

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

British summer time ended a few days ago and I think we can say we've had a nice end to summer and start to winter. Of course we can start to expect some chilly days from now onwards!

A few haworthias, aloes and mesembs are flowering for me right now, but other than that, most things have stopped blooming. I am still thinking about whether to give the plants one more drink or let them commence their winter rest. Or perhaps I need to be selective and only water things like haworthias and a few of the mesembs.

Announcements

The **Zone 11 Quiz** will be hosted by the Isle of Wight Branch this coming Saturday (November 8th). We will be sending over a team for this event, if you are interested in coming along (we cross over using the hydrofoil and we will be picked up and taken to their meeting hall), please notify David Neville ASAP.

Next month is our **Annual General Meeting**, which will be followed by an American supper. As is usual, there will be no table show, library or plant sales at the AGM. However, please do bring along some food or nibbles for the American supper. There will also be a lucky dip "bran tub" where members can exchange gifts. Further details of this are given on the back page.

Nomination forms for the 2015 Committee are available on the front table. We would like to see some new faces join the committee, so if you are

interested in maintaining the success of the branch, please do have a chat with David or Dot.

Last Month's Meeting

Plants of Interest

Michelle Fox-Rousell had brought along some photos of her bonsai trees. She mentioned she had around 50-60 trees, ranging from seedlings to 60 year old plants. These were mostly English trees but she also had a few other types, such as Japanese White Pines. She invited anyone interested in the bonsais to have a chat with her during the break.

Mark Larter mentioned that he had noticed that on Ivor's membership card that Ivor joined the society 2 years before he was born! He felt rather intimidated to step into the role. He mentioned that he and Sue grow plants together and have a joint interest and compete by sometimes growing the same things. So the first pair of plants were *Aeonium tabuliforme*. His plant was much bigger.

He keeps detailed notes on all his plants, and these had both been obtained in June 2012. He potted his up this June, but in reality the plant was no different from when he had first got it. Meanwhile, Sue had replanted hers, and it had grown and flowered, and this was actually an offset from the original plant. So the first looks were deceptive. And if you do pot things up, they will grow. When it flowered, the plant formed a yellow flower spike and the flowering head will die.

The second plants were a couple of pots of *Notocactus magnificus*. This was a plant acquired a few years ago from a friend who didn't want it. It had been a head with lots of pups around. He chopped off the main head off and planted it - this had since flowered but it hadn't really grown at all. The rest of the offsets went into 4 pots and he had brought along one of those. Which was the nicer plant? The large single head or the collection of offsets? He thought the group of babies looked a lot nicer. He asked David Neville, would the plant with multiple heads be thrown out in a show, since it should only be a single plant in a pot? The final plant was an exercise in cactus abuse. It was an old

woody Copiapoa which had been in this pot for a year and a half. It was reasonable healthy and growing. The interesting thing is that before being potted up, it has spent 2 years out of the pot with no soil and went through a winter underneath a bench in a cold frame. So it had 2 years of neglect and no water - and yet it's been able to resume growing. This just shows how tough this genus is.

Tony started his talk by saying that he recognised of the faces in the audience, and thanked everyone for showing up. He mentioned that in the first half he would talk about and show some actual examples of how and what he had grown from seed, and then in the second half he would show about 50 slides of his setup, back in his greenhouse.

He posed a question to the audience - who grows seeds regularly? About half the people put their hands up. That was good to see. It is a cheap way of growing cacti and succulents. So why don't the others grow from seed? Is it space? Lack of knowledge? No one volunteered any answers. Going back a few years, magazines and journals always had articles on seed raising. Going back to 1946, 1956, 1961, each quarter had articles on seed raising, cultural notes, germination of cacti seeds, cultivation of succulents, seed raising, black seeds of Mammillaria. For some reason, these days, we don't have regular articles in the journal on seed raising. This is a pity really. There were two books he would recommend if growing from seed - *Succulents Propagation* by Attila Kapitany, Rudolf Schulz (2004). This has good pictures and hints on sowing small seeds and the basics. It is priced at \$23.95 (AUD). It is a good book. Another book is from the Amateur Digest, a Canadian organisation which is now defunct - *Cacti & Succulents from Seeds* by Marina Welham, (2000). This can be purchased and downloaded from a website. There is a section in that book about self-fertile plants, and he wasn't sure if there were any other lists of self fertile seeds, so it was a useful list. Give it a try - growing from seed.

So where do you get seeds from? The BCSS society does an annual list. The American society does a list too. The MSG issue list of seeds to members too. Even if you don't belong to these organisations, if you go to the Cactus and Succulent plant mall (<http://www.cactus-mall.com/>) there are listings of nurseries and seed sellers there.

If you keep within the EU you can buy cacti 1 and cacti 2 plants and seeds without restriction. Outside the EU you do need a permit. Most of the seed can be obtained within the EU. The Czech Republic is a good place. Once upon a time seed merchants used

to issue booklets of their seed listings but that's rare these days. Here's Mesa Garden's list from 2003. Now the list is online. Mesa Gardens has one of the best collections. This one from the Czech Republic (Cactus Hobby Bruno) is very good and it runs to 151 pages. Alice mentioned there was also another big supplier in Prague although she couldn't remember the name. David mentioned that he had never managed to place an order with Mesa Gardens and avoid VAT and customs handling charges. Unfortunately any imports from outside the EU above the value of £15 could be liable to be charged taxes, and there is also a sizeable Royal Mail handling fee of £8.50 to £10 if taxes are charged. Another good source of seeds is Ebay.

Tony said he doesn't have a cactus or succulent plant collection and only grows plants for sale. Around 20% of the plants he sells are from seeds. Originally he grew mostly cacti from seed, but now it's mostly mesembs. Assuming you want to grow from seed, how do you go about it? He asked when do people sow their seeds? February or March seemed to be the popular answer. Adrian Bailey said he uses a light box so starts his sowing in January. Tony said he sows his mesembs on the 1st March, and his cacti on the 1st January. He also doesn't use any special lighting, he didn't feel that it made any difference. David asked didn't he usually have a horrible headache on the 1st of January? How do people sow their seeds? Ivor said he found lithops did better on the windowsill - he bought a special propagator and found the results very poor, perhaps the seedlings prefer the change of temperatures one gets on a windowsill compared to the constant heat in a propagator. Mark Larter said he had tried using heat but now doesn't and just sows as soon as the seeds arrive in the post. The pots are placed in the greenhouse or a windowsill and are protected in polythene bags, and as soon as the succulents get going, he starts opening the bags. Ivor also uses a poly bag. Ivor did say that with Euphorbias he found the roots wouldn't go down into the compost and for those he tends to use vermiculite.

Tony passed around the Kakteen Piltz 2012 and Mesa Gardens 2003 seed lists. Other suppliers he has used recently include Kohres, Cactus Hobby Brno, Frik Du Plooy's. The latter provides seeds still in the flower capsule, so that you don't really know how many seeds you'll end up having. Ivor asked "how do you get the seed out from the capsules?" Tony said he used a sieve from John Lewis and then grind the capsule and you can tip the seeds out. Ivor said his approach was to soak the capsule in warm water and then use a tooth brush to scrape the seeds out. Tony said some people plant mesembs in autumn, but he hasn't tried that.

For seeds, in the greenhouse, you don't need heat at the top of the greenhouse or all over the greenhouse, you really just need it at the pots and don't want to waste energy heating the air. He achieves this by placing a 2 inch thick slab of polystyrene on the staging and then the aluminium sheet with embedded heating wires on top. On top of this go the gravel trays, and he places capillary matting in the trays. The polystyrene stops the heat going downwards. He uses 6cm pots and places them in a bag. The soil he uses is a 50-50 mix of John Innes seed compost and vermiculite. You don't want any feed in the compost. He's tried cat litter, John Innes + cat litter, and cat litter + vermiculite and came back to his current mix as the best. The others just didn't have the consistency or retained the wrong amount of moisture.

He found an old book of his from the 80's which recorded how many seeds he had been sowing when he had a collection. It was only when he 10 years way from retirement that he decided he enjoyed seed raising the most and so had a big greenhouse built and had it cater for seed raising. The last 4 foot section is kitted out with bubble wrap and the glass is whitened to keep direct sun out, and he uses the aluminium panels for heat.

If you're buying seed in, you will probably receive it in a cardboard box. You may also need a listing of your order since quite often the sellers only mark the catalogue reference number on the seed packet. With the Czech suppliers, one has to decipher their writing - they have a fancy "1" and also put a line through the number 7. If he has a 100 seed lot, he splits it into two lots of 50. The large trays he uses holds about 120 of the pots. He puts the soil mix into the pot and damps down using another pot to get the surface flat. He then puts the pot in the trays then puts water in the tray and an hour later it's soaked up as much as water as it needs. He then places the pots on old newspapers to absorb any excess moisture - "The Times" is best for this! Then put your label in the soil and tap in the seeds. If you do have too many seeds you may get overcrowding but the plants will use up the available area. With fine seeds like Lithops it's hard to know how many seeds you are working with, so you just have to guess. He showed an example tray of plants he had sown in March last year. He then places the seed pot into the bag and seals the bag. He only leaves the pot in the bag for a short time, not 6 months or a year like some other people do. As soon as any seeds have come up, he removes the pot from the bag. He prefers to harden them off as soon as you can. Don't worry about the seeds that have not yet germinated in the pot, they will soon follow. He passed around more examples of the size of the

plants after a year and a half. He also showed some of the results from the capsules received from Frik Du Plooy and sown in March this year. Some pots had too many, others had some bare patches. A quarter seed tray made of solid plastic was warping due to the pressure from the little seedlings. With Lithops cultivars like *L. optica* Rubra and *L. cv* "Green Soapstone" you can get some seedlings which are not true to type and you have to prick them out. However, they had all done well after 8 months of growth. With the cacti, in March he turns the heating off, at that point the strength of the sun is good enough to germinate the seed, and the lower temperatures at night might benefit them.

Mike Shaw commented on the vermiculite, the flakes were smaller than what he was used to. Tony said this was a horticultural grade which tends to be finer. You can probably buy it at some garden centres. Dot said she had found some online, and Alice said she had found some in Wilkinsons, who are also good for gravel and seed trays. The small green Stewarts quarter trays he was using were purchased on the Internet. He pricks out the plants after a year or two, depending on demand from his customers.

At the Bristol Branch, there used to be a show class for seedlings, and Tony won this for 7 years in a row. When he stopped entering, no-one else would enter either, so they got rid of the class and gave him the trophy to keep. When he makes out the labels for his plants, he also put the details in a record book - he has one for cacti and one succulents. He records the name of plant, nursery from where the seeds were obtained, and the date of sowing. These records also help if the label breaks or fades. He does not bother recording the germination status but over time, he had worked out which seed suppliers are the better ones in terms of seed quality. Mesa Gardens (Steven Brack) and Brno are amongst the best suppliers. BCSS seed doesn't always germinate well, the results are variable, even though they try and secure fresh supplies each year. Since a complaint from some people is that they have no space to sow seeds, one idea to overcome this is to run a wire along the eave of the greenhouse, put some washers on the line and then hang the plastic bags through the washers. You can wait until April for enough heat. When it comes to watering, where he lives it's hard water, but the plants do not seem to be affected even though there was the white chalky build up on the outside of the pot. David Neville mentioned that Ken Burke of Pete and Ken Cacti used to have pots hanging down in bags - and they didn't used to touch the bag for 12 or 18 months and then just cut a hole in the side of the bag. Tony admitted that some people do keep

the plants in bags for extended periods, but he gets them out right away. Responding to a question from the audience, he confirmed that he did not provide any feed for the seedlings whatsoever, and John Innes seed compost contains minimal amounts too. Michelle mentioned said she used to raise a lot of seed and they used to come up OK, but then used to damp off despite her using copper fungicide. She then got some seed from Chiltern seeds and their advice was to use de-ionised water and she started using that everything was fine again. Tony mentioned he had no problems with green algae growing in the pots. He avoids using peat which can attract sciara fly, a few do disappear, but with so many seedlings coming up, losing one or two isn't a big concern. David mentioned there is a small amount of peat in the John Innes mix. Geoffrey Penrose mentioned he uses a sieve to remove any lumps which might be present in the compost.

Resuming in the second half, Tony mentioned that he had 50 or so pictures to show, to illustrate some of the points he had made in the 1st half. He showed one end of the greenhouse - there was large sized bubble wrap, and 2 sets of shelves. The bottom shelf had heated cables, the top half was for more mature plants which didn't need the heat. In the main greenhouse he uses white shading to restrict the light and this is rather messy to apply. The seedlings are pricked into cells which are placed in seed trays, each holding 60 plants, all individually named. One of the pictures showed a tea mug - well, you need something to keep you going. A picture of the seeds when they come in showed some just marked with a reference number. If he has 100 seeds, he writes 2 name labels out since the seeds will be split into two lots of 50. The seed tray which sit on the heating cable also has capillary matting in. The hard water marks the pots but doesn't seem to affect the plants. We saw the shading in the main greenhouse. He uses 3 x 3kw heaters which are on all the time. In the summer they blow cool air and in the winter they'll blow warm air. He uses "Hot Box" heaters and the first ones lasted about 10 years of solid operation. We saw the aluminium sheet with the embedded heating cable, and the 2" thick sheet of polystyrene which he had painted dark green. A small tray with the cable dangling out actually contained a sensor for the heating. The heater is on all the time and he runs it from 1st January to 1st March. It was controlled by a "Bio Green" thermostat. On a secondary thermostat the plastic had cracked and the control knob fell off but he knows it's still working from the clicks it emits. The gravel trays hold about 120 plants and you can get 2 lots (240 plants) in and a total of 4 of these groups, so he can sow into 960 pots in total. The heating cable is available from sources, including Ebay.

Near the top shelving was a strange item which no one recognised. He mentioned that his birthday is on 24th January, and one day his wife said to him she'd got him a birthday present and it was out in the greenhouse. He went out there and couldn't see anything. She told him to go to the end. Well it was an intercom, allow communication between the greenhouse and the house. She was fed up of people phoning up and asking for him when he was out in the greenhouse and this would make life easier. Of course it works the other way too. When he has visitors and wants cups of tea, he can now call her from the greenhouse. He's never got another present since! A picture showed some labels and some seed packets from the Czech Republic which were like tissue paper, and had just the number written on. If writing on this, you need to use a pen where the ink doesn't spread.

We saw some pictures of pots of seedlings, where a few had come up, but at the back of the group there was no germination yet. As soon as one or two green blobs show, just take them out of the bag, the rest of the seeds will follow soon after. Most things usually germinate within a couple of weeks. The next picture showed the pots being soaked and then standing on newspaper, which appeared to be the Daily Mail. Sometimes while doing all this, he was to use the path to the greenhouse to lay out the trays and pots. Accidents can happen and sometimes he knocks the pot over. Once he came home from holiday and found he had left the door open - a bird had gone in and 120 *Dianthus* seedlings all labelled in pots had been knocked around by the bird. The seedlings were impossible to tell apart at that age and he had to chuck them out. Now he has fitted netting over the door to prevent birds from getting in. A lady does his watering for him when he's away and she's asked "Aren't you scared of the foxes getting in?" Well he is! Next was a small metal tray of the type you get in an oven. He uses that to soak the trays in.

Tony mentioned the vermiculite / John Innes mix doesn't sag at all, especially in the first year. It does perhaps drop a fraction at first use but then stays put. The other mixes he's tried all sagged. David said he had never tried vermiculite in all the years he has been growing seeds. What's the benefit? Tony mentioned it aerates the soil mixture, and is inert. He hasn't tried perlite which is cheaper. We saw a picture of his left hand tamping down the soil in one pot. He just uses another pot to do this. We also saw sale plants some of which were just 2-3 years old. These were potted up and priced up, and ready for sale. He uses 6 cm pots. He used to use white plant name labels which were available in a couple of different sizes, but the wholesaler ran out,

and now he uses orange plastic labels which are flexible and which do not crack. Mike Shaw mentioned there are some pot designs now incorporate a label holder and the label can be used to handle the pot.

Next were pictures of this year's sowing, taken in March. This showed some of the same trays which he had brought to the meeting today. In one case nothing much had come up and in another the plants had grown really well. In the 1980s, he used to put the seedlings into 2" BEF pots and sell them locally for 50p each. If he had known that sometimes the BEF pots would be dearer than the plants they contain, he would have kept them all! There are other square pots available from other sources. Alice mentioned that there is a line of Czech ones which come in a good range of sizes, and she's had them for 4-5 years now and they appear to be fine. Tony mentioned he had a couple of boxes of the BEF pots coming in, and he will be listing them on his website, <http://www.tonyironsacti.co.uk/>. He had sowed 90 quarter trays. He also had obtained 5 capsules of Muiria seeds - these had come up and so he will see if he can get them through their first winter. A question from the audience asked whether he keeps his seedlings moist in the winter? Tony said there was no need, the plants in question were ok due to the early sowing. Sometimes, Lithops may need a small teaspoon of water if they look dehydrated, but one shouldn't water if you are in a cold greenhouse.

Another reason for taking them out of the bags is that he wants them to be hardy not soft and lush. Adrian said his seedlings were smaller and looked nothing like as good as Tony's, so he felt there was a greater need to water in that situation. Tony suggested that if people didn't like opening bays relatively early in the plant's life, he suggested splitting the seed into 2 batches and opening one bag and leaving the other closed, and then compare results across both groups.

David said that Tony's greenhouse conditions made it resemble a giant propagator. For the soil mix, he does use vermiculite and John Innes. He doesn't like it doesn't like it too moist and prefers to be able to "pour" the soil straight into the pots. His plastic bags are 12 years old and they are still usable. He doesn't bother sterilizing the bags, doesn't spray, doesn't use any fertilizer and doesn't get any green. He does keep the fans running all the time. He changed the fan heaters a couple of years ago since they were at the end of their life. Because of the cost of electricity, he did try not running the fans all day long for a period of 3 months, but he found a lot of

seedlings keeled over so he has gone back to running the fans permanently.

Being crowded together with heat from underneath helps conserve the heat. We saw a close up of one of the heaters. A close up of the heater showed it to be a HotBox featuring a label with a SO49 postcode and address in Lymington. The company now operates from near Huddersfield. It's a good recognised name for greenhouse heaters. We saw some elongated plants - these might have been in the bag too long, but they should sort themselves out eventually. We saw the cacti which were being pricked out. These would go into the main greenhouse. He had about 5000 seedling plants about an inch off the floor, so there's some ventilation. Above that is the main benching and then there's upper layer benching which is half the width of the main benches. We saw some *Dinteranthus* picked out into pots. We saw some nice plants of *Eulychnia saint-pieana* which were hairy even when young, followed by a gibbaeum.

Over in Europe - the commercial growers do things on a slightly different scale thanks to their bigger greenhouses. We saw a view of the one of the commercial greenhouse which has a huge number of plants. Some are so large that they use bicycles or disabled scooters to move around. There are so many plants it is difficult to see everything. Occasionally you see a few stray plants, such as columnar plants growing amongst smaller plants. The seedlings are grown in trays which are 4 inches deep which is more than you'd expect. There were also yellow sticky fly traps to catch sciara flies - some growers do use peat based compost and others use coir. Tony said he uses 25% coir in his plant mix. David mentioned that most of the nurseries do not sow seeds in coir - they tend to use a peat-based compost mixed with grit and sand.

To obtain seed - go to any search engine and look for cacti seed. You can buy packs of various sizes. A page mentioning "special mix" showed a picture of grafted plants! Some places are better than others in terms of seed quality. If you are new to seed raising - you can always try sowing some of your own seed first. The cactus and succulent plant mall is a good resource, but a load of stuff is not listed there. When he first went to Holland and was given a list of nurseries, he found that only 20% of them existed or had the right address or phone number. A lot of sources aren't listed. Even the coach trips that sometimes go over go to different sets of nurseries.

Showing the plant mall listing of Czech Republic suppliers, it showed which one supplied plants or seeds or both. The top listing was Cactus Hobby

Brno. Alice didn't see the one from Prague which supplies succulents seed only. On the right we could see all the other countries listed on the plant mall. In Malta, John Gauci runs Cactus Heaven and has a selection of seed - he does offer quite a few *Astrophytums*. We saw a picture of some of the brochures - a lot of them just have online lists now. All supply smaller quantities, suitable for hobbyists. Now is a good time of the year for the seed catalogues to be updated and he's recently been notified of new lists by a couple of the sellers. So go online now and take a look. He prefers working with a printed-out list. For seeds ordered now, delivery would be around Christmas. He advised getting the *Succulents Propagation* book and adding it to our library.

We saw a picture of his record book and he was on his 7th page of *Lithops* seeds. *Lithops* cv "Embers" sold out straight away on the Internet. He had some recent Cole numbers too - it is hard to get hold of the newer items. Frik Du Plooy is from South Africa and he has lists in Rand or USD. Right now the pound is very strong against the Rand so you get seeds at very good prices when ordering in wholesale quantities. *Lithops* "Green Soapstone" produced one-third green plants and two-thirds brown - he sowed them this February. He keeps one log book for succulents and one for cacti, to keep things easier. We saw some of the sowings from last spring, including last year's *Lithops*. Some of the cultivars vary a lot - cv "Top Red" varies a lot and others are true to type. cv "Hot Lips" is another cultivar which varies a lot. The number of seeds from a capsule varies a lot, so a relatively few seedlings in some pots is not down to germination, just fewer seed. With *Lithops optica rubra* he's had trouble in the past, but this year, seed from Frik Du Plooy came up lovely. *Lithops* seed can last 10 years.

Tony mentioned that being October, he would not be watering the seedlings any more this year. A picture of some mixed mesembs were all grown plants from Mesa Garden's seed. Tony ended his talk by mentioning that he loves *Glottiphyllum*, with the way that the leaves fan out and the massive yellow flowers in the middle. John Watmough calls them grottyphyllums - but he doesn't agree at all.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 16 entries in the October table show.

	Cacti – Echinocereus	Succulents – Lithops
Open	(1) I Biddlecombe <i>E. brandegeei</i>	(1) I Biddlecombe <i>L. olivacea</i>
	(2) B Beckerleg <i>E. nivosa</i>	(2) T Smith <i>L. fulviceps</i>
	(3) -	(3) T Smith <i>L. pseudotruncatella</i>
Intermediate	(1) I Biddlecombe <i>E. rigidissimus</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>L. optica rubra</i>
	(2) I Biddlecombe <i>E. gentryi</i>	(2) I Biddlecombe <i>L. optica rubra</i>
	(3) B Beckerleg <i>E. delaetii</i>	(3) T Smith <i>L. fulviceps</i>

Ivor Biddlecombe

Bill Chase - Portsmouth Branch

I am very sorry to report that Bill Chase from Portsmouth Branch passed away recently. Bill had been a member of Portsmouth Branch since the 1960s and was one of their leading members for many years. Although not so active in recent years he used to give some very entertaining talks, and along with his good friend Bill Hedger he gave several talks to our branch over the years that we met in the Allotment Hall in Bangor Road. As they always performed as a double act they were affectionately known as 'the two Bills'. (Bill Hedger is still alive and well, although he has not attended branch meetings for many years, and he was at the recent funeral.)

I first met Bill Chase in 1977, just 2 days after passing my driving test at the age of 17, when I attended my first BCSS meeting at Portsmouth. As a fresh face at the meeting Bill greeted me and introduced me to a number of the people present. He sat with me throughout that first visit to the branch, and we remained friends over the years. Ivor Biddlecombe knew Bill for many years before I even joined the society, and it was Bill who encouraged Ivor to get involved in cactus and succulent shows, resulting in Ivor being our branch Show Manager for decades!

Although most of our current members won't have met Bill, there are still a handful of Southampton

members who will remember him with affection. Ivor and I last met and chatted with Bill at the Portsmouth Branch spring show in June 2013 when he came along for a couple of hours. The funeral service was held in Havant last week and Ivor and I attended to pay our respects, and those of Southampton Branch, to one of the local characters of the succulent plant hobby.

David Neville

the Veld' (Hammer), **'Flora of Southern Africa'** (Court) and **'Mesembs of the World'** (Smith).

Sue Wilson

Bookworm Corner

Well how unseasonably warm has it been, it seems like we are still in high summer. However, saying that a week before the meeting will probably mean it is raining stair-rods and very chilly as you read this!

The garden seems to continuously full of hungry starlings, house sparrows and collared doves. The black-headed gulls and pheasants wait impatiently on the other side of the garden fence each morning for a luxury breakfast of soaked bread, left over potatoes and bird seed. Sometimes it feels like we are a bird hotel and not the only ones, as the sparrowhawk is a regular visitor for a tasty warm dove or sparrow breakfast!

A little bit of colour is still appearing in the greenhouse with a few lithops, conophytums, faucaria and the odd mammillaria flower. At least the glass is nearly all back in making it much more pleasant checking cacti on a windy day. The great move back indoors has nearly been completed with columnar cacti too tall for the hot box in the greenhouse now arriving into the bedroom and looks like many more smaller fellows will be joining them before the week is out!

'ENJOYED THE LECTURE? THEN ENJOY THE BOOK!'

October

Tony Irons gave us an interactive talk on 'growing from seed'. Books to look at from the library include **'The Complete book of cacti & succulents'** (Hewitt), **'Cactus and succulents'** (Mace) and **'Growing cacti & other succulents in the conservatory & indoors'** (Bell). All of these books cover hints and tips on seed raising.

November

Our very own David Neville takes the limelight this month with his presentation on 'South Africa and Namibia'. Plenty of mesembs should be seen so have a look at the following books **'Lithops – flowering stones'** (Cole) **'Lithops – Treasures of**

Next Month's Meeting

Our final meeting of the year will be held on December 2nd. This will be our **Annual General Meeting** followed by the **Christmas Social**.

After receiving reports from branch officers, it will be time for some food and refreshments! Drinks will be provided by the branch, but please do bring along some items of food for the buffet table.

There will also be a "bran tub" lucky-dip. Simply bring along a wrapped present (suggested value is £2 or thereabouts) and place it in the tub at the start of the meeting. Later in the evening you'll get a chance to take a present out of the tub.

In order to give the Committee members a chance to participate in the festivities, there will be no plant sales, sundries sales, table show or library at the December meeting.

Forthcoming Events

Sat	8 th	Nov	Isle of Wight	Zone 11 Quiz (Hosted by Isle of Wight Branch)
Sat	15 th	Nov	Portsmouth	Highlights of South Africa & Namibia (David Neville)
Tue	2 nd	Dec	Southampton	Annual General Meeting, followed by Christmas Social/American Supper
Sat	6 th	Dec	Portsmouth	Annual General Meeting & Christmas Social
Sat	13 th	Dec	Isle of Wight	Annual General Meeting followed by American Supper

Branch website: <http://www.southampton.bcsc.org.uk>
 Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/southamptonbcsc>