

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

October 2008



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### Editorial

October is here, along with a few chilly evenings (I had to turn the heating on last week) and the trees have begun to drop their leaves. This year's summer must rank as one of the coolest for quite a few years. I feel like watering my plants once or twice more before their winter rest but with the cold evenings one has to choose a day when the sun is going to be out and temperatures won't drop to freezing in the evening.

In my conservatory, a number of the mesembs (Conophytums, Fenestraria, Glottiphyllum) have come into flower. Some of the later flowering cacti also produced some blooms in late September, but the lack of sun hasn't really provided much encouragement.

### Announcements

Oxford Branch will be hosting a **Succulent Show** in conjunction with the Mesembryanthemum Study Group on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> October, at Witney. There will also be plant sales and refreshments, and a lecture (ticket only) by Paul Shirley on Ceropagias.

The new branch **lapel badge** is now available. It's made from hard enamel and is plated in gold and features a cactus as the centrepiece. If you would like one, please see me during the break. The badges are priced at £2.00 for one, or £3.50 for two.

We have had good attendances at recent branch meetings and this does mean that the hall **car park** may sometimes be full. If you have problems

finding parking space, please remember that the main church also has a car park – the entrance is on West End Road, which is off the main road just round the corner from Hatherell Close.

Our meeting next January will follow the usual tradition of short talks given by our own branch members. If you have plants you want to talk about or pictures that you wish to show, please let one of the Committee know.

### Last Month's Meeting

#### Plants of Interest

Ivor Biddlecombe had brought in a selection of his Lithops plants.

He had been trying different cultivation techniques to see what worked best. He had grown 6 plants of *L. aucampiae* and some had got very large heads, distorting the pots. In particular, the kuruman form tends to form large heads. He mentioned that he had put a handful of bonemeal in the soil and this seemed to help the plants. Tom Radford mentioned that lithops liked lots of root room – if you leave the plants in a small pot, the plants tend to remain small.

Another of the plants was a hybrid between *L. steineckeana* and *L. pseudotruncatella* and the offset which had formed was almost pure *L. pseudotruncatella*. Another plant of *L. steineckeana* had strange flowers, which were missing the petals.

Some of the trays of plants contained different varieties of the same species for comparison. For example, there were 10 different types of *L. karasmontana*. With *L. dorotheae*, Ivor had been collecting these over a period of time, and he had now got a lot of different types with different body markings – there were 14 different plants in the tray. He mentioned that he had grown a batch from the seeds we sell at events, and had got around 6-8 different forms from just one packet.

He is now trying to amass a collection of Lithops cultivars and had brought along a tray of 21

different cultivars. One of these was the pink bodied *L. optica rubra* and another was a form of *L. meyeri* called *L. meyeri* "Hammeruby".

The final tray contained Lithops which were growing in strange patterns or shapes. A couple of the plants were heart-shaped and another one had two large leaves and a small leaf. Ivor said these funny growths were usually one-offs and the plants would revert to normal in due course.

### **An Introduction to Columnar Cacti**

The speaker for September was Tony Mace who had kindly agreed to re-arrange the date of his talk at short notice. Tony mentioned that he had a large greenhouse which could accommodate some of the large plants he was going to talk about. He also mentioned that he has visited our branch many times and had given a talk on this subject when we were at Bangor Road but that was a long time ago - most would have forgotten what he had said then, and he certainly had!

Most hobbyists will have one or two Espostoa or Cephalocereus or Cleistocactus in their collections. These plants form quite a big proportion of the cacti, making up around 40% of the species. However, many are not well known in cultivation and some are not that attractive. Tony mentioned that he had been growing plants for 50 years and as a schoolboy he used to pop into Woolworths who in those days sold nice seedlings of plants like Lemaireocereus and *Pachycereus pringlei*.

You don't tend to see sizeable plants of these species these days. One of the issues is that quite a few of the Cerei including the Mexican ones like winter temperatures of least 45°F or 50°F whereas many growers are now limited to 40°F because of winter fuel costs. Tony's suggestion was to grow some of the hardier types, or to grow some of the smaller ones in a section of the greenhouse which can maybe be kept at a higher temperature. He also advised leaving some area aside to allow the plants to be put on the floor, thus allowing you to grow the taller plants to a height of 5 or 6 feet. It was impractical to bring large plants in so his talk today was going to consist of his own slides, a few habitat shots and some of Keith Grantham's slides taken in Venezuela.

Over the years, he has been lucky enough to visit quite a few habitats. The valley of Metztitlán is 100 miles north of Mexico City and is the home of *Cephalocereus senilis*. This is a wonderful area for cacti, with other plants such as *Mammillaria*

*geminispina*, *Astrophytum ornatum* and *Ferocactus glaucescens* also growing here. We saw the top of a *Cephalocereus senilis* - the plant was around 15 feet tall and 10-12 inches diameter. There was little evidence of hair - young seedlings are typically covered in silky hairs but once they get larger they lose the hair. At around 12 feet or taller, they form a cephalium on one side of the plant) and this is where the flowers grow. Quite a few columnar plants form cephaliums. This partly protects the flowers and fruits from the sun. Seeing a cephalium on *C. senilis* is an unlikely sight in Europe except perhaps in the Canaries. It is now very hard to get seeds because it takes so long for the plants to reach maturity and Mexico no longer allows the export of seeds.

Next we saw *Morangaya pensilis*. This is now positioned in Echinocereus. It is a cliff dweller so the stems hang down. The red flowers aren't typical of Echinocereus and are rather like those of Aporocactus. Moving on to Peru, we saw *Epostoa senilis* (which also goes under the name *Trixanthocereus*). We saw a nice white-spined plant. This also forms a cephalium. The plant had white flowers whereas all the pictures he had seen had featured pink flowers, so perhaps it is variable. He tried planting this out in a bed, but the plant did not get enough moisture and dried out.

*Anisocereus gaumeri* is from Southern Mexico so needs to be kept warm - 50°F or higher. He grows it in a bed with a heated cable. The plant forms odd flower buds which look like haworthia plants! The flowers are 2 inches across and night flowering although the scent is not pleasant. The plants have three angled stems and are easy to grow. Another Mexican plant is *Cephalocereus hoppenstedtii* which is very rare. It comes from the South so needs heat, and it grows to 20-30 feet. *Cephalocereus palmeri* (also known as *Pilosocereus palmeri*) from Mexico seems to grow in a number of varieties - there are bluish forms from the South and greenish forms from the North. All have woolly stems, and they flower easily once they get to around 2-3 feet. The flowers are pinkish and the plants appreciate warmth and will grow better at 45°F. We then saw a shot of a nursery in Tenerife with nice cereoid plants growing outside. One of these was the Brazilian *Micranthocereus violaciflorus* which forms a woolly cephalium containing tiny pink flowers which are produced in large quantities. It flowers in autumn and can produce a second flush in the following spring.

A plant dating from his Woolworths days was *Cephalocereus euphorbioides* (now *Neobuxbaumia euphorbioides*). It didn't do much for ages but once

he grew it at 45° to 50°F, it did a lot better. It's now hit the roof and the tip has bent. It forms a 2 inch flower which opens in the evening and is dead by the next morning. Their plant is now 7ft tall but it can flower at 3-4 feet. It is very rare in habitat since it grows near flat areas towards the coast and most of this area is being developed, so now you just find the odd plant here and there. Next was a Brazilian Arrojadoa featuring bunches of flowers along the stem. This forms a sort of cephalium with modified areoles but the stem carries on growing so you get a jointed appearance with flowers growing at the joints. They are shrubby plants, and are pretty easy to grow. We saw a more developed plant in Graham Charles' collection. Tony mentioned that there were probably only half dozen collections of large plants in the UK.

Tony mentioned that Notocacti became very popular due to new plant discoveries but these were only available in continental nurseries. So he went over to the Continent, on a trip with Michael Martin, and this is where he saw some of the newly imported columnar cacti. One with a dark cephalium was *Coleocephalocereus goebelianus* with stems 3-4 inch in diameter and 2 feet in length. The plant produced some flowers on the ferry on the way back. He grew it in a heated bed but it never took hold. The cutting took 2 years to produce any roots and it then died! Another Brazilian plant which grows near Rio de Janeiro is *Coleocephalocereus fluminensis* which has white flowers and golden spines. He got it from Uhlig and grew it for a few years before it rotted off.

*Calymmanthium* forms 4 angled stems and grows fast, almost like a tree. It has a strange flower and is one of the very primitive cacti. It comes from the North Peruvian valleys going towards the Amazon and needs a lot of heat (50°F). We saw a group of Espstoas at Freshacres and a *Epostoa lanata* with a cephalium. Tony mentioned that the growth of the cephalium distorts the stem and if you cut a section of the stem you can see that it goes into the plant for quite a depth. The formation of the cephalium can cause the stems to bend. Some of the stems have cephaliums on more than one side, this is perhaps due to the plant being moved. We saw a *Micranthocereus albicephalus* – he has a grafted plant of this but it is not showing a cephalium yet. A shot of Cephalocereus with a blue stem was taken in New Zealand.

Buiningias - when small – look like Melocacti but they form an intermediate form of Cephalium which we saw on *Buiningia brevicylindrica*. *Buiningia purpurea* has pink flowers like a Melocactus and

needs warm conditions - 50°F - and some water in the winter. We saw top cuts of *Backebergia militaris*, a plant which can grow to 40 feet in habitat. Unfortunately most of these would not root so they were just going to waste. We also saw top cuts of *Astrocephalocereus fluminensis* v. *victoriensis* from Uhlig.

*Peniocereus greggii* has an enormous tuber and is found in Arizona. It produces nice large flowers which also smell nice. The thin stems are impossible to find except for the flowers and scent. It is hard to grow in England, but other members of this genus are easier. *Peniocereus maculatus* from Mexico was in a 4 inch square pot and it forms a smaller tuber. The flowers are not as big as *P. greggii* but still 4-5 inches across and again scented. There are about a dozen species from Mexico and also a couple of south American ones.

*Lemaireocereus pruinosus* is another Woolworths plant and is now classified as a *Stenocereus*. It grows 25-30 feet tall and branches eventually. They grow very quickly if planted out. It did not flower well for them, perhaps due to getting too much water in the Winter. As they get bigger the skin changes to a normal green colour. We also saw a cristate form of *Polaskia chichipe*. The stem of *Stenocereus marginatus* is quite attractive and the areoles coalesce, forming white ridges.

A plant bought in a florist shop in Brighton and which started growing well after 4-5 years was *Cereus chalybaeus*. It is Argentinean and doesn't need extra high temperatures. They planted one of these near the door of the greenhouse when it was 2 feet tall. It is now growing up to the roof and has dozens of stems, which produces hundreds of flowers each year. The flowers are 6 inches in diameter and scented.

Now for the sad story of an Azureocereus. This too was planted in a bed and it grew on and on, flowering at 8 feet tall. The flowers are strange, black on the outside with a white tube on the inside. The following Christmas the plant had fallen over, having broken at a weak spot. He suspected plants grown in greenhouses do not harden enough and the stems often cannot support the full weight. He tried repotting the top but it never recovered. The stump does have three nice blue stems so they might still salvage something. A close up showed the pattern of the spines.

Next was a Jasmineocereus, which grows on the Galapagos islands. It is very rare and hard to cultivate. One plant in Tom Jenkins' collection was

sold off when he sold his nursery and it went to Japan for around £200. *Lemaireocereus thurberi* (the organ pipe cactus) has a dark green body and chocolate-brown areoles. It only grew to a couple of feet after 17 years, and the flower is not particularly exciting. *Cleistocactus flavescens* doesn't grow too tall and the flowers emerge at almost a right angle to the stem. It can be flowered in a 4 inch pot. The more common *C. strausii* needs to be larger before it flowers. *Cleistocactus vulpis-cauda* (named after a fox's tail) has soft spines and it can be stroked. It has purple pollen and is easy to grow. We also saw a hybrid of *C. strausii* x *C. samaipatanus* – the flower opens more than the normal *C. strausii*. A Seticleistocactus had a multi-toned flower with colours of red, yellow and purple. We also saw a clambering species with a red flower.

We saw *Oreocereus celsianus* growing in an 8 inch pot. They need good light to keep them tight and woolly. The plant was now 4-5 feet tall and still hasn't flowered – it needs extremely good light to do so. A mystery cereus from DeHerdt which no one has identified was like *Machocereus eruca* but erect. We also saw a good selection of Cerei for sale at Cok Grootsholten's nursery in Holland.

A *Micranthocereus flaviflorus* in the Canaries was covered in flowers – it would not have managed such a show in the UK. We also saw pink flowers on *Micranthocereus polyanthus*, which for them flowers almost every year. Their *Trichocereus pasacana* hadn't flowered despite being 20 feet in size. Perhaps this was due to getting too much moisture in the winter. *Morawetzia* (*Oreocereus*) *sericata* had almost formed a cephalium on top. It is variable and forms red, pinkish or orange flowers. *Oreocereus fossulatus* is taller growing and easier to flower. We also saw *Austrocephalocereus dybowskii* and a blue pilosocereus.

*Seticereus isocogonus* is a scrambling plant which has deep golden spines. It forms bristles in the flowering area. There was also a *Lophocereus schotti* (monstrose) in the background. We saw a close up of the stem of *Pachycereus pringlei*. As the plants get larger, the areoles run together and they also lose their spines completely.

The southern form of *Pilosocereus Palmeri* has blue stems and deeper coloured flowers. The Brazilian *Pilosocereus glaucochrous* grows tall thin stems. Another mexican Pilosocereus is *P. leucocephalus*. We also saw an attractive pilosocereus from Albert Buining's collection. Tony mentioned that Buining got poisoned by a insecticide and never recovered. We also saw a hybrid of *Cleistocactus strausii* x

*Chamaecereus silvestrii* – this flowers freely but seems to have inherited the worst features of both parents.

Quite often, you will get fruits forming on a Cereus, and we saw the fruits of *Harrisia martini*. The pulp is very sugary and goes mouldy quickly. Also mealy bug love getting in there between the fruit and the stem, so it is best to take the fruits off quickly once they ripen. A cleistocactus with fruits is a rarer sight - they have specialised pollinators such as hummingbirds. We also saw a borzicactus with fruit which contained orange pulp.

The Brazilian *Stephanocereus leucostele* is related to Arrojadoa. The flowers are bigger and greenish white. It is a horrible plant to grow in cultivation – it just doesn't like our conditions, and the featured plant was at Heidelberg. *Pilosocereus pentaedrophorus* has lovely red pulp in the fruits, which is a startling contrast to the blue stems.

Another group of plants which make attractive plants is *Eulychnia saint-pieana* which has flecks of white wool and black spines. Haageocereus is also interesting and we saw a golden spined specimen. Smaller clumping plants are easier to flower, and the flowers are like those of a Trichocereus. We saw a Haageocereus with enormous fruits some 2 inches across. *Cleistocactus tarijensis* has 4 inch long flowers. not as numerous as others but more showy. Another very popular plant is *Hildewinteria aureispina* – which is very floriferous – the flowers are very showy and it can be in bloom for 10 months of the year if you keep feeding and watering it. There are also several hybrids of it these days.

*Cleistocactus micropetalus* has tiny green flowers. We saw a *Stenocereus benekei* in the Canaries, which had lost all the white farina which is present on younger plants. It was a shrubby thing with masses of buds. His plant forms buds very late in the year and they don't open. We also saw an *Oreocereus selsianus* flowering in the UK, in Macclesfield. *Trichocereus chiloensis* is a hard spined plant and not easy to flower. We saw a close up of the body, which had been marked due to the plant's own spination., and we also saw the flower buds. *Harrisia jusberti* has white flowers. *Cleistocactus baumannii* grows with different spine colours and also some variation in the flower colour.

The woolly *Arrojadoa eriocaulis* has red flowers and is quite difficult to grow. *Harrisia bonplandii* has white flowers and flowers easily. There was a grafted Heterochocereus, and *Cephalocleistocactus ritteri* which can be found with either red flowers or

yellowish-green flowers. We also saw *Pilosocereus palmeri* with pale pink flowers on a 2 foot high plant. The flowers are pollinated by bats. *Harrisia fragrans* comes from Florida and has white flowers. *Echinopsis candicans* grows fairly low and forms mats of stems. We saw another shot of Espostoa growing at Fresh Acres, and their *Trichocereus pasacana*. This grew to 7 feet tall after 40 years in a 15 foot greenhouse so they thought it would be OK to plant out. It then started to grow at a foot a year. It comes from high altitude and doesn't mind the cold of our winters. It eventually grew to about 20 feet at which point a 4-foot section of the top fell off and did a lot of damage – it must have weighed a few hundred weight.

*Bolivicereus samaipatanus* has red flowers and is worth growing. A trichocereus was unknown until it flowered and proved to be *T. andagalensis*. It is from Argentina and is heavily spined and has a very nice flower. *Selenicereus hamatus* is a trailing plant and produces huge 12 inch flowers which last for an evening. A large plant can produce a hundred flowers in the summer, although they had to hack their plant back and it was now sulking.

We saw *Cleistocactus baumannii* with red flowers and an unknown Harrisia with 4-angled stems and beautiful 10 inch flowers. When in Brighton they grew a lot of Cerei in pots on a heated sand bed and these grew well due to the extra heat at the roots.. *Cleistocactus ayopayanus* - branches further up. has to be fairly large before it flowers. *Trichocereus schickendantzi* has nice flowers and can be flowered in a pot. At a bring and buy sale, he once bought a cristate *Carnegiea gigantea* (which is extremely rare) for just 50p. A plant which ought to be very robust but which is difficult to grow is *Stetsonia coryne*, a branching plant from Argentina capable of reaching 20 feet. We saw a Pseudopilocereus from an island off Venezuela - another plant from Venezuela is *Pilosocereus kanukuensis*. *Cephalocereus senilis* grown from seed and now 2 feet tall. The monstrose form of *Cereus peruvianus* can get very big – it was once very popular but is rare now. *Stenocereus dumortieri* has a bit of character about it and he managed to flower it once. We also saw plantings of Espostoa and Pilosocereus in California.

The Derek Garden Centre at Malta contains a fantastic collection of plants and we saw several of these. *Borzicactus tesselatus* was flowering in a 5 inch pot. Next we saw a Leocereus which he got from Robert Holt. He put it in a hanging basket where it grew well until he lost it one winter. The Brazilian *Arthrocereus microsphaericus* has lovely little highly scented flowers – it was being grown on

a graft and is something which can be grown in a pot in a small greenhouse.

We saw a thicker form of *Austrocephalocereus dybowskii* from Brazil, and examples of Hertrichocereus Buiningia, Bolivicereus and Arrojadoa. *Setiseria roezlii* (now a Borzicactus) in a hanging basket, *Cereus aethiops*, a Myrtillocactus, and a Stenocereus at Fresh Acres. We also saw a couple of Trixanthocereus in John Donald's collection – *T. senilis* + *T. blossfeldiorum*. *Pilosocereus languinosus* and *Peniocereus maculatus* are from Venezuela, and we saw Tillandsias growing on some of these plants. We also saw a short *Trichocereus tarimensis*, which does eventually grow larger. Suzanne mentioned the flowers have a beautiful smell which lasts until the next morning.

We finished with some pictures taken at the Phoenix Botanical Gardens Neobuxbaumia from Mexico were growing here despite the temperature sometimes going down to 20°F. We also saw *Pachycereus pringlei* and *Idria columnaris* in flower in the background. Also at Phoenix were plants like Carnegiea and South American species such as *Neocardenesia herzegoniana* and *Weberocereus* growing next to each other. There was also a rather spectacular cristate Carnegiea. The last plant featured was a *Pilosocereus tillianus* with golden spines.

Peter Down thanked Tony for showing us a good selection of plants which most of use would not have seen (or have the room to grow!).

Vinay Shah

[Ed – If you like Tony's talk, a couple of web sites you may find interesting are :  
<http://www.columnar-cacti.org/>  
<http://cactiguide.com/> ]

**Table Show Results**

There were 27 entries in the table show at the September meeting.

	<b>Cacti – Gymnocalycium Group</b>	<b>Succulents – Mesemb. Group</b>
Open	(1) A Sheader <i>Gymnocalycium</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Glottiphyllum oligocarpum</i>
	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Gymnocalycium horridispinum</i>	(2) P Clemow <i>Fenestraria aurantiaca</i>
	(3) T Radford <i>Gymnocalycium zegerrae</i>	(3) J Roskilly <i>Trichodiadema densum</i>
Intermediate	(1) P Clemow <i>Gymnocalycium mihanovichii albiflora</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Ophthalmophyllum schuldtii</i>
	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Gymnocalycium vatteri</i>	(2) P Clemow <i>Frithia pulchra</i>
	(3) P Clemow <i>Gymnocalycium tillianum</i>	(3) P Clemow <i>Faucaria tuberculosa</i>

*Ivor Biddlecombe*

Our Librarian Dot has provided a list of books which are being sold off from the Branch Library :

**Ex Library books for sale**

Cacti (Botanical aspects, descriptions & cultivation)	
Barthlott W	£2
The Mammillaria Handbook	
Craig R T	£3
Cacti and Succulents for the Amateur	
Glass & Foster	£2
The Cactus Handbook	
Haustein E	£3
The Study of Cacti	
Higgins V	£1
Succulent Plants	
Jacobsen	£3
The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Succulents	
Rowley G	£10

*Dot England*

**Branch Committee Meeting**

A branch meeting was held at 79 Shirley Avenue on September 22nd.

Branch finances remain in a healthy state, and it was agreed to buy the recently published Echeveria book.

The New Forest Show went well, although after the payment of costs for extra tickets and our stand, there wasn't much profit left over. We had been given a good position in the marquee this year.

David Neville had been attempting to contact Roy Trickett to see if he would be holding any shows at Broadlands next year. If those shows were not going to be held, we would need to find alternative events to take part in, in order to maintain contact with the public.

Due to the timing of Easter next year, our meeting hall will not be available for our normal meeting - hence the April 2009 meeting will be moved forward by a week. This means we will have two meetings in March and none in April.

David Neville was making progress with the branch Programme for 2009, and this would be finalised in the next few weeks.

Peter Down mentioned that he had heard that our Life President Doris Meager, who used to live in Portswood was now in a nursing home.

*Vinay Shah*

## Next Month's Meeting

The next meeting will be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November and will feature a talk by Jonathan Clark on the Canary Islands. Please note that this talk was originally scheduled for September, but Jonathan was unavailable at that time, which is why the talk was moved to November.

The November table show will feature the **Echinocereus Group** (Cacti) and **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 Echinocereus group consists of *Echinocereus*, *Morangaya* and *Wilcoxia*.

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

## Forthcoming Events

Sun 12 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Whitney	Succulent Show, Langdale Hall, Witney OX28 6AB. 10:30am-3:30pm
Fri 17 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Isle of Wight	"Sea to Sierra" – Doug Donaldson
Sat 18 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Portsmouth	"Mexico Parts 1 and 2" – Stuart Riley
Sat 18 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Reading	Branch Autumn Evening Show
Tue 4 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Southampton	"Canary Islands – Wild and Tamed" – Jonathan Clark
Sat 15 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Portsmouth	AGM
Sat 15 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Reading	"Cactus Hunting in the South of France" – David Neville
Fri 21 <sup>st</sup> Nov	Isle of Wight	"Agave, Haworthia and Aeonium" – Stuart Riley
Tue 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec	Southampton	AGM and Christmas Social

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