

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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## Editorial

This past week has seen a couple of frosts - of course it's not too of a surprise for this to be happening since we are in December now. I stopped watering my plants a few weeks ago, and although on some days the temperatures are still warm enough to consider watering, it's just not worth the risk of a cold night.

## Announcements

Our **next meeting** will be held on **7<sup>th</sup> January** and will consist of **short talks by branch members**. We would like members to bring along photos or plants and talk about them for a few minutes. Pictures can be brought along on slides or a memory stick, and should be prefixed with 001, 002, 003 etc. so that they are shown in the correct order. Please let David Neville know ASAP if you would like to present.

The **branch programme for 2020** has been prepared and is available from the front table.

The branch's **financial accounts** for the year ending September 2019 will also be handed out during today's AGM.

## Last Month's Meeting

### Chairman's Report

2019 has been a good and eventful year for the Southampton branch of the BCSS. We celebrated this 65<sup>th</sup> Sapphire Anniversary year at our May meeting with a superb two-tier cake cut by our founding member Peter Down. Peter set the branch up in 1954 by summoning up local support in many ways, apparently including knocking at doors of houses with potted plants in their windows! He still regularly attends our branch meetings. Sadly, this year has also seen the death of Geoff Card in June. He was an active supporter of our branch for many years including a period as Chairman. My own particular memory of Geoff was that not only was he kind and helpful but also he was the most smartly dressed person at our meetings. He is sadly missed.

Our programme of meetings, shows and visits has gone well with positive feedback from many people. Attendances at our branch meetings are now nudging 40 and Vinay prints and distributes more of the free branch Newsletters at our meetings. Our invited speakers invariably compliment us on our organisation and the large audiences they address, often saying they would be pleased to come again. Thank you David for arranging our yearly programme. The two big events that we participated in with cactus/succulent displays and plant sales were the New Forest and Romsey shows. At both of these our branch was awarded a Gold Medal and cash for the displays plus a best pot plant award as well at the New Forest Show. These shows are put on by a small group of committee and branch members and their considerable efforts are very much appreciated. Socially we enjoyed Alice's Garden Party once again and also our branch annual dinner in November.

Finally, as I write this I am looking forward to our Christmas Social evening to happily round off our year. With many thanks to every one of the branch committee for their unstinting work throughout the year together with support from some branch members at shows and meetings which has enabled our programme to run smoothly and successfully. Finally, thank you to the many branch members and

others that support our meetings and make it all enjoyable and worthwhile.

I wish you all the very best for Christmas and 2020.

*Adrian Bailey*

### **Secretary's Report**

How quickly the year passes, and already it is time to look back and assess Branch activities during 2019. We have barely had a meeting this year at which we have not welcomed new people to our meetings – whether they be newly recruited BCSS members, or people who have an interest in our plants but want to check us out before they decide to join the Society. A number of the new people are regularly attending meetings, but others have only visited us once or twice, so I am wondering whether there was something about the meetings that they didn't enjoy. Could I just take this opportunity to encourage everyone to make a special point of welcoming and chatting to new people when they turn up at our meetings, to help ensure that they feel comfortable and welcome – walking into a room full of strangers is not easy for most of us!

I have made it known in the past that I would like to stand down as Secretary if we can find someone else willing to take on the job. It is the biggest and most time consuming of posts on the Branch committee, and is probably best suited to people who have already served on the committee, but so far there have been no offers. I will carry on in the post if there is no alternative, but I intend to continue delegating other people to take on some of the range of tasks that I undertake. If more people were to take on some responsibilities in helping the Branch it would reduce my workload, and it would be healthier for the future of our group. You don't need to be on the Committee to help the Branch, and assistance from Peter Bircher and Miranda Stevenson with the raffle, and Ben Turner with the admin of the New Forest Show, are already making my job less onerous. If you would like to help more with the running of the Branch, please have a chat with me at meetings, or you can phone or email me (contact details included in every Newsletter).

The programme for 2020 should be printed and ready for distribution at the December meeting, and PDF versions will be emailed to everyone soon. Hopefully you will all be able to come along to most of the meetings next year, and if you do come along can you please make a special effort to bring some plants to support the Table Show classes, support for which has fallen in recent years. It is ironic that we have more people attending meetings than ever in

the past, and yet support for the Table Show has dropped.

I would like to thank all members of the Committee for their help and assistance over the past year, and particularly Vinay Shah who does a lot behind the scenes to ensure that our Branch runs smoothly. I would also like to thank everyone else who helps in any way, including setting up or packing up the chairs and tables, cleaning the hall, helping with refreshments, donating raffle prizes, etc.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our meetings next year, and in the mean time I wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

*David Neville*

### **Treasurer's Report**

I would like to thank Colin and Lorraine Bieleckus for yet again completing our annual accounts in such a quick time. The 2018/2019 financial year has been really good for the branch funds. Not only did we manage to clear last year's deficit of £44, we have actually realised a profit of £351. This can be greatly attributed to an exceptional profit at the New Forest Show. The rest of the profit is all thanks to continued support by new and existing members. Figures are up across the board (Catering, raffle, donations, plants sales & library) while we have kept overall expenses the same as in previous year.

The Branch continues to maintain a very comfortable savings and current account balance of £8,229.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the best throughout the festive season and look forward to seeing you all next year.

*Alice Jankovec*

### **Display Manager's Report**

#### **New Forest Show July 30<sup>th</sup> – August 1<sup>st</sup>**

This year we initially thought we would not be able to participate at this show since David Neville would be away and would not be able to organise the tickets and no one on the committee was willing to take on the job. However Ben Turner heard this and agreed to work with the committee and take on the job of organising us for the event. I am willing to help with the display but am finding it harder to carry the larger plants and put up the back cloth for the display, fortunately Ted Smith and his grandson Zack were a big help with plants and the back cloth. This year we had a very large number of sale plants, due to the unfortunate death of Geoff Card. Dot,

Ted, Bruce and myself all brought plants which gave me a good selection to put on the display. I am pleased to say we won a gold medal and the Helmut Gimmeler trophy for the best plant in flower at the show, and for the first time we had a cash prize for our display. and the sale of plants over the three days was good so it was well worth doing. Please accept my thanks to all that helped put on this show.

### **Romsey Show 14<sup>th</sup> September**

Bruce, Dot, Ben, my brother Peter and I all arrived at 2pm on Friday to set up the display. The weather was dry and sunny this year, unlike last year. Our display was in a different position in the marquee this year, with the end with the sale table at the back wall. This turned out to be good as our cars were parked near to the display and this made it easy to load and unload the plants. Peter was a big help as he did most of the stapling of the back cloth. The weather on Saturday was a bit overcast but mainly dry. Plant sales was steady most of the day. Our display won a gold medal and we also won £100 prize money which helped the branch funds.

### **Branch Table Show**

The support for this year's table show was low, much the same as last year. Several new members entered once and I hope they will enter more classes in the future. I wish we had more support as the table show, giving members a chance to see some of the plants that we all grow. I did wonder if we had different format for the table show, would we have more entries? Please let me know if you can think of a way we can improve on how we run the show.

Best wishes for 2020 - good growing and lots of table show entries!

*Ivor Biddlecombe*

### **Librarian's Report**

The increase last year in the borrowing fee to 30p per book per month does not seem to have reduced branch members' book borrowing activity, and of course increased the small amount of cash added to the branch reserves. After last year's flurry of acquisitions, we did not buy any new books this year. But branch member Ian Acton did donate another book, or rather a classic three-volume work on the cactus family, "A Handbook of Succulent Plants", by Jacobsen (English edition, 1960). Somehow this was listed in my report for last year's AGM, despite not being added to our official stock list until later. In recognition of this and previous donations of books and plants, Ian was presented with a bottle of single-malt scots whisky at a recent branch meeting. Ian was suitably appreciative, but sadly (i) it was only a half bottle, to avoid any

danger of being investigated or suspected of bribery by the Charity Commissioners, and (ii) Ian promised to enjoy it all himself and not to share it with us.

The library contains approximately 100 books, including some which I don't normally put out on display each month. If you see something in the library list (available on the library or main chairman's table, or on the branch web-site at <http://www.southampton.bcss.org.uk/library.html>) that you'd like to look at or borrow, please talk to me during a meeting or contact me by email ([richard@rjwhite.tk](mailto:richard@rjwhite.tk)) or phone (01425 653840) or text (07751 937060), so that I can dig it out of the cupboard or make sure it's on the library table at the next meeting. I will update the library list for the January 2020 meeting, and ask Vinay to update the branch web-site accordingly.

If you have any books on loan from the library, please remember to return them at the next meeting. We will offer for sale a few duplicate or outdated books at branch meetings during 2020, starting at the January meeting. Conversely, if you have any recent books not already in our library that you no longer require, we may be able to find them a good home where they are cared for and let out on monthly leave to interested readers.

I wish you all Rapt Reading as well as Good Growing in 2020!

*Richard White*

### **Plant Sales Officer's Report**

There was no Countryside Day at Sparsholt this year; We do not know whether it will be held next year or if it is permanently cancelled.

At the New Forest Show takings were £1975 which is a record by a big margin, we normally take £1300 to £1400 there. There was no competition this year – normally there is a nursery in the marquee - which obviously helped, but I am not sure that is the only reason for the high sales.

Our second show was at Romsey where we took £1093 which is also a record, we took £845 last year but in previous years we were only taking just over £500. It looks as if we are seeing a surge in interest in cacti and succulents; long may it continue.

Sales at branch meetings have been good, as they were last year. We have continued to get a number of different sellers which adds extra interest to the sales table. I would like to thank all of you who brought sales plants to branch meetings and other events.

For those of you who do not know, anyone can bring plants for the sales table, just make sure each plant has a price label with your initials on it. We charge 10% commission at branch meetings and 15% at shows.

*Bruce Beckerleg*

### **Publicity Officer's Report**

The BCSS has launched a re-brand in terms of logo and our Facebook page and website will reflect this soon. Currently the Facebook page has over 900 "likes" and we occasionally have contact from people looking to find out about plants, or join our meetings. In terms of opportunities for free listings in the local press this is somewhat diminished due to the pressures on local councils and newspapers alike. We continue to find ways to spread the word though. As well as our own Facebook page the BCSS Facebook page and Instagram is worth a follow if you're into Social Media. The main Society page has over 11,000 likes! We will have some material available in the new year to help promote the Branch, but as ever it is the members helping out at Shows etc. that is the best way to spread the word.

If you have any ideas for ways to help in this regard don't hesitate to let me know.

*Robin Caddy*

### **Newsletter Editor's Report**

The branch had continued to enjoy good meeting attendances throughout the year and I've increased the newsletter print run to ensure everyone has a printed copy. If you fail to receive a newsletter at a particular meeting, please note that copies are published and can be downloaded from the branch website.

I continue to update our home page with details of the upcoming meeting a few days ahead of the meeting - I hope members find this useful. With winter almost here, if the weather is particularly bad, and a meeting needs to be cancelled, this will be announced by an email from the secretary as well as on the website, as soon as is practical.

The programme of events for 2020 has been prepared for David and the branch website will be updated to show next year's meetings and events within a week or so. Once I receive Portsmouth and Isle of Wight's 2020 programmes, I will also update the Zone 11 page.

Best wishes to everyone for the coming year .

*Vinay Shah*

## **Last Month's Meeting**

### ***Agaves for the Collector.***

Kathy said both she and Keith had been growing Cacti and Agaves for very many years. She had known Derek Bowdery (who passed away 2 years ago) very well and she first met him in the 1980s when she joined Croydon Branch. He used to give her cuttings and offsets of Agaves and when they grew too large for her small greenhouse, she had to give them away. When she met Keith he too was growing Agaves and he was upset she had given them away since he didn't have some of them! They grew lots of big agaves and the biggest reached the top of the greenhouse. When you buy them in a 4" pot, you just don't realize how large some of them can get. Some of the ornamentals may remain small and well behaved, others are very vigorous and can easily get to amazing sizes.

Keith mentioned that like a lot of hobbies, things start off small but then get out of hand. He's had to weasel it down to the *Agave parryis* which are generally well behaved. *Agave potatorum Kichijokan* is also well behaved. He's got one that he got in the 1990s and it looks like it will flower - he doesn't know anyone else who's flowered it yet, so he's looking forward to the event and to see the flowers. At this time of the year, everything goes into the greenhouse, under the staging, apart from the very largest plants. It takes them about a week of hard work to do this.

One of the best books on Agaves is *Agaves of Continental North America* by Howard Scott Gentry - it tends to deal with the larger plants and mature plants, so not easy to use with young specimens. John Pilbeam's book *A Gallery of Agaves* is perhaps easier to use and user-friendly and good for the amateur. A more recent book is *Agaves: Living Sculptures for Landscapes and Containers* by Greg Starr - it's perhaps even more useful than John's book and some of the photographs are superb. A newer book that came out 2 years ago from the German Society is *Die welt der Agaven* - it is only available to German / Austrian / Swiss Cactus society members who are only allowed to buy one copy, so it's not easy to get hold of. It has German text but it's not difficult to use once you learn a few words. *Chasing Centuries: The Search for Ancient Agave Cultivars Across the Desert* by Ron Parker came out at the start of 2019 and it focuses on plants cultivated by the native Indians. It tells you the uses of the plants - these plants were a source of thread, fibre, needles, and food.

We saw a picture of how they organized their agaves for the winter rest period - it just got crazy and they didn't have access down one side of the greenhouse. Some of the kichijokans you see pup like crazy. They do it about three times, if you keep removing the pups then they will eventually become a solitary plant. They are slightly tender - *A. truncata* and *A. parryi* can take the cold spells - but only if you keep them dry.

We now embarked on an alphabetical journey through the genus. *A. albopilosa* is a plant which always gets a lot of attention. The leaves have ribs and fine teeth down the side, which are hard to see with the naked eye. The white at the tips of leaves fluffs open but this can be knocked off by rough handling and it won't grow back. We saw a plant with pups around the base. One they saw in America must have been one of the earliest collected ones and we also saw pictures of them in habitat where the white tufts on the end of the leaf were particularly impressive. Next was *Agave Americana*. cv "Lemon and Lime" has a pale green midstripe. These plants can get really big. We also saw *A. americana mediopicta*. He had hoped Christine from Portsmouth branch would be here because she gave him some small offsets of this and they have done really well. We also saw *A. americana mediopicta alba* and a monstrose variegated form called *A. "Cornelius"*. Next was *A. americana striata*, growing in gardens in Menorca. The yellow stripes of variegation can vary, as could be seen on each of the baby plants coming out between the rocks. *Agave americana v. marginata* was a plant which they planted out in their garden, after it got too large for their 40 x 10 greenhouse. It became a dangerous menace and eventually had to be cut down.

*A. applanta* was originally called *A. patonii*. It seems like a perfect windowsill plant but it but morphs after 10 years, pups like crazy and changes over 2 seasons to become a much larger plant. We also saw *Agava applanta "Cream Spike"* which does much the same - it seems happy in a 6-7-8 inch bowl then it takes off. It is usually highly rated on the show bench but they know that it grows very quickly. They had a large plant in a 50+ inch bowl and took it to the National Show one year. They grew it outside in a shelter, but didn't seal back of container and frost and rain got in and whole plant died but they were able to salvage bits of it. Geoff Bowman's National Collection of Agaves in Newent, Gloucestershire is well worth visiting if you like these plants - he has a 30 x 80 greenhouse as well as many bedded out. We saw a plant labelled as "Cream Spike" which they picked up at the judge's course - but every leaf was different. *A. x arizonica* is threatened in habitat - it is said to be a

natural cross of *A. toumeyana bella* and *A. chryscantha*. We saw an adult plant on the cusp of flowering. They have never tried growing it outside in winter but they have seen it growing outdoors in Exeter. *A. attenuata* is prone to sunburn and also needs protection for winter. It does grow outside in places like Menorca. It is called the foxtail agave because the inflorescence is curved. *A. attenuata x ocahui* "Blue Glow" is nothing like its parents. You need to keep the hybrids in good light in order for them to keep their colours. The same plant seems to be sold as "Shaka Zulu" in garden centres. Next was Agave "Snow Glow" which is another *attenuata x ocahui* cross. *A. bovicornuta* has a beautiful red edging to the leaves and imprints on the back of the leaves. We saw another *attenuata* which was on the cusp of flowering and too large to move, and also the blue form.

*A. celsii* is now called *A. mitis* and we saw variety *albicans*. The wide leaves mean that the plants tend to collect muck in their lower leaves. *A. chazaroi* is a newish discovery and is named after a Mexican botanist. *A. chiapensis* is from the south of Mexico and somewhat cold-tender. *A. colorata* has undulating edges to the leaves. It can be grown in full sun and won't burn - on one form you get banding on the leaves, on the other you don't. It can eventually become a few feet across. *A. cupreata* has copper edging to the side of the leaf.

We saw a shot of Derek Bowdery's collection which Keith called the "Agave emporium". There were some really large plants and many that had been grown for many years. A picture of *A. desertii* was taken in habitat - the plant was forming rings of offsets where the central plant had died but the offsets were carrying on - these are called "colonial rings". *A. desmetiana* "Joe Hoak" is named after a Californian nurseryman. The leaves have a spike at their end but the spines are either minute or non-existent along the edge of the leaf. We also saw *A. desmetiana variegata*. *A. durangensis* is a high altitude plant with bluish leaves.

*Agave filifera* is a distinctive species with leaves which are edged with white filaments. *A. filifera compacta* is a more compact form. *A. filifera schidigera leopoldtii* is another miniature. *A. filifera schidigera leopoldtii* "Hammer Time" is variegated and has red flushing - not sure if this was due to stress or sun. *A. filifera schidigera "Shira Ito No Ohi"* is a Japanese cultivar with white variegated edges to the leaves, although you don't see it much now. *A. filifera schidigera "White Stripe"* is a plant he got from Craig at Edenbridge earlier this year. *A. filifera ssp. schidigera mediopicta* has a broad band of yellow in the centre of the leaf.

*A. flexispina* comes from Zacatecas and it has strong spination which leaves imprints on the leaves. *A. fourcroydes* was a plant he watched growing in Menorca for years without knowing what it was, until it flowered this year with a 20 foot flower spike, and he was finally able to identify it correctly. They found just one seed pod on it, containing a couple of seeds. *A. franzisnii* - does not appear in habitat but it showed up in Europe as a blue leaved cultivar.

*A. ghiesbreghtii* can have varying degrees of variegation. It likes to produce plants on suckers. *A. x gracilipes* is a natural hybrid - it is prone to sunburn. *A. guadalajarana* appears in John's book and two forms are very different. The back of the leaves like sandpaper. You need to protect central cone. in the winter. It has corkscrew terminal spines. *A. guiengola* "Creme Brulee" has dark spines which contrast with the variegated stripes down the leaves. The plant was obtained for him by Peter Down.

*A. gypsophila* has wavy gray coloured leaves and the variegated form *A. gypsophila* "Ivory Curls" was obtained from Daniel Jackson's nursery at Woking. *A. horrida* has leaves with an apple green colour - but it grows on to a large size. The leaves have fierce spines, like a chainsaw. *A. isthmensis* x *filifera* seems to bear more resemblance to the first parent. It pups like crazy given the chance. His plant of *A. lophantha* flowered at a size of 38cm - he has not been able to replace it since. We also saw *A. lophantha variegata* which is an attractive plant. *A. lurida* is found in green blue and variegated forms. *A. macrocantha* has dark spines on the tips of the leaves. We saw the flower spike and also variegated forms. *A. macrocantha* x *applanata* "Black Stabber" was a cross produced by Derek Bowdery - all six seedlings he saw were slightly different. *Mangave* "Bloodspot" is an intergeneric hybrid between Agave and Manfreda - it has the typical agave flower, with hotdog shaped anthers. The parent plant died a few years after flowering but many pups had formed in that time and the plant also formed plantlets on the flower spike.

*A. mamorata* v *brachyphylla* is a tender plant which burns easily if given too much sun. *A. mckelveyana* is from Arizona and said to be cold-hardy but he heard that it perished in a cold spell when grown in California. *A. montana* can take low temperatures if kept dry. We also saw a blue form at Geoff Bowman's. *A. murphyi* "Engard" is a variegated form distributed by the ISI and the plant may be related to *A. americana*. *A. nizandensis* is from Oaxaca. This plant is often used at the judges course because it looks like an aloe. It has brittle leaves - the plants can get a purple tinge when grown in

sunlight. We also saw a cross of *A. nizandensis* with an unknown 2nd parent. *A. ocahui* has quite stiff leaves - when hybridised with *A. attenuata* it forms plants such as *A. "Blue Glow"* and *A. "Snow Glow"*. We saw *A. ocahui var longifolia* with a flower spike forming. *A. ovatifolia* has broad leaves and we saw a beautiful plant at Geoff Bowman's. It forms a nice rosette after 10 years. Different forms exist. *A. parrasana* has two varieties called "Meat Claw" and "Fireball". Be careful detaching the old leaves to avoid damaging the plant. You can see the leaf imprint on the old leaves. We also saw *A. parrasana variegata* - as with many agave plants, they do lose variegation as they age.

With *Agave parryi* he planted in a bowl in 2006 - it had reached a size of 60cm in 2010 and we saw more pictures of it even larger in 2014 and 2016, at which point the pups were forming pups. We saw a puffball fungus growing on the leaves of *A. parryi* - it doesn't seem to harm the plant in any way. We saw *A. parryi* v. *huachucensis* - under the soil it has a large caudex. We also saw *A. parryi* v. *huachucensis mediopicta*. *A. parryi* v. *truncata* is slightly more tender and one of his plants also had a virus which causes streaking on the leaves - you need to be very careful to avoid this spreading to other agave plants. *A. parryi* v. *truncata variegata* was brought back by Stuart Riley from the USA. Keith mentioned taking care when paying high prices for variegated plants on Ebay - the plants may look good when young, but may not look as good when they age. *A. parviflora* has farina and filaments - it is notable for having the smallest flowers in the genus. We also saw *A. parviflora mediopicta alba* and *A. parviflora minima*. *A. parviflora ssp flexiflora*. *A. pelona* is a plant he has never seen for sale or at any shows. *A. petrofilia* is like *A. stricta*.

*A. potatorum* is Gentry's "Butterfly" agave. It is cold hardy but dislikes low temperatures for days on end. We saw it in habitat. It is a plant that can flower in 10 years and there is a bunching of the leaves just before it flowers. The plant has an attractive form and we saw examples of the newer leaves having imprints of the older leaf edges on the back of the leaves. The spikes on the end of the leaves sometimes have a pronounced kink. We saw close ups of the potatorum flower spikes and the flowers.

*Agave potatorum Kichijokan* is a selected variegated form of potatorum and it is a very attractive plant, with a variable amount of red marking on the edge of the leaves. *A. potatorum "Kiss Cubic"* has intense red edges to the leaves, contrasting with the bluish colour of the leaves. It seems to sometimes form mutated growths along the leaves. *A.*

*potatorum* "Kissho Kan" is another variegated form of *potatorum* and the amount of yellow (and red edging to the leaves) can vary between different cultivars with the same name (and depending on age). Keith showed an older plant where the old leaves had lost most of their variegation, but the new offsets forming at the base of the plant did show the variegation. *A. potatorum* "Saw Edge" has chunky leaves and some cultivars have an almost continuous band of red colour on the edge of the leaves - Keith showed a close up of the tip of one of the leaves followed by an image of a horse-shoe crab to show us the similarity. We also saw *A. potatorum* "Saw Edge" produce a flower spike and the flowers, as well as baby plants from the base as the old leaves began to dry up after flowering. We saw various small plants of *A. potatorum* which all look quite attractive in their own right, with deep impressed markings on the backs of the leaves.

*A. potatorum* "Snowfall" has broader white variegation. *A. potatorum* "Trade Winds" was a young plant, but Keith said it had broad leaves with whitish-yellow stripes of variegation and red edges to the tips of the leaves. *A. potatorum* var "Ikari Rajin Nishiki" was a stunning plant with a mixture of green, light green and yellow contrasting the red spines on the tips of the leaves. *Potatorum isthmensis* is called the dwarf butterfly agave and it can eventually grow to a foot across. *Potatorum isthmensis* "Ohi Rajin" is a variegated form with a pale midstripe and it has been produced by tissue culture. These are very compact plants when young. The leaves can get marked close to the ends of the leaf from secretions which the plant naturally produces. *A. potatorum* v. *verschaffeltii* has quite prominent waving of the leaves and a long flower spike. They rescued a plant which was suffering from severe attack by the agave mealy bug - they manage to get an offset and grow it on.

*Agave pumila* is quite a small and compact plant with patterns and stripes on the leaves when young but changes form as it ages. Gentry speculated that if it were of hybrid origin then he would suspect it as a cross between *Agave lechuguilla* and a dwarf form of *Agave victoriae-reginae*. We saw a variegated form with a broad yellow-white portion of the leaf, this was a picture he had found on the internet. *A. pygmae* is a dwarf agave. *Agave isthmensis* "Rum Runner" is a cultivar with dramatic contrast of golden-yellow stripes that run all the way down to the centre of each of the leaves in between the gray-green leaf margins. It was a chance find at an American nursery. *A. rzedowskiana* grows in Sinaloa and Jalisco and was discovered in 2003 - it is one of the *striata* group and indeed resembles those plants.

*A. salmiana* v. *ferox* is a huge scary agave often encountered in cultivation. Over time it will produce an urn-shaped silhouette made up of very broad and well-armed, leaves (up to 35 cm wide). The epithet *ferox* is due to the hard and long (up to 8 cm) apical spines alongside the edge of the leaf. It can get to 2-3 metres across. We saw his in a huge pot and others planted out and growing in a large greenhouse. *A. scabra* has straight leaves with a lot of small teeth. A hybrid of *A. scabra* x *victoriae reginae* seemed to retain most of the characteristics of the first parent. *A. striata* can be quite dangerous with sharp tips to the narrow leaves. *A. stricta* looks similar, it is called the hedgehog or sea-urchin agave and it forms tight balls of narrow leaves. *A. stricta minima* is a smaller variety.

*A. subsimplex* has prominent teeth and we saw a plant with both red and yellow teeth. There were strange growths emerging from in between the lower leaves. *Agave titanota* has a distinct form to its spines and it can form huge plants. *A. titanota* v. *truncata* has stumpy leaves and we also saw *A. titanota* *variegata*. The plant *A. titanota* "Red Cat Weazle" is a European cultivar - it has reddish colouring to the plants when they are young and the teeth have a reddish colour on the older plants. *A. toumeyana* "Bella" is a shorter leaved version of the normal plant and it forms plants with white markings and different clones have different amounts of filaments. Old plants can form impressive clusters. *A. triangularis* has stiff leaves with fine teeth. *A. univatata* often has a lime green mid stripe, and the variegated form *A. univatata* *var quadricolor* is very attractive.

*A. utahensis* v. *discreta* has a seam at the base of spine. *A. utahensis* v. *eborispina* has a grass-like terminal spine and some forms are very desirable - in some, this spine can be several inches long. *A. utahensis* v. *nevadadensis* has a powder blue colour to the leaves and it looks very fierce. In contrast, *A. utahensis* *ssp kaibabensis* has leaves edged with fine red teeth which are much less prominent. A close up showed the teeth and how they leave impressions on the newer leaves. Next we saw an assorted group of *A. victoria reginae* plants, showing the wide variation in forms and leaf markings. *Agave victoriae-reginae* *ssp. swoboda* is a stubby form with a complex terminal spine. We saw a flower spike and this grows fast, growing a few feet each week. *A. victoriae reginae* f. "Hyou Zan (White Rhino)" is very attractive. *A. victoriae reginae* f. "Kazo Bano (Golden Princess)" has yellow variegation. *A. victoriae reginae* "Kizan" has more subtle variegation. *A. victoriae reginae* "Snow Princess" is covered in white marks along the leaf ridges.

We saw a picture comparing *A. victoriae reginae* and *A. nickelsiae* (the new name for *Agave ferdinandi-regis*). The plants do have many similarities but *A. nickelsiae* has glaucous foliage, larger leaves, and larger terminal black spines.

*A. wocomahi* has long pines on the ends of the leaves. *A. xylonacantha* is called the saw-leaf agave – some examples have very prominent teeth. *A. zebra* has reflexed leaves, with intense red teeth. A close up showed the leaves were covered in small raised dots. We ended with some miscellaneous pictures. *Furcraea foetida* has reverse spines along the leaves. There are some nice variegated forms of it. Other pictures showed strange roots growing from the ends of agave leaves and into the soil. We also saw the agave mealy bug – it’s a pest that can devastate a plant if left unchecked. Keith also showed a couple of pictures of attractive agave plants he had found on the web - one with attractive fine spines all the way up the leaves and another other with yellowish leaves and black leaf edges/teeth.

There was some time for questions at the end. Keith mentioned that the compost he grew most of his agaves in was a 50-50 mix of John Innes and grit. For fertiliser he used a 19-19-19 balanced feed from Vitax but there are many alternatives that can also be used.

Vinay Shah

**Table Show Results**

There were 8 entries in the November table show, and 1 entry for “Plants in Flower”.

	<b>Cacti – 3 Cacti</b>	<b>Succulents – 3 Succulents</b>
Open	(1) I Biddlecombe	(1) I Biddlecombe
	(2) B Beckerleg	(2) B Beckerleg
	(3) -	(3) -
Intermediate	(1) I Biddlecombe	(1) B Beckerleg
	(2) B Beckerleg	(2) I Biddlecombe
	(3) -	(3) -

<b>Cacti/Succulent in Flower</b>
(1) B Beckerleg Glottiphyllum nelii
(2) -
(3) -

Ivor Biddlecombe

**Branch Committee Meeting**

A branch committee meeting was held on 12<sup>th</sup> November.

Alice had sent the financial details to our accountants to allow the accounts to be prepared. The branch’s financial position remains healthy.

Recent events and branch meetings were discussed. We’ve decided not to hold a garden party next year, but will try and see if a member can put on an open day.

David had prepared most of the programme for 2020 and he intended to have the programme completed in time for the AGM.

We have used an amplifier at the last 2 meetings and would appreciate feedback on whether the members found it to be effective.

Vinay Shah

## Table Show 2019 – Overall Results

### Open Section – Cacti (50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Trophy)

1) B Beckerleg	22
2) I Biddlecombe	21
3) P Klaassen	7
4) M Stevenson	5

### Open Section – Succulents (50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Trophy)

1) I Biddlecombe	31
2) B Beckerleg	30
3) M Stevenson	12
4) B Turner	10

### Intermediate Section – Cacti (Peter Down 50<sup>th</sup> Golden Jubilee Trophy)

1) B Beckerleg	31
2) I Biddlecombe	21
3) G Penrose	5
4) T Radford	3
4) M Stevenson	3

### Intermediate Section – Succulents (25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Paperweight)

1) I Biddlecombe	35
2) B Beckerleg	30
3) M Stevenson	16
4) T Radford	6

### Ladies Cup (highest points total/Female entrant)

1) M Stevenson	43
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### Solent Cup (Cactus or Succulent in flower)

1) B Beckerleg	31
2) P Klaassen	9
3) M Stevenson	7
4) I Biddlecombe	6

*Ivor Biddlecombe*

## Next Month's Meeting

Due to the timing of New Year's Day, our first meeting of 2020 will be held on January 7<sup>th</sup>. The meeting will feature short talks by branch members, and if you have a subject that you would like to talk about (even if only for a few minutes), please let David Neville know as soon as possible.

We will have access to conventional and digital projectors, so members are welcome to bring along slides, or a memory stick containing digital pictures. You can also bring along live plants, if you prefer to talk about those!

The January Table Show will consist of the **Echinocactus** group (cacti) and the **Aloe** group (succulents), along with "plant in flower". Please note that members can submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

The table show classes use the classifications from the *Guide to Shows 10<sup>th</sup> Edition* (contact me if you don't have a copy of this).

The Echinocactus group includes *Echinocactus*, *Ferocactus*, *Homalocephala*, and *Leuchtenbergia*.

The Aloe group contains *Aloe*, *Aloiampelos*, *Aloidendron*, *Bulbine*, *Chamaealoe*, *Kumara* and *Lomatophyllum*.

*Best Wishes for a  
happy Christmas and  
a merry New Year!*



## Forthcoming Events

Sat	7 <sup>th</sup>	Dec	Portsmouth	Annual General Meeting & Christmas Social
Sat	14 <sup>th</sup>	Dec	Isle of Wight	Annual General Meeting followed by American Supper
Tue	7 <sup>th</sup>	Jan	Southampton	Members' Mini Talks - short talks by branch members
Sat	11 <sup>th</sup>	Jan	Isle of Wight	no meeting
Sat	18 <sup>th</sup>	Jan	Portsmouth	Ramble through the collection + Greenhouse automation
Tue	4 <sup>th</sup>	Feb	Southampton	What I Did Last Winter – Paul Klaassen
Sat	8 <sup>th</sup>	Feb	Isle of Wight	Highlights of Arizona & Utah – David Neville
Sat	15 <sup>th</sup>	Feb	Portsmouth	New Season Cultivation/Propagation Workshop

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

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/southamptonbcsc>