok and Stadium of Light football grounds. Predictably, Mark Roberts in the audience cleaned up. The next question on cricket proved to be even harder on the teams, with the Ashes series of 2005 and 2007 and the 1-day International cricket tournament of April 2007 having faded from most people's minds!

Next, the teams were asked "From which country do the following species originate?" *Mammillaria bombycina* (Mexico), *Rebutia senilis* (Bolivia), *Parodia chrysacanthion* (Argentina), *Leuchtenbergia principis* (Mexico), *Haworthia truncata* (South Africa), *Pachypodium lamerei* (Madagascar) *Dudleya pachyphytum* (Mexico) *Euphorbia meloformis* (South Africa). There was time for one light-hearted question about cartoon characters. The hunter who chases Bugs Bunny is Elmer Fudd, the cat who chases Tweety Pie is Sylvester, Speedy Gonzales was a mouse and his catch phrase was "Ariba Ariba Andele Andele" and Wile Coyote chases the Road Runner.

It was time for the mid meeting break and the scores stood at Isle of Wight 26, Southampton 27, Portsmouth 30 and Audience 33 – very close, but the audience were beginning to build a lead!

After having tucked into the fine selection of refreshments and food which Glenn Finn and members of his family had helped prepare, it was time to resume, with the questions now being asked in a clockwise direction.

There were some more questions on the locality of selected species : *Sclerocactus whipplei* is from the USA, *Matucana haynei* is from Peru, *Discocactus insignis* is from Brazil, and *Ferocactus latispinus* is from Mexico. *Euphorbia splendens* is from Madagascar, *Frithia pulchra* is from South Africa, *Agave filifera* is from Mexico, and *Pachypodium namaquanum* is from South Africa. With Anthony Mitchell sitting in the audience, they were hardly likely to get that last one wrong!

The teams did well with identifying the stage names of singers Reginald Dwight (Elton John), Harry Webb (Cliff Richard), Priscilla White (Cilla Black) and Thomas Woodward (Tom Jones), but struggled with the stage names of actors - Allen Konigsberg is Woody Allen, Doris Kapelhopf is Doris Day, Richard Jenkins is Richard Burton, and Frederick Austerlitz is Fred Astaire.

Another question from the Guide to Shows prompted some debate - In which group would you show *Yavia* (*Strombocactus*), *Leuchtenbergia* (*Echinocactus*), *Uebelmannia* (*Melocactus*) and *Denmoza* (*Matucana*)? The next round proved to be somewhat easier with teams successfully naming two genera amongst *Opuntia* beginning with P, two amongst *Rhipsalis* beginning with S and H, and two genera beginning with W.

It was time for some more general knowledge questions. The Star of India is the world's largest Sapphire, Fred Flintstone's best friend is called Barney Rubble, the only mammal without wings which flies is man and the third part of JR Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy is "Return of the King". At this point, the scores had moved on to Southampton 31, Isle of Wight 38, Portsmouth 42 and Audience 44.

The next round contained a question which according to David is sure to appear in every quiz – what is the world's largest mammal (blue whale). Other questions on who created Jeeves and Wooster (by PG Wodehouse), where is Graceland, the former home of Elvis Presley (Memphis) and who wrote the Peter Rabbit books (Beatrix Potter) were also answered correctly. Cockney rhyming slang is alive and well, and the meanings of Mickey Mouse (house), Trouble and Strife (wife),

Dog and Bone (Phone) and Mince Pies (eyes) were all explained successfully.

The next question asked which plant families do *Monadenium*, *Pachypodium*, *Lapidaria* and *Rhipsalis* belong to – the answers were Euphorbiaceae, Apocynaceae (or Asclepiadaceae), Mesembryanthemaceae and Cactaceae. The next round asked the teams to identify a hooked spined *Mammillaria* from groups of three species, and this was tackled successfully by all the teams.

Time for some technology and statistics and we learnt that 1 billion phones will be sold in 2007, there are more mobile phones (65m) than people in the UK, 60% of homes have access to the Internet, and 75% of homes have digital TV. Next we had some questions on the capitals of the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Malta, Denmark, Austria, Iceland, and Finland. Somewhat harder were the capitals of Estonia (Tallinn) Latvia (Riga), Ukraine (Kiev, needed a clue about chicken breast and garlic butter!) and Indonesia (Jakarta).

The teams correctly identified the monotypic species *Muiria hortensae*, *Bergeroscaetus emoryi*, *Denmoza rhodocantha* and *Mammilloidya candida*. An update on the scores (Southampton 41, Isle of Wight 49, Portsmouth 56 and Audience 58) showed that we were headed for an exciting finale!

The teams were unable to answer which actress has won the most academy awards (Kathryn Hepburn, with 4) but did answer that the most successful movie at the box office was *Titanic*, and that there were 6 *Star Wars* movies. Guesses at the number of Rocky movies were less successful (7 so far).

The name Saguaro refers to *Carnegiea gigantea*, pincushion cactus to *Mammillaria*, peanut cactus to *Chamaecereus* and mother in law's cushion to *Echinocactus grusonii*. The genus containing the species *agavoides*, *fissuratus*, *trigonus* is *Aricarpus*; *grusonii*, *horizonthalonius*, *polycephalus* is *Echinocactus*; *engelmannii*, *pectinatus*, *reichenbachii* is *Echinocereus*; and *lanata*, *menalostele*, *nana* is *Espositoa*. *Avonia* belongs in *Portulacaceae*, *Othonna* belongs in *Compositae* or *Asteraceae*, *Dudleya* belongs in *Crassulaceae* and *Alluaudia* belongs in *Didiereaceae*.

Going into the final round on the capitals of Albania (Tirana), Croatia (Zagreb), Slovakia (Bratislava) and Belarus (Minsk), the outcome had been in the balance, but Portsmouth stumbled, handing bonus points to the audience. It was time to reveal the final scores, Southampton 48, Isle of

Wight 51, Portsmouth 66, and Audience 69, and just as with the last Southampton-hosted quiz, the audience emerged victorious!

The Mealy Bug trophy was duly presented to the best placed branch (Portsmouth). Mark Roberts and Robin Goodredge thanked Southampton Branch for hosting the quiz and for the catering and hospitality, and Peter Down also echoed his thanks.

*Vinay Shah*

## Snippets

Thanks are due to Margaret Corina for providing the following article on how *Jatropha* may help to cut global warming:

### ***Poison plant could help to cure the planet***

The *jatropha* bush seems an unlikely prize in the hunt for alternative energy, being an ugly, fast-growing and poisonous weed. Hitherto, its use to humanity has principally been as a remedy for constipation. Very soon, however, it may be powering your car.

Almost overnight, the unloved *Jatropha curcus* has become an agricultural and economic celebrity, with the discovery that it may be the ideal biofuel crop, an alternative to fossil fuels for a world dangerously dependent on oil supplies and deeply alarmed by the effects of global warming.

The hardy *jatropha*, resilient to pests and resistant to drought, produces seeds with up to 40 per cent oil content. When the seeds are crushed, the resulting *jatropha* oil can be burnt in a standard diesel car, while the residue can also be processed into biomass to power electricity plants.

As the search for alternative energy sources gathers pace and urgency, the *jatropha* has provoked something like a gold rush. Last week BP announced that it was investing almost £32 million in a *jatropha* joint venture with the British biofuels company D1 Oils.

Even Bob Geldof has stamped his cachet on *jatropha*, by becoming a special adviser to Helius Energy, a British company developing the use of

*jatropha* as an alternative to fossil fuels. Lex Worrall, its chief executive, says: "Every hectare can produce 2.7 tonnes of oil and about 4 tonnes of biomass. Every 8,000 hectares of the plant can run a 1.5 megawatt station, enough to power 2,500 homes."

*Jatropha* grows in tropical and sub-tropical climates. Whereas other feed-stocks for biofuel, such as palm oil, rape seed oil or corn for ethanol, require reasonable soils on which other crops might be grown, *jatropha* is a tough survivor prepared to put down roots almost anywhere.

Scientists say that it can grow in the poorest wasteland, generating topsoil and helping to stall erosion, but also absorbing carbon dioxide as it grows, thus making it carbon-neutral even when burnt. A *jatropha* bush can live for up to 50 years, producing oil in its second year of growth, and survive up to three years of consecutive drought.

In India about 11 million hectares have been identified as potential land on which to grow *jatropha*. The first *jatropha*-fuelled power station is expected to begin supplying electricity in Swaziland in three years. Meanwhile, companies from Europe and India have begun buying up land in Africa as potential *jatropha* plantations.

*Jatropha* plantations have been laid out on either side of the railway between Bombay and Delhi, and the train is said to run on more than 15 per cent biofuel. Backers say that the plant can produce four times more fuel per hectare than soya, and ten times more than corn. "Those who are working with *jatropha*," Sanju Khan, a site manager for D1 Oils, told the BBC, "are working with the new generation crop, developing a crop from a wild plant which is hugely exciting."

*Jatropha*, a native of Central America, was brought to Europe by Portuguese explorers in the 16th century and has since spread worldwide, even though, until recently, it had few uses: malaria treatment, a windbreak for animals, live fencing and candle-making. An ingredient in folk remedies around the world, it earned the nick-name "physic nut", but its sap is a skin irritant, and ingesting three untreated seeds can kill a person.

*Jatropha* has also found a strong supporter in Sir Nicholas Stern, the government economist who emphasised the dangers of global warming in a report this year. He recently advised South Africa to "look for biofuel technologies that can be grown on marginal land, perhaps *jatropha*".

However, some fear that in areas dependent on subsistence farming it could force out food crops, increasing the risk of famine. Some countries are also cautious for other reasons: last year Western Australia banned the plant as invasive and highly toxic to people and animals.

Yet a combination of economic, climatic and political factors have made the search for a more effective biofuel a priority among energy companies. New regulations in Britain require that biofuels comprise 5 per cent of the transport fuel mix by 2010, and the EU has mandated that by 2020 all cars must run on 20 per cent biodiesel.

Biodiesel reduces carbon dioxide emissions by nearly 80 per cent compared with petroleum diesel, according to the US Energy Department.

Under the deal between BP and D1, £80 million will be invested in jatropha over the next five years, with plantations in India, southern Africa and South-East Asia. There are no exact figures for the amount of land already under jatropha cultivation, but the area is expanding fast. China is planning an 80,000-acre plantation in Sichuan, and the BP-D1 team hopes to have a million hectares under cultivation over the next four years.

Jatropha has long been prized for its medicinal qualities. Now it might just help to cure the planet.

*Ben Macintyre, The Times, 28<sup>th</sup> July*

## Next Month's Meeting

Our next branch meeting will be held on October 2<sup>nd</sup> and will feature a talk by Anthony Mitchell. Anthony last spoke at our branch in 2004 and I am sure he will again prove to be interesting and knowledgeable speaker.

The October table show will feature the **Mammillaria Group** (Cacti) and **Haworthia & Gasteria Groups** (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 **Haworthia** and **Gasteria** groups contain *Haworthia*, *Astroloba*, *Chortolirion*, *Poellnitzia* and *Gasteria*.

A reminder for committee members that a branch **committee meeting** is due to be held on 17<sup>th</sup> September.

## Forthcoming Events

Sat	15 <sup>th</sup>	Sep	Portsmouth	"The Succulent Scene" – Jean Ellis
Mon	17 <sup>th</sup>	Sep	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Fri	21 <sup>st</sup>	Sep	Isle of Wight	"Socotra" – David Porter
Sat	29 <sup>th</sup>	Sep	Portsmouth	Branch Autumn Show @ Christ Church Hall, Widley, Waterlooville
Tue	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Oct	Southampton	"Confessions of a Cactogenarian" – Anthony Mitchell
Fri	19 <sup>th</sup>	Oct	Isle of Wight	"The Richtersveldt" – Terry Smale
Sat	20 <sup>th</sup>	Oct	Portsmouth	"Succulents other than Mesemb's" – Suzanne Mace
Tue	6 <sup>th</sup>	Nov	Southampton	"Eastern Cape" – Rodney Sims

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