

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial.....	1
Announcements	1
Last Month's Meeting	1
Plants of Interest	1
Brazil	2
Table Show – September	5
Committee Meeting	5
Snippets	6
Margaret's Musings.....	6
Letter from Eddy Harris	6
Next Month's Meeting	7
Forthcoming Events	7

Editorial

I suppose the weather this last weekend is a reminder that Summer really is over. I haven't ventured into the conservatory for a few days but several mesembs were in flower when I last looked.

October really is the last month to attempt any repotting and I may do a few more plants before the end of the month. However I also need to get round to cutting the hedge and disposing of some broken fence panels. As I am sure you are all aware, thinking of these tasks takes a lot longer than actually doing them!

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, I have put up photos from the National Show on our branch website. When time permits, I would like to add more material to the website, including links to other resources on the Internet. There really are some amazing websites specialising on certain genera out there. If any of you have interesting photographs of specimen plants (or plants in flower) and are willing to share them with the rest of the world, please let me have them – either as prints or as digital images on floppy disk or CD.

Announcements

Tony Grech has obtained a supply of horticultural glass in two sizes (24 x 18 inch and 24 x 24 inch).

So if you need any for repairs etc., please have a word with him at one of our branch meetings.

Peter Down and Geoff Card will be absent at today's branch meeting. They're currently in the middle of a two week trip to Argentina! We should hear a report on their adventures at a talk sometime next year.

Last Month's Meeting

Plants of Interest

Peter Down had brought a group of "colourful" plants but since there were a number of other people who had brought along *Plants of Interest*, he decided to skip descriptions of his plants in order to let the others take the stage. He did mention that at home, he had a couple of cerei in flower but the flowers had faded by the time of the meeting.

Although Peter did not describe his plants to the audience, I did take a look at them during the break. Particularly striking was a variegated *Haworthia limifolia* with a strong yellow streak within the tight rosette of dark green leaves. There was also a *Gasteria carinata*, and a *Pleiospilos nelii rubra*. *Adromischus marianae* v. *herrei* had knobbly round leaves which had coloured up nicely.

Jim Roskilly had brought along two examples of *Yavia cryptocarpa* which grows near the border between Chile and Argentina and which is still rare in cultivation, having only been described in 2001. The plant numbered "Clone 91" had grown 3" tall and looked rather strange since its body was still quite narrow. The other plant was labelled "Clone 20" and was 1" tall. Both plants were on grafts. A page on the BCSS website mentions that over £1500 has been raised for the Society's conservation fund from sales of seedlings of this plant.

Next were two examples of *Copiapoa laui*. One was the normal form and the other was a cristate.

The smallest Tylecodon is *T. mimina* and Jim's plant had just flowered. The flowers were pale pink rather than the red he was expecting, but David Neville mentioned that the flowers do fade in the heat.

We then saw two "recovery" stories. A *Geohintonia* which he had put on the top shelf had been badly scorched and he thought he'd lost the plant. But this year the plant had resumed growth and he was hoping that the new growth would eventually cover up the scars. A *Blossfeldia* had been attacked by slugs, but the plant had managed to survive and was now forming several offsets.

Next were three *Adromischus* plants – *A. cv.* "Little Spheroid", with round leaves, *A. cv.* "Bryan Makin" with heavy patterning, and *A. diabolicus* about which I can't find any information! *Conophytum pubicalyx* is a very small growing plant and it hadn't flowered for him yet. Jim also mentioned that the plant which Anthony Mitchell had handed out to everyone at our March meeting (*Othonna euphorbioides*) was now beginning to show signs of life after a dormant spell in the summer.

Jim had also brought along a selection of insectivorous plants. The venus fly trap (*Dionaea muscipula*) is quite clever: since the traps can only operate a few times, they actually wait to be triggered more than once before the traps close shut – this presumably avoids false triggers. There were also examples of *Nepenthes*, *Drosera* and *Sarracenia*.

Finally, there were some pictures of his *Agave victoriae reginae*. This plant had been bought from Lambs Nursery in 1977 and it decided to flower last year. The flower spike grew at a peak rate of 6" in a day, but slowed a little when moved out of the greenhouse. The growth outside seemed to depend on the temperature; on very hot or very cold days there was no growth, but in between it grew around an inch a day. The spike finally reached a height of 9ft 6 inches.

Derek Prior had also brought along some plants. First was the strange and rock-like *Pseudolithos migiurtinus*, in flower. The plant had produced 7 clumps of flowers, with up to 8 flowers in each clump. Like other members of the Stapeliads, the flowers have a rather unpleasant smell. Looking from the top, the plant seemed to be growing in four sections. The plant forms bumpy peduncles from which the flowers grow over and over again.

It is difficult to maintain on its own roots but Derek stated that the plant had flowered off and on for the last 4 months. Second was another lumpy rock-like plant, *Lavrania cactiforme*. This had produced 3 lots of cream flowers heavily spotted with maroon. This plant was formerly known as *Trichocaulon cactiforme* and it is also a Stapeliad.

Echeveria cv. "Rainbow" had been obtained from Cliva Innes. This was the first time it had decided to flower and the flowers were pale red/orange with cream petals, which he found unusual. The dark green leaves were marked with red lines, so one of the parents was possibly *E. nodulosa*.

Next was an unidentified *Euphorbia* which he had grown for 7 years and which had flowered twice. He mentioned he grew it for the wavy edged leaves rather than the flowers. His variety of *Aloe jucunda* had flowers which are very large compared to the average aloe. It had produced seeds this year so it must have crossed with something else. The plant was a fast grower, in two years it had grown 5 offsets around the base.

Next was a South African plant called *Cyrtanthus* which forms nice lily-like flowers annually. Derek mentioned he had 8 or 9 different types and the shape of the flowers varies from tubular to an open cup shape. The final exhibit was a *Cuphea*. This plant had formed a little shrub – although a little untidy in appearance, it had striking red flowers which contrasted well against the dark green leaves.

Peter Down reminded everyone that anyone could bring plants in for the Plants of Interest spot.

[Ed - Thanks are due to David Neville for providing his field notes to assist me in writing a report on his talk.]

Brazil

David Neville started his talk by saying that Brazilian cacti aren't widely grown and it was not a country he had ever expected to visit. However, 2½ years ago, an opportunity came along to travel to Brazil and explore in the company of experts such as Marlon Machado and Graham Charles and he could not turn this opportunity down. In Brazil there are relatively few types of globular cacti, but quite a few cerei, so this would make an interesting change from his visit to Mexico the year before.

David visited Brazil in May 2002. The contingent started in Salvador and travelled inland and south towards Bahia in the state of Minas Gerais, which literally stands for “General Mines” - the area flourished thanks to mining in the 18th and 19th centuries. The footballer Pelé was also born and raised in this state.

In the north of the Brazil, there is tropical rain forest and no need for plants to adapt to dry conditions. However, in the south of the country, there are rocky outcrops and hills, and cacti and succulents grow in this drier terrain.

The first plant we saw was *Melocactus bahiensis*. For those unfamiliar with this genus, rather than flowering like a conventional cactus, when mature it produces a growth on the top of the plant (called a cephalium) and the flowers form in this part of the plant. The plants were growing in cracks and crevices in the rocks, and the colonies they found numbered 100's or 1000's of plants, all in very good condition. There were also lots of seedlings – it was almost like being at a nursery. There were also lots of bromeliads around. Some of these are succulent, but they are not eligible in our shows. David was unable to identify the featured bromeliad but thought it was probably a *Hecthia* or an *Encholirium*.

There aren't many *Opuntias* in Brazil but we did see a flat padded example. Most of the Brazilian *Opuntias* belong to the group *Tacinga*. In the *Melocactus* populations, they found carcasses and new plants which are probably offspring of the deceased plant. *Melocacti* are self fertile and the seeds tend to fall off the parent and land near the base. We saw a close up showing the red seed pods being squeezed out of the cephalium. There were also seedlings growing in shade of an *Euphorbia*. Even in May (their winter), the temperatures are as high as in our summer.

Another locality of *Melocactus bahiensis* was an old abandoned quarry which John Hughes has written about in the BCSS Journal. The light from the sun gave an eerie appearance to a *pilosocereus* growing at the top of the cliff. The *Melocacti* were growing on the quarry face and there were hundreds and thousands of them. Interestingly, there were none at the base of the cliff, even though seeds would have been washed down to this area. Many of the plants would also become dislodged as they grew bigger and heavier and eventually would just tumble down to the ground. However, there was no soil for them to grow in at

the base and there would probably be competition from other plants in the wet season.

As they were driving inland, they stopped, having noticed a flash of pink colour at the side of the road. It was a *Carrisia* in flower. Seeds of this genus are often sold along with succulent seeds, but the tree grows to the size of an oak! They also found bromeliads along the side of the road and epiphytic orchids amongst the trees. However, they were unable to find the *Opuntia brasiliensis* which they had hoped to see in this area.

They did find *Coleocephalocereus goebelianus* but it's not something which he's considered growing since he didn't fancy writing out the plant label! The other dull and boring looking plant in the photo was a *Pereskia bahiensis*. This is one of the most primitive types of cacti; it looks like a shrub but it does have areoles.

Stephanocereus leucostele is difficult to grow but it is one of the most beautiful Brazilian ceroids. It produces a ring cephalium on each year's growth. They also found another *C. goebelianus* with a long vertical cephalium. The *Stephanocereus* produces a large bluish fruit packed with hundreds of black shiny seeds, and Marlon collected some of these. *Arrojodoa* can flower on the previous year's cephalium but they didn't find any nice ones, although we did see a thick cluster of *A. penicillata* stems. There were also more *Tacingas* (*T. funalis*, *T. inamoena* and *T. palmadora*), some with shoots over a metre long.

At a flat bedrock, they found more examples of *Melocactus bahiensis*, but these were long spined forms. They also saw bromeliads with an attractive green/red centre although the leaves were edged with sharp teeth, like saw blades. They found *Espositoopsis (Austrocephalocereus) dybowskii* which is a white stemmed plant with fine needle-like spines, and they also came across *Pilosocereus gounellei* here – it grows like a sprawling candelabra. The *Espositoopsis* produces a typical cephalium at the top with a fluffy woolly area where it produces flowers. Also here was an old specimen of *C. goebelianus* some 11-12 feet tall and with a cephalium starting at 3 feet and growing all the way to the top. This only tends to flower on the new part of the cephalium.

In what was probably the equivalent of someone's front garden, he saw a *Kalanchoe (Byrophyllum) tubiflorum* with red flowers. This plant must have naturalised here – it actually originates from Madagascar.

At Pedra Azul, they came across a large barren rock mound. Here they found *Buiningia brevicylindrica*. The genus *Buiningia* is related to *Melocactus* and contains globular or short columnar plants which all produce a cephalium. They also saw many spidery rosettes of the bromeliad *Encholirion*. These had a variety of different colours, and they were scattered all over the rock face. He thought these plants would be quite popular if cultivated. There were also other silvery grey bromeliads.

The rocks had vertical strata which suggest they were pushed out of the earth by some violent geological action. We saw *Buiningia aurea* growing in the shade of some shrubs. A photograph taken early in the morning showed beads of moisture on these plants. This condenses from the air and it can get quite wet! Growing on a rock was a *Tradescantia* of some sort and there were some pink flowers from a *Talinum*. They also saw an epiphytic *Hylocereus setaceus* with long stems, growing within the trees.

After a break for refreshments, we continued the journey and saw another *Coleocephalocereus* at Padre Paraiso. This was *C. fluminensis decumbens*. There were also plants of *Pilosocereus magnificus*. The rock here was covered in a black coating which Paul Klaassen said was a cyanobacterium (*Nostoc*) - the same type which grows on *Copiapoas* in Chile.

Here they also found *Buiningia purpurea*, which only grows in white quartz sand. The plant had a dark cephalium and dark spines and looked beautiful. They also found *Buiningia brevicylindrica*. The *Melocactus* plants in this region had multiple cephaliums and they were a form of *M. ernestii* called multiceps. There were previously large numbers of plants here, but most had gone, presumably collected. Here is where he also found the best looking *Arrojodoa* of the trip. The pink flower buds go from bright pink to jet black as they mature and die. A close up of *Buiningia brevicylindrica* showed lime green flowers in the cephalium.

A photograph showing the silhouette of a *Carrisia* tree (probably dead) covered in Spanish moss and clusters of *Tillandsias* looked spooky. On a rocky outcrop, they came across *Micranthocereus violaciflorus*. This plant needs warmth but produces masses of small flowers which are very ornate. They also found *Brasilicereus markgrafii*.

In white quartz, they found their first discocactus. Three inches in diameter, the plant was probably a form of *D. placentiformis*. These plants are more difficult to grow than *Melocacti*. Then, near Grão Mogol, they found the choice *Discocactus horstii*. This plant only grows in white quartz in just one locality. In the past, thousands were collected and exported, and the plant is endangered since it only grows in a small and specific area. The locality is not publicised in order to protect the remaining plants. It was getting late in the day so they returned the next day.

The *Discocactus horstii* plants were growing in the quartz gravel and sand. The dark bodies with neat white areoles are quite distinctive. They also found lots of small seedlings under the gravel surface – the seedlings push through the sand when they grow larger. The largest plants were 2 inches in diameter. David estimated that in some areas, there were around 40 to 50 plants per square metre.

Also growing here was *Pilosocereus fulvinatus* with thick brown wool. *Discocactus pseudoinsignis* was 9" across and had a cephalium which was 2-3" across. A nearby shrub provided some shade. They also came across *Micranthocereus auriazureus* which was 10-15 inches tall and featured lots of pink flowers.

In this region they also found *Vellozias* growing in the quartz. These unusual plants ranged in size from varieties which were just 5 to 6 inches high to others which were 8-10 feet tall. The featured plants had black woody stems. A large bromeliad (2 feet tall with an urn 5 inches in diameter) was probably a *Billbergia*.

They travelled on to Diamantina which is a picturesque town, once famous for its diamond mines. This is the region where *Uebelmannias* grow. They stayed at a ranch and had a 2-3 hour climb through thick shrub to find their first plants. The son of the local rancher was keen to come along, although his mother was very worried about his safety, despite him being 24 years old. As they climbed the rocks they saw a rather sinister pool of dark water and also an alligator in a pond of water. Fortunately they did not encounter the panthers reputed to be there. Here they found *Uebelmannia horrida (pectinifera)* some 7 inches tall. They also found a variety of *Discocactus placentiformis*. These were huge, with the largest one being almost a foot across. A new name "gigantiglobus" may be assigned to this type. They also saw large

Vellozias – these were over 6 feet tall. They also came across a fantastic population of *Uebelmannia gummifera*. This is very difficult to grow in cultivation and it was growing in loose quartz sand. Paul Klaassen mentioned the pH of this area was 3.5 which is very acidic. They also came across *Pilosocereus densilinus* and *Ciphocereus crassisepalus*.

They also found a series of “everlasting” plants whose dried flower heads are used for decoration. Members of the Eriocaulaceae, these plants had yellow flowers. The locals collect thousands of the dried flower heads (they get paid a pittance, depending on the weight of flower heads collected) and in some cases the plants are endangered due to over-collection. One type of these everlasting plants had very attractive rosettes 1.5" across which looked just like a miniature *Agave victoria reginae*. Unfortunately, Marlon wasn't able to grow this plant even in Brazil, so there's perhaps little hope of seeing it in cultivation. Some more of the tufty everlasting flowers looked just like heads of *Mammillaria plumosa*.

Here we saw our first photo of a Vellozia in flower. It had an attractive purple flower with a yellow centre. David said some white flowered forms also exist. This is where they found *Uebelmannia pseudopectinifera*. Nearby, clinging on to a rock for dear life with its long aerial roots was a relative of the cheese plant (*Philodendron*). They also found *Uebelmannia flavispina* which has fine yellow spines. This plant has a paler body and bears yellow flowers. The largest plant was over a foot across.

They found more Eriocaulaceae, an urn-type bromeliad and *Euphorbia sipolosi*. A *Laelia* orchid had yellow flowers and the leaves of another *Laelia* in an exposed situation had turned a very bright shade of red – this plant was growing in a more exposed position than the cacti.

Then they reached the locality of *Uebelmannia pectinifera*. Again, due to overcollection, there are very few plants left – mainly those which were inaccessible or damaged. In cultivation, these plants have a dark purple epidermis, but in habitat the plants have a white epidermis due to some sort of coating (farina). Even young plants just a couple of inches across seemed to have the white coloration. Some of these were growing in the shade so the coating is not necessarily protection against the sun.

The final slide showed a white bodied *Uebelmannia pectinifera*. David mentioned that seeing these plants and the *Discocactus horstii* had made his whole trip worthwhile.

Vinay Shah/David Neville

Table Show – September

There were 13 entries in the September table show.

	Cacti – 3 cacti	Succulents – 3 succulents
Open	(1) G Finn Mammillaria crucigera Mamm. pseudoperbella Ferocactus macrodiscus	(1) I Biddlecombe Haworthia bolussi Astroloba asperula Aloe cv. 'Lizard Lips'
	(2) I Biddlecombe Mammillaria lenta Ferocactus chrysacantha Matucana paucicostata	(2) J Roskilly Euphorbia lactea cristata Echeveria sp. ?
	(3) J Roskilly Mamma huitzilopochtlii Gymno. mihanovichii Cephalocereus senilis	(3) -
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg Mammillaria lenta Neoporteria villosa Uebelmannia pectinata	(1) B Beckerleg Euphorbia obesa Haworthia comptoniana C. mesembryanthemoides
	(2) I Biddlecombe Astrophytum myriostigma Copiapoa tenuissima Gymno. mihanovichii	(2) I Biddlecombe Crassula susannae Conophytum Haworthia minima
	(3) G Finn Mammillaria perbella Mammillaria albilanata Mammillaria morganiana	(3) J Roskilly Haworthia truncata Peperomia wolfgang Crassula susannae

Ivor Biddlecombe

Committee Meeting

A committee meeting was held on 20th September. Our recent shows and events were discussed. Although our accounts for the year to September had not been closed at that point, it looked like we made a good profit this year, thanks mainly to the success and number of events we took part in.

A provisional programme for next year is in the process of being put together. We will host the Zone 11 Show as part of the Broadlands Garden

Show in August, and the branch is also due to host the Zone 11 Quiz in 2005.

The library had a better year in terms of the number of books borrowed. We are considering putting the list of books available up on the branch website so that members can check the list and reserve the rarer books ahead of the monthly meeting.

A CD of the pictures taken at the Anniversary Convention is being prepared. There will also be space on the CD to include pictures from the National Show.

Shirts (bearing the name of our branch) for helpers at shows and events will be ordered at the start of next year. Members can also order these shirts if they wish - please see Margaret as soon as possible for further details.

Vinay Shah

Snippets

Margaret's Musings

Do I begin with my usual apologia about not writing things for Vinay for the newsletter? No. I shall just pride myself on the fact that at least I do write something, even if only occasionally.

I have been very busy this summer in helping to form a new specialist group. I want to tell you about the new Southern African Bulb Group. A lot of people who grow succulent plants (be they cacti or the other succulents) find that all sorts of tender bulbs start creeping into their greenhouses. Most of the southern African bulbs are winter growers, but some do come from summer rainfall areas. They have a dormant rest period when they can go under the bench and can be relied on to give you something in flower when there is not really any other colour in the greenhouse. Terry Smale and Stefan Rau are the founding members of this group. They both grow lots of bulbs and met at Alpine displays. After the usual chatting they discovered they both liked these plants, and, as usual, on chatting to others they found that there are quite a few people out there that like them as well.

The principal objective of the Group is to enable the exchange of information between its members on all aspects of southern African bulbs

It is envisaged that there will be two main activities of the Group. First, occasional meetings

in members' gardens so that members can see what is being cultivated there and also bring their own plants for display. This will provide opportunities for face-to-face exchange of information and also for exchange or sale of plant material. These were obvious features of the inaugural Epsom meeting and there are presently three other offers of venues for further meetings. Second, there will be mechanisms set up for the exchange of information by such means as the production of an occasional newsletter or perhaps in due course by means of a web-based news group. Initially, notes on plants and cultivation will be solicited by Robin Attrill, who will compile them and distribute either by E-mail or the ordinary post as required. Obviously the use of electronic communication will keep costs to a minimum.

I have volunteered to be the treasurer of the group (after all, I have had a lot of practice at that sort of thing!) and Stefan and Terry are the co-ordinators. If any of you are interested in joining please come and chat to me and I will give you a membership form.

We are running out of space in our greenhouse at the moment. All the pelargoniums are up on the benches and quite a few are showing signs of growth. My conophytums have come through the summer successfully, I am really pleased about this as some of them are real miniatures. One has heads the size of a pin - literally! The flowers are so pretty, I even have an orange flowered cono this year. I am waiting anxiously for my Phyllobolus to show signs of growth, I have been spraying it and was brave enough to water it earlier in the week. Let's hope it doesn't rot.

After the previous 'spiel' you won't be surprised to hear that I spent a busy fortnight repotting all my winter growing bulbs. I think some of them had not been touched for over five years. I am hoping that this will encourage an even better show of flowers this winter. If anything pretty turns up on 'first Tuesday' I will bring it along to show you!

Margaret Corina

The following letter was received by the Branch recently:

Letter from Eddy Harris

At our recent Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting it was realised during the course of our discussions that a great deal of

Society representation takes place at the various major shows throughout the year, chiefly through the hard and dedicated efforts by members of the branches local to the event. It was also realised that for various reasons, most of this dedication gets little or no acknowledgement from the Society.

We are very aware of the valuable publicity and additional members that such dedication produces and felt that this lack of recognition needs to be rectified. Consequently, I am writing to you as two of the organisers of the displays, both in the Southampton area and at Broadlands, to pass on the grateful thanks and appreciation of both the members of the Finance & General Purposes committee and the Society members in general for your personal efforts and that of your band of helpers in undertaking this aspect of Society publicity. In these days of reducing membership, all efforts to promote the Society to the general public have become increasing more important and we can only be grateful for your sterling efforts.

As it is impossible to contact each person involved personally, could I ask you to pass on these thanks to all those who were involved and ask that you keep up the good work.

With grateful thanks,

Eddy Harris – Hon. Society Secretary

Next Month's Meeting

Next month's meeting will take place on November 2nd and will feature Terry Hewitt, who will talk about the Holly Gate Cactus Garden, which is an impressive collection of cacti and succulent plants located just down the road at Ashington in West Sussex.

Terry has spoken at our branch on several occasions. If you are interesting in buying some new plants, please check his website:

<http://www.hollygatecactus.co.uk/plants.htm>

(I am sure if told in advance, Terry would be willing to bring along any specific plants which you wish to buy)

The November Table Show will feature the **Echinocereus Group** (Cacti) and **Lithops** (Succulents).

The Echinocereus group consists of *Echinocereus*, *Morangaya* and *Wilcoxia*.

The Lithops subgroup includes *Lithops*, *Dinteranthus* and *Lapidaria*.

Forthcoming Events

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
Fri	19 th	Nov	Isle of Wight	"South American Cacti for Flowers" – Peter Down
Sat	20 th	Nov	Portsmouth	Annual General Meeting
Sat	4 th	Dec	Portsmouth	Christmas Social / American Supper
Tue	7 th	Dec	Southampton	AGM and Christmas Social / American Supper
Fri	17 th	Dec	Isle of Wight	AGM and Christmas Social / American Supper

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