

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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## Editorial

The weather has been pleasant these last few days, but is still very changeable. Last Thursday we had thunderstorms in the south, and the same day, frost overnight in Scotland!

I was in Homebase a couple of weekends ago and was surprised to see them selling Christmas Cacti (*Schlumbergera*) this early in the year! I was really there to check out any special offers on composts and was surprised at just how many different non-peat types there are out there these days. Several types contained water retention granules or feed that would last one or two seasons. Talking about this reminds me of the Succulent Tissue Culture sales stand at the National Show. They were selling 2 litres bags of compost with a coir base – one type was specially recommended for Haworthias, and another for Aloes and Agaves.

## Announcements

Recent events that members may have attended were the National Show and also the Annual Branch Dinner. The former turned out to be one of the warmest days of the year, so conditions were tiring but there was a good selection of plants on sale and in the show itself. The branch dinner was well attended, and I think everybody had a good time.

Portsmouth Branch have notified me that there is a change of speaker for their 15<sup>th</sup> September meeting, but the subject to be covered is similar to what was originally planned.

This coming Saturday, the branch will be putting on a display and have a sales table at the **Romsey Show**. Setup will be on the Friday. We already have

enough people to help on the stand, but if anyone else does attend, do come by and say hello.

## Last Month's Meeting

### *South Africa Tamed*

Our speaker for the evening, Eddie Harris started by mentioning that this talk had been put together from his first three trips to South Africa. During these trips, he visited botanic gardens and nurseries and this talk would show us some of these. He pointed out some of the advantages - the plants in a botanic garden tend to be in far better shape, they are also all in one place, and even better, they are often labelled! During his trips he visited Kirstenbosch 4 times, the Karoo botanical gardens 3 times, Sheilam's nursery a couple of times and Buys Wiese's Kokerboom nursery in Vanrhynsdorp 4 times. This last place was well worth a visit because the plants were very cheap. All plants we would see were being grown in collections - hence the title of "South Africa tamed".

At the start of the trips, they always landed in Cape Town, which is an 11½ hour flight from Heathrow. On the first day there, it tipped it down and the rain was really heavy. On a map, Eddie pointed out that Kirstenbosch is on the south side of Cape Town, Worcester is to the east and the final destination of Vanrhynsdorp is to the north. Plants from other regions being grown in Cape Town need some of protection since it is too wet for many of them. However, the weather in Worcester is drier and more suited to growing a wide variety of plants.

A view of Cape Town showed the prominent feature of Table Mountain with a bank of clouds hiding a large part of the mountain. It is a modern city, but at night you have to be careful. The first day they were there, John Ede and he went out to make a telephone call, and they were mugged at knifepoint, in a brightly lit mall. Everything was taken and he had to have a new passport and credit cards issued. So when travelling, go out as a group and don't go out as night. Despite this incident, it is a pretty and friendly city, and he enjoyed his time in South Africa.

Cape Town sits all around the base and lower slopes of Table Mountain. Kirstenbosch is on the southern face of Table Mountain. From Table Bay, you can see Robben island. The colonial past means that within the town, there is a lot of Dutch influence. One way of getting up to the top of Table Mountain is by cable car, but there was a 2 hour queue to use this, so they didn't bother. To the east is Hout Bay, where there is a decent English fish and chip shop. One thing to be aware of is that the west coast is very cold, with winds streaming in from the Antarctic. The water is also very cold and you also get sea fogs. We saw a view looking to the south. Chapmans Peak is a scenic drive which runs all the way down to the southern tip of the country. It was built by convict labour in the 1890s. It is only 2 cars wide and although people drive on the same side of the road as us, you have to be careful if you are on the outer edge and there's something large coming the other way. It is a quite spectacular drive.

Eventually they reached Constantia, the site of Kirstenbosch. The gardens have changed since their first visits, and now there is a brand new entrance and foyer and new car parks too. A brand new conservatory was built in 1998. They met Ernst van Jaarsveld on one of the earlier trips, and he mentioned he was about to go out to collect a Baobab tree. By 2008 this tree had taken very well, and was growing some 6 feet a year. The plants in the collection were arranged according to rainfall regions, with sections for plants from the Nama Karoo, Richtersveld and the Eastern Cape. All around the edge were sub-conservatories, for bulbs, mesembs etc. We started with a nice *Aloe dichotoma*. In the Knersvlakte and Nama Karoo area, there were lots of Aloes, with *Aloe broomii* 3 feet across coming into flower. An Euphorbia was identified by David as *E. stellaspina*. Eddie was a little disappointed that some of the plants were bloated or had split, perhaps because the watering was incorrect, but generally the condition of the plants was pretty good.

The Little Karoo area was 10 foot square, with a path all the way around. Eddie commented that in all his visits here, there were never many visitors, he had never seen more than 5-6 people around. We saw *Gasteria brachyphylla*. The Eastern Cape section was the wettest part of the conservatory. Many of the Aloes and Euphorbias being grown here are highly threatened in habitat. A *Cyphostemma* which had been mounted horizontally high up the wall had decided to grow a root downwards and so they had decided to place a pot for it. It was now growing beautifully, and during the 2008 visit it, was in full leaf and doing well. We also saw *Dioscorea elephantipes* with an 18 inch

caudex. Unfortunately it was not in growth. We also saw *Aloe variegata* in flower – in the intense sun of South Africa, the green colour of the stems turns almost black. We also saw *Lithops julii* ssp. *fulleri*. *Argyroderma congregatum* is one of the smaller growing ones, but some of the heads had split. *Pelargonium echinatum* had white flowers, but the flower colour can vary through to purple. *Sarcaulon paniculatum* had feathery foliage.

One of the side areas covers South African bulbs and they saw Clivias, and *Cyrtanthus elata*, with 2.5" diameter flowers. *Babiana stricta* is a member of the Iris family. Another member of the same family is *Romulea leipoldtii* which had flowers 2" across. In South Africa, Lachenalias are everywhere, and we saw *Lachenalia aloides* v. *aurea*. This is a variable species with flowers in other colours too. *Freesia alba* was growing in a 6" pot. *Watsonia laccata* is another member of the Iris family, and *Watsonia spectabilis* was 3 foot high, both are striking when in flower.

They were allowed to go "behind the scenes", and behind the conservatory was a path which led to a stone wall planted out with Aloes. They were also allowed to view the private greenhouses, including one which houses Ernst's *Gasteria* collection – this was used for his *Gasteria* book. There were some very good plants there but some needed tidying up. We saw several forms of *Gasteria rawlinsonii*. Outside, an area sheltered from the rains was filled with mesembs and he spent a couple of hours there. We again saw *Argyroderma congregatum*. As an indication of size, most of the plants were in 6 inch pots. *Gibbaeum heathii* was in flower and was growing in a concrete tray which was 12 inches by 9 inches. There were 6 inch pots of various *Conophytums* - *Conophytum ectypum*, *Conophytum schlechteri* from the Knersvlakte, and *Conophytum hians* from the Richtersveld. A plant of *Muiria hortense* was 3 inches high and considerably wider – and far more impressive than his small plant in a 3 inch pot back home.

Out in the gardens is the grave of Professor Harold Pearson, who was the first directors of the Gardens, in the period from 1913 to his untimely death in 1916. On Pearson's headstone was the epithet "If ye seek his monument, look around you". The silvery trees were Protea trees, which are endemic to Cape Town. We saw the flower of a *Leucospermum* which was 5 inches across. *Leucodendrum xanthoconus* had 3" flowers, and a Protea had a similar sized flower. There were many other flowers in the gardens. *Adenandra uniflora* is a member of the Rutaceae and makes a lovely ground cover plant – it has aromatic foliage and flowers 1.5" across. In

sunshine the gardens do change their character and become much more inviting. Clivias were growing outside and a shrub which was a member of the Fabaceae (pea family) was three feet across and had scented flowers.

We saw a view of Table Mountain framed by a pair of Kosi palms - these belong to the genus *Raphia* and are supposed to have the longest leaves of any plant. Sculptures are also present in the gardens, and there were lots of statues by Zimbabwean artists, including pieces titled "Playing with the children", "Expecting our first born", "Proud of her beauty", "Family" - these were all around 4 feet high. A lily pond had a life-sized statue of an otter. There were also statues of guinea fowl. The live guinea fowl in the gardens are a menace since they'll take an interest in anything you're trying to eat. The cycad garden is one of the best to be found anywhere, and occupies 5 acres. Next was a pretty bush where all the new leaves were white - he'd have to try and find out what this was. All the plants growing outside are local flora since it is too wet for plants from other regions. We saw a general shot of the area and ended this section with a multi-branched *Aloe plicatilis* which was 8 feet across - he himself has grown this to a 12 inch pot size.

Their next venue was eastwards, across the mountain range to Worcester. The first place they visited was a reptile farm on the outskirts of Worcester. We started with a picture of Carolina ducks and Eddie hoped these were not food for some of the other creatures at the farm! Next were Crocodiles 5 feet long and then an indoor area of snakes. Between him and the snakes was a 4 feet wall. We saw cobras, a tree snake and also a puff adder, which is one of the most poisonous snakes in South Africa. We also saw a tented tortoise, which has an attractive pattern on its shell. This was 9 inches long and apparently highly threatened in the wild. We also saw the owner posing with a large 4 feet long iguana, which had been raised from an egg. It was quite an affectionate animal and apparently not dangerous, being a vegetarian.

They then went to Robertson, which is the location of Sheilam's Nursery. As they approached, there were cattle and egrets in the field. At the time, Winnie Schwegmann was in charge but ownership has since been passed down the family. The nursery was started by a Mr Malherbe in 1954, who named it after the initials of his 6 children. We saw an *Alluaudia* which was 12 feet high, a *Cussonia*, and a selection of mixed plants. There were lots of *Echinocactus grusonii* everywhere, and also *Agave victoria reginae*. General views showed a wide variety of plants being grown although it seemed

that many were not for sale. During their 2004 visit, the nursery was not keen to sell plants to foreigners because of the paperwork. We saw *Ferocactus glaucescens*, with heads up to two feet in diameter, a 4 feet clump of *Echinocactus grusonii*, *Pachypodium lameri* and another *Alluaudia*. There was a nice tree *Euphorbia* around 6 feet high, and also *Euphorbia millii*, 2 feet across. We also saw a *Weberocereus*, and a nice *Cyphostemma bainesii* 4 feet across and 8 feet high - Eddie thought it would need 4 people holding hands to reach around it. There were a number of cycads up to 3-4 feet high, including some bearing fruit. We saw more big clumps of *Echinocactus grusonii*, 4-5 feet across and also *Ferocactus stainesii* and a nice 5 feet tall *Oreocereus*. *Senecio haworthii* was 18 inches in diameter - it can be found growing in habitat just 10-15 km away. The clone of *Agave victoria reginae* being grown here was offsetting like mad. We saw a group of mixed cerei and also a *Cereus* in flower - the plants obviously liked the conditions. *Erythrina falcata* was a rather nice tree with 3" flowers - it is a member of the pea family. The last slide at Sheilams featured a nice clump of *Lampranthus* in flower, some 6 feet across.

During the break, our projector screen decided to collapse, but after some emergency repairs, we were able to continue. We were still in the Worcester area and it was time to visit the Karoo Botanical Gardens. In the old days you used to park at the front and walk through a wild area with plants along the sides, but now you drive in further on a tarmac road to the car park and then walk back to the entrance. Eddie said he had never found anyone collecting entrance fees on his visits but Ian Acton said that was not the case when he had visited. We saw a general view looking south, following by a nice bush of *Tylecodon pearsonii*, some 15" tall. *Lachenalia carnosa* is found throughout Namaqualand. *Portulaca afra* is used as a hedge out there and was 8 foot tall - there was also a variegated form which was 6-7 feet tall. We also saw *Tylecodon paniculata* and *Crassula perforata* with pink flowers.

There was a nice *Lampranthus* species (or it might have been a *Ruschia*). *Haworthia pumila* was 5" across. *Euryops* is a member of the Asteraceae and it was a 3 foot high bush with yellow flowers. *Drosanthemum bicolor* had red flowers with yellow centres. Looking around the beds outside the entrance, he found *Cheiridopsis candidissima* (now *C. denticulata*) 8 inches across and just coming into flower. There was also a 9 inch *Cheiridopsis pillansii*. *Euphorbia ferox* was fronted by *Gibbaeum heathii*. *Euphorbia horrida* was 12 to 14 inches high and 18 inches across. He had seen clumps in habitat

4 feet high and 5 feet across. There was also a clump of *Euphorbia stellata* 12" across. We saw a general view of rockery area. The owner had his house behind the rockery. A lampranthus species had 1.5" flowers, and there were some nice wild flowers, which looked like members of the Asteraceae. Carpobrotus were growing under the various trees. A bed of Euphorbias included *E. horrida*. They were also using the bed to display a parasitic plant, *Viscum minimum* which has red berries. It is a mistletoe which grows on Euphorbias. They were also growing beds of plants which were typical of the ones found in the Karoo – it was a bit like the Spalding bulb festival. There were lots of sun birds around, but these were hard to photograph since they moved so fast. He did get a picture of a bird which someone identified as a shrike. Walking around, he found a 12-15" tortoise, busy eating a Tylecodon. As he got nearer to take a picture, the tortoise decided to start eating his shoelaces!

In the garden, there were lots of shade houses, and in these various genera of plants were being grown. The Haworthia section was impressive, featuring plants collected by people such Bruce Bayer, Harry Hall, and Anthony Mitchell, amongst others. We saw a clump of *Haworthia setata* (arachnoidea) 3" across, *Haworthia mutica*, and a tray-full of *Haworthia pygmaea*. *Pachypodium succulentum* was growing in a 12 inch pan and had not really woken up yet. There was a Pelargonium in a 6" pot, and a plant with nice yellow flowers which he thought might be a Babiana, although Ben from the audience suggested it might be a Wachendorfia. There were lots of plants of *Dactyloopsis digitata*, and we also saw *Gibbaeum crytopodium* and *Muiria hortense*. in 6" pots. There were nice clumps of Oophytum with magenta flowers – these are endemic to the Knersvlakte. These plants colour up with a nice red tint, but in cultivation in this country they remain a boring green. We saw *Conophytum ectypum* ssp. *sulcatum*, *Conophytum luckhoffii* with individual clumps 5 inch across and a 3 inch clump of *Conophytum obscurum* ssp. *vitreopapillum*. A clump of *Conophytum piluliforme* ssp. *edwartii* was all of 2" across – it is one of the miniatures. *Conophytum schlechteri* only grows on one mountain in the Richtersveld and has a nice white flower. *Conophytum uvaeforme* ssp. *decoratum* used to go under the name *C. occultum*. There was also a 4" clump of one of the hairy species – *Conophytum stephanii*.

There were lot of Gazanias everywhere – these have a variety of flower colours. *Dimorphotheca pluvialis* is a member of daisy family and has colourful flowers. *Lampranthus haworthii* had flowers 3" across. A Monsonia was a member of the

Geraniaceae. There were Aloes everywhere. *Aloe ferox* was 8 feet tall, and there were also smaller ones 12" across. *Aloe striata* was growing as a 9 inch clump. *Aloe marlothii* was a stunning plant, 8 feet tall. We ended the visit here with a view of an 18" clump of *Lampranthus speciosa*.

The last place to visit was Vanrhynsdorp, which is 250km north of Cape Town, and on the southern edge of the Knersvlakte, which is a region of hilly terrain covered with quartz gravel in the North-West of the Cape. They were travelling from Clanwilliam and phoned ahead to book accommodation at a guest house at the top of the Matzikama. However it was dark when they got there and they couldn't find the place, so they went to the Vanrhynsdorp guesthouse, where the owner had previously told him to get in touch if they encountered any difficulties. Arriving at 7pm, the owner was in the middle of dinner with the other guests but he was able to find them accommodation in the town. The guest house had a nice garden with Aloes and Euphorbias and also an area for the mesembs.

The nursery they visited was just down the road, and it was the Kokerboom nursery, owned by Buys Wiese. You go in through an avenue of Aloe dichotomas all planted out. They were made extremely welcome and the plants for sale were very cheap. Buys Wiese has a farm where he grows the plants, then it's a matter of digging them up and potting them up for sale at the nursery. The regeneration rate on his land is phenomenal. There isn't much passing trade but he has supply arrangements with other nurseries and also sells by mail order.

One area has plants with their common names and we saw *Conophytum calculus* with the common name of double stieges (dice) and an *Argyrodema* likened to "babys bums". *Carpobrotus quadrifidus* was growing outside and we also saw a picture of the Maskam Mountain at Matzikama. Oophytums everywhere were in flower. It was the first time he'd seen *Gasteria glomerata* which is a dwarf gasteria with pretty flowers - unfortunately they didn't have any for sale.

There were seedlings of *Haworthia globosiflora* growing in a 12 inch tray. *Diplosoma* (*Maughaniella*) *luckhoffii* had half inch heads with a lovely windowed leaf. *Pachypodium namaquanum* plants were 3 feet high. A nice Euphorbia in an 18" pan was from the hamata complex. *Dioscorea elephantipes* had a 16-18" base and was in growth. A number of Aloes and Haworthias were all bedded out, and we saw *Aloe polyphylla*, *Aloe erinacea*, *Aloe claviflora*, *Aloe pictifolia*, *Aloe glauca*, a small

*Aloe dichotoma*, and a 12 inch *Aloe melanacantha*. He has seen 4-5 feet clumps of the latter. We also saw *Haworthia emelyae* in a 5" pot, and a nice *Trichocaulon marlothii* in flower – this is from the Orange River area and used to be known as *T. dinteri*. It offsets like mad and was in a 5" pot. *Trichocaulon flavum* was 15 inches high and had yellow flowers. *Hoodia gordonii* was 18" high and 2 feet across – it was previously classified as a spiny *Trichocaulon*.

*Anacampseros baeseckeii* v *namaquensis* (or *lanigera*) was a nice hairy plant, 2 inches high. The featured *Anacampseros (Avonia) alstonii* was 3-4 inches long, but he also saw some pieces which were 6 inches long. *Conophytum burgeri* was 2 inches across and it was the first time he'd seen this strange species. *Faucaria tuberculata* was growing in a 6 inch pot. *Namaquanthus vanheerdei* comes from the northern Richtersveld, and it's a pig of a plant which he has been trying to grow without success. It was nice to see *Vanheerdiia divergens* which looked much better in South Africa than it does in his greenhouse. It comes from the Orange River / Northern Bushmanland area. We also saw a 6" clump of *Didymotus lapidiformis*, and *Aloinopsis schoonesi* in a 7" pot. Gillian Evison from Oxford has one of these which is 15" across but she can't get it out of the greenhouse. The last plant for the evening was *Gibbaeum pubescens* in a 9" pot. Eddie said that the lovely deep pink flowers and white bodies make a stunning sight, which is unforgettable when seen en masse in habitat.

After a few questions from the audience, Eddie ended by saying "If you get the chance, go!"

*Vinay Shah*

## Table Show Results

There were just 4 entries in the August table show!

	Cacti – Mammillaria	Succulents – Euphorbia
Open	(1) B Beckerleg Mammillaria lenta	(1) B Beckerleg Euphorbia valida
	(2) -	(2) -
	(3) -	(3) -
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg Mammillaria splendens	(1) B Beckerleg Euphorbia mosaica
	(2) -	(2) -
	(3) -	(3) -

*Ivor Biddlecombe*

## Branch Committee Meeting

A branch committee meeting was hosted by Dot England on 13<sup>th</sup> August.

Recent meetings and events were discussed.

In July, the New Forest Show had been a success, with plant sales just slightly lower than last year. However, the cost entrance tickets had meant that the branch had made hardly any profit on the event (and it is supposed to be our busiest event of the year). We had previously agreed that 4 people were needed each day to man the sales table and to talk to the public, but on the last day, everyone who has brought sales plants or display plants needs a ticket - so we require around 8 tickets for that final day. The allocation from the show organisers is just 2 free tickets per day, so extras are bought by the branch. It would be somewhat cheeky to expect members to work for the branch's benefit and to also have to pay for the privilege! Another issue was that too many sales plants had been brought along and this had caused storage and space issues. It was agreed that as a general rule, people should not bring more than 6 trays of sales plants to an event. If they did happen to sell a lot of plants, then they could bring additional stock on subsequent days.

Arrangements for the Romsey Show which will be held on September 8<sup>th</sup> were discussed.

The Branch is due to host the Zone 11 Quiz in November and this was also discussed, including catering and lifts from the ferry for the IoW team. David will away for this meeting.

David mentioned that he needed to make a start on the Branch programme for 2013 right away, since he will be otherwise occupied during most of October and November. We plan to ask the members (via a questionnaire) what type of talks they would like us to host, but in the meantime, if there are any speakers or topics that you'd like to hear at our meetings, please let David know as soon as possible.

In recent years, there have been delays with preparing our annual accounts in time for the AGM, but Alice was hoping this year would be more straightforward.

The next committee meeting was scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> November.

*Vinay Shah*

## Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on October 2<sup>nd</sup> and will feature Terry Smale, with a talk titled "Conophytum". I am hoping he'll be talking about the whole genus and not just one plant!

The October Table Show will consist of **3 Cacti** and **3 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.

## Forthcoming Events

Sat	8 <sup>th</sup>	Sep	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Romsey Show, Broadlands, Romsey
Sat	8 <sup>th</sup>	Sep	Isle of Wight	"Arizona Byways" - Trevor Wray
Sat	15 <sup>th</sup>	Sep	Portsmouth	(Changed) Socotra & Madagascar - Leo van der Hoeven
Tue	22 <sup>nd</sup>	Sep	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Autumn Show @ Christ Church Hall, Widley, Waterlooville
Tue	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Oct	Southampton	"Conophytum" - Terry Smale
Sat	13 <sup>th</sup>	Oct	Isle of Wight	"Bats" – Graham Street
Sat	20 <sup>th</sup>	Oct	Portsmouth	"Conos & Other Mini-Mesembs" - Derek Tribble
Tue	6 <sup>th</sup>	Nov	Southampton	Zone 11 Quiz – hosted by Southampton Branch
Sat	10 <sup>th</sup>	Nov	Isle of Wight	"Cultivation; Back to Nature" – Anthony Mitchell
Sat	17 <sup>th</sup>	Nov	Portsmouth	"Hybrids etc." – Stuart Riley
Mon	19 <sup>th</sup>	Nov	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting

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