

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

I hope everybody had a good time over Christmas and the New Year. I had several days off work and it was good to be able to take things easy for a few days.

I was a bit shocked by the price of perlite and vermiculite in local garden centres, and found that Amazon sell large bags (100 litres) for £19/£23, including free delivery. Although it's a very large amount of material to buy in one go, it's a big saving over the cost of small 5L/10L bags in the garden centres and will keep for years.

Announcements

The **Branch Programme** for 2015 has been prepared and is available from the front table. There are a couple of updates to the version handed out in December (Bristol + Oxford Show are both a day earlier than originally indicated).

Branch member **Tony Grech** has a surplus stock of secondhand horticultural grade **greenhouse glass**. The panes each measure 24x24 inches. This is a widely used size in greenhouses. The glass is offered for sale at £2 per sheet. If you are interested please contact Tony at branch meetings or by telephone on 023 8039 9232.

If you haven't already done so, please **renew your BCSS membership**. You should have received renewal forms with the Journal (in December) or you can also pay online via the BCSS website – visit <http://www.bcsc.org.uk/fees.php> for further details.

Annual General Meeting

Dot invited our president, Peter Down to speak first. Peter thanked David and the committee for the extra things done during the 60th Anniversary year. There were several outings during the year and people attended these in varying numbers, but it was a good chance for those who were really keen. He thanked all the members for attending meetings, supporting the raffle and buying refreshments and plants at meetings.

Dot said he had included her report in the newsletter. She thanked Ted Smith for opening up the meeting and Ivor Biddlecombe's brother, Peter, for helping at the shows and events. She also thanked everyone else in the committee and who helped. She proceeded to discuss results from the members' survey conducted a couple of months earlier. There were a lot of things that people like. Most people come to all the meetings. They are interested in open days and visits. Everyone would like to have 12 meetings a year rather than 11 or 10 - some other branches skip winter meetings. Everybody likes the raffle and the table show - but not many enter. The newsletter is found to be interesting, and the guest speakers are of interest and people like the mixture of talks. Most people grow a mixture of cactus succulents - only one person grew cacti only, and another succulents only. People were interested in the idea of swapping seedlings and cuttings - but the auction of large plants had a 50-50 response. Perhaps it was unclear how this would be run. People liked the AGM and the American supper format, although 7 people preferred a catered event. 8 people would be interested in helping at shows, 5 people would join the committee and 10 people would like to help at meetings - but no-one gave their names! She wasn't sure if some of these answers were from existing committee members. One person said that sometimes the one line description in the programme and website wasn't enough for people to decide if they would like to attend the talk. Someone else said we don't start on time. Well, generally we do try and start the main talk by 8pm.

David Neville said he didn't have much to say - his report was in the newsletter. It had been quite a

successful year given the attendances and turnout at meetings, which was his main concern when getting speakers from a distance to come and talk to us. He had put together the programme for 2015 and would just run through some of the items. The January meeting would be members giving mini-talks and it is usually a good mix of subjects. In February, Alice Vanden Bon would be coming down from Reading – she’s been to South Africa several times and will be talking about spring in South Africa. In March - Ian Woolnough would be talking about world collections and nurseries. In April, Paul Klaassen would describe two trips to Mexico – he covered the same ground for part of the trips, so we would be able to see differences between spring and autumn. In May we would have our Cultivation and Propagation workshop again and this would be a mix of different items as usual. If anyone had anything that they would like to see discussed or could talk about, let him know. May would also see us participate at Sparsholt College’s Countryside Day. In June, Chris Ayers from Croydon would talk about plants and animals from Namibia. There was also the Mammillaria society event at Wisley and the Cactus Mart in Bristol.

In July, Keith and Kathy Flanagan, members of Reading branch, will talk about their fantastic collection which we have visited on a couple of occasions. At the end of July, we would have another summer garden party hosted by Alice, followed by the New Forest Show. In August, we will arrange a trip to the Oxford Branch Show, in Wantage - without doubt, this is the best regional show in the country, only the National Show is better. This show normally has extra Haworthia or Mammillaria classes and in 2015, it will be Haworthias. In August, we will try something new, with another cultivation discussion, with a panel where people can ask questions too. We will try and have a bit more detail on cultivation and will of course rely on member participation.

In September, John Hughes from Orpington (Bromley branch) will give a talk on plants grown with minimal heating. John is a good and entertaining speaker. We will also be at the Romsey Show in September. In October Martin Sheader, one of our members who is an active member of the Alpine Society will talk about a trip he undertook with the AGS, to southern Peru in 2014. In November, it will be our turn to host the Zone 11 quiz – it’s our turn this year. It wasn’t that popular last time we hosted it - but it is the only common activity across the branches in the zone. We are trying to think of ways of making the event more interesting to get more people to attend. We also

haven’t yet decided who will do the questions. And then a year from now would be the AGM.

One other trip possibility for 2015 is a visit to Lullingstone Castle in Kent. The owner Tom Hart-Dyke is one of the 2 patrons of the BCSS. This is only about 20 miles from John Pilbeam/Doug Sizmur’s nursery in Orpington. In all, it’s about a 100 miles from Southampton. David will arrange a date for this event in due course.

Alice gave the Treasurers report - again it was included in the newsletter. The main point to note was that the 60th Anniversary did use up some of our funds. We had to pay for catering at a couple of events, and also gave out the Handbook of Shows – so overall we made a £316 loss, according to preliminary accounts which had still to be finalised. These were of course exceptional costs and we should recoup them over the coming years, and we do also have reserves of £7000. The final accounts should be available soon, and she had a draft set available if anyone wanted to take a look. Colin Bielckus prepares our accounts and he mentioned the delay this year was due to a change to new software which still required some setting up. We agreed to do the branch’s accounts next year as well.

Ivor mentioned he would like more support for the table show – currently it’s dominated by Bruce and himself. David mentioned we will be using the new classifications from the 10th edition of the Guide to Shows. Ivor mentioned that all the external displays made a profit.

I mentioned that our newsletters (which are archived on our website) get read about 100 times a month – all the words are indexed by Google so searches for cactus/succulent terms may lead people to us. We also get about 5000 visitors to the website per year. If anyone has pictures of the 60th Anniversary events, please email these to me so that I can consider using these in a 60th Anniversary page.

For publicity, Ben Turner mentioned that digital interest was beginning to take off - we have 60 “likes” now on Facebook and the number seems to be growing. He will delve into twitter in 2015. The monthly events are publicised on Facebook and by Country Gardener. Of course, although the Internet allows access to us from all over the world – the challenge is to get local people to know about us and come to meetings and events.

David said he had not been notified of any changes for the committee, so they were elected en-masse. Next was the presentation of trophies to the various

table show winners, with Ivor, Bruce and Sue being the winners.

David mentioned that we had won the Zone 11 Quiz hosted by the Isle of Wight with a team consisting of myself, Richard White and Peter Down. We had won it two years in a row, which is relatively rare.

There was a discussion about the seedling swap and auction events and how these might be run. What happens if people don't have anything to exchange? Could they buy some of the items? And with the auction, perhaps the branch can waive any commission on the sales.

The evening ended with Glenn Finn thanking everyone who has helped out and filled in for him with the kitchen duties.

Vinay Shah

Zone 11 Quiz

The Zone 11 Quiz was held in November 2014 and was hosted by the Isle of Wight. Things got off to an interesting start as the Southampton team made our way across to the island – heavy traffic and roadworks meant that we missed the intended RedJet crossing and got to the island half an hour late. It was also a Saints match day so the crossing was busy, and we disembarked in the midst of a punch up between some drunk football fans!

Ron Mitchell started off the evening and introduced the question master – Stephen Woods, with Pauline Pauline Buckett doing the scoring. The teams consisted of :

Portsmouth : Carrie Hands, Maggie Maddock, Graham Daniels
Isle of Wight : Ron Mitchell, Peter Collard, Anthony Mitchell
Southampton : Vinay Shah, Richard White and Peter Down.

Including the teams, there were 20 people in attendance. Stephen mentioned there would be 3 questions in each round, with questions being passed to the audience if unanswered by all the teams.

The first round require identification of capital cities in countries in South America. This was followed by a round of a mixture of general knowledge questions, including which star is the closest to earth (the Sun), which organ secretes insulin (the pancreas) and what is the moto of the SAS (who dares wins). Round three was botanical definitions – no one was able to deduce that “a member of the vegetable kingdom in common use, excluding trees and shrubs” was a reference to “plant”! Some of the other definitions were also rather obscure. The score

at this stage was Southampton 8, Portsmouth 5, Isle of Wight 12.

There were some more questions on general knowledge, followed by movies, requiring correct answers to directors and dates of first showing. We were unlucky with “Jaws”, being just one year off on the date, which was 1975. Round 6 was about sports, prompting one member of the Isle of Wight team to declare he might be better off watching the fireworks that were exploding outside the hall! My football ground knowledge helped get us a bonus point and we ended round 6 with the teams on: Southampton 16, Portsmouth 8, Isle of Wight 22.

Round 7 was general knowledge and consisted of questions about the solar system, temperatures in using different scales and about Roman gods. Round 8 asked about the classification of obscure genera in the Guide to Shows and revealed a worry lack of knowledge in all the teams. The scores at this state were Southampton 22 Portsmouth 9, Isle of Wight 27 and it was time for a break for the raffle and to enjoy the buffet food that the IOW branch had provided.

Round 9 resumed with general knowledge questions – the old London Bridge is now in Arizona. There was issue with one the questions where the quiz master asked “what is the name for the metal known as ‘Kilium’”? No one got this right and it was only later we realized he had meant Kalium (Potassium). And apparently the owner of the post office in Postman Pat was Mrs Goggins.

Round 10 required identification of county towns around the country and this was quite difficult, although Richard got us a bonus point for Oakham (Rutland). Round 11 was more general knowledge – no one knew the name of Batman's butler (Alfred) and or Long John Silver's parrot (Captain Flint). However we did accumulate some bonus points and the scores now were Southampton 33, Portsmouth 13, Isle of Wight 33.

Round 12 required some maths knowledge – and although someone complained “you can't do maths on a full stomach” – we did quite well and picked up some more bonus points. The next round was general knowledge and we learnt that an octopus has 3 hearts, a dominoes set contains 28 pieces, and that the only British King who didn't appear on our coins was Edward VIII. We again did well and the scores were now Southampton 40, Portsmouth 16, Isle of Wight 38.

Round 14 required knowledge of various imperial measurement ratios, followed by comparisons

between different measurements. Most of us struggled here! Round 15 was another general knowledge round where the teams did equally well/badly and the scores were now Southampton 45, Portsmouth 19, Isle of Wight 43.

Next was a round about Shakespeare, including identification of some famous quotes and plays – we were not very scholarly here but fortunately it was a mixed performance by the teams. The next round was identification of Abba songs, given some lyrics. There were 3 sub-rounds here, which was probably 2 too many. Only a few of the lyrics were identified correctly, but again the performance was equally poor by all the teams!

Mindful of the time that the meeting had to end (given the need to catch ferries and the like), this was the last round. **The final scores were Southampton 52, Portsmouth 22, Isle of Wight 49.**

Carrie Hand, secretary of Portsmouth branch thanked the Isle of Wight branch for the hospitality and admitted they had no interest in taking the mealy bug trophy back with them. Ron Mitchell thanked the two visiting teams and Peter Down thank Isle of Wight for their hospitality and for setting a good range of questions.

Vinay Shah

Bookworm Corner

Happy New Year! The weather was kind to us over the Christmas break and let's hope this spell of occasional chilly nights followed by a run of mild weather continues. In comparison last year was very much more 'wild and woolly' when we lost quite a few panes of glass out of the greenhouses.

Mark's mammoth potting up sessions throughout 2014 has produced lovely looking plants (?) but the downside has been the inability to shoehorn them all back into the greenhouse for the winter. This has resulted in far too many now residing in the living room, kitchen, spare bedroom and we are even fighting for access to our own bedroom.....!

It's all a bit quiet on the flowering front in the cacti house right now, with only a few including *Crassula tecta*, *Berberanthus multiceps*, *Aloe* spp., *Senecio archeri*, *Aloinopsis* sp. *Echeveria gigantea*, E. 'Pearl von Nurmberg' and E. 'Mr Frosty' in flower. *Pelargoniums* are growing well but not flowering at the moment.

On arriving home on Sunday evening, from visiting the old folks up in Birmingham, a friend texted me to ask if I had been selling tea and cakes to the spectators down the beach. On inquiring what on earth was she going on about, she updated me on the grounded ship 'Hoegh Osaka' which I am sure all of you saw on the telly. So we popped down with the binoculars to have a look! Although it had gone 8pm we were amazed at the amount of cars turning up to see this event. I expect we will get used to seeing it whilst walking the dogs over the next few weeks.

'ENJOYED THE LECTURE? THEN ENJOY THE BOOK!'

January

As this month is the member's night I have not got any books to recommend. Instead do talk to the speakers and see what they can recommend you read!

I would like to thank everyone who has borrowed books in 2014 and do let me know if there are any new books that you would particularly like to see and I will put these requests forward at committee meetings. And finally have a Happy and Successful New Growing Year!

Sue Wilson

Table Show Resolutions

Each month at our meetings we hold a Table Show class for specified cactus and succulent groups, along with a class for any plant (cactus or succulent) in flower. The plants that are exhibited each month attract the attention of everyone present and stimulate discussion about their cultivation etc. Having some mature plants on display at each meeting is a valuable part of the evening, particularly for those newer members who have perhaps never seen some of the plants before. The number of people who enter plants in the Table Show has declined in recent years, and I would like to encourage everyone to make a New Year's Resolution to try to bring along a few plants during the year to support this part of the branch activities. Please don't feel that you have to bring along spectacular show specimens, we will be delighted simply to see an increase in the number of entries.

Full details of the classes for the Table Show can be found in the current branch programme. Please make a special effort to support the Table Show during 2015.

David Neville

Next Month's Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 3rd February and will feature Alice Vanden Bon from Reading Branch. She has visited South Africa recently and she should have some good pictures to share with us.

The February Table Show will consist of the **Eriosyce & Copiapoa** groups (cacti) and the **Adromischus** subgroup (succulents). 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. In addition there is a class for any flowering cactus or succulent plant.

From this year, the table show classes will now use the classifications from the *Guide to Shows 10th Edition*. (contact me if you need a copy of this)

The Eriosyce and Copiapoa groups include *Austrocactus*, *Chileorebutia*, *Eriosyce*, *Horridocactus*, *Islaya*, *Neochilenia*, *Neoporteria*, *Pyrrhocactus*, *Rodentiophila*, *Thelocephala*, *Copiapoa* and *Pilocopiapoa*

The Adromischus subgroup contains *Adromischus*, *Bryophyllum*, *Cotyledon*, *Kalanchoe*, *Kitchingia* and *Tylecodon*.

Forthcoming Events

Sat	10 th	Jan	Isle of Wight	No Meeting
Sat	17 th	Jan	Portsmouth	Members talks
Tue	3 rd	Feb	Southampton	Spring in South Africa – Alice Vanden Bon
Sat	14 th	Feb	Isle of Wight	Plant Auction, Members' Slides
Sat	21 st	Feb	Portsmouth	New cactus and succulent hybrids – Stuart Riley
Tue	3 rd	Mar	Southampton	World Collections & Nurseries – Ian Woolnough
Sat	14 th	Mar	Isle of Wight	Branch Quiz & Members' Talks
Sat	21 st	Mar	Portsmouth	Plants and Animals of the Western Cape - Hazel Taylor

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