

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial	1
Last Month's Meeting.....	1
Brazil Part 1 – the State of Rio Grande Do Sul	1
Forthcoming Events.....	6
Next Month's Meeting	6

Editorial

The weather has been changeable but we have had a tremendous amount of rain in the last month. Some spring flowers have opened but a few more are yet to develop. And a reminder that our clocks will change right at the end of the month.

Last Month's Meeting

David mentioned we had -8°C for a couple of nights. It cost him £225 to heat 2 greenhouses for just one month - and that was with the weather being mild overall.

David also mentioned that Les Palmer from Portsmouth Branch had passed away recently.

For *Plants of Interest*, David had brought in *Echeveria rosea* – it had pink sepals and yellow flowers and the leaves can turn an intense red after flowering. This was a plant which is essentially hardy in warmer parts of the UK. He will be trying to propagate it. Richard had also brought in some *Sansevierias*. The first was the mother in laws tongue (*S. trifasciata*) and it was owned by his mother. Although *Sansevierias* are supposed to be impossible to kill, he managed to kill one because he let it get too dry when growing with his other plants. Next was *S. trifasciata* “Golden hahnii” which is an attractive variegated cultivar which is also a miniature. Next was *Sansevieria parva* which was in flower - the flowers resemble *Chlorophytum* (spider plant) flowers. The plant produces new plants on stolons. *Dracaena francisii* has some new growths - like *Agaves* they are terminal flowering – the plant does not die but it won't grow either. Richard mentioned that being monocots, the first root always dies off and then it produces other adventitious roots. It can be grown from leaf cuttings. If you take a cutting of a variegated plant

then the colour will depend on what part of the leaf was propagated. *S. gracilis* has small cylindrical leaves and it is like a miniature form of *S. cylindrica*. The final plant was labelled as a *Dracaena trifasciata* cultivar – Ricard mentioned that *Sansevieria* has now been placed under *Dracaena*. Some of them are slow growing – there is a dragon tree in the Canaries which is reputed to be 6000 years old.

Brazil Part 1 – the State of Rio Grande Do Sul

Cliff said he has done many trips since his first in 2002 and he's lost count of how many trips he's been on. This was a trip he did in 2009 with a large group of other people and it included some Americans. He and Paul Klaassen spent three months in Brazil and they visited a different state each month, so there are further follow up talks after this one. There were 7 of them on the trip and we would see them later on. The people on the trip were named as Wiebe Bosma (Holland), Paul Klaassen (UK), Marlon Machado (Brazil), Woody Minnich (USA), Angie Money (UK), John Senior (USA) and of course Cliff himself. He mentioned the talk was in the form of a video clip and it was timed to last 40 minutes for the first half.

He showed a map of South America and said that Brazil is the biggest country in South America and the 5th largest in the world - a further map showed each state, and some are huge - Rio Grande do Sul is bigger than Uruguay – you have to use flights rather than driving because of the distances. He showed a picture of one of their hotel rooms – it was basic accommodation but all you need is a bed and a shower and toilet. The next picture mentioned “don't park for too long” – it was a picture of a car outside the hotel which had been stripped of everything – it was like being in Liverpool, he joked! The next picture showed the members of the party walking along a path.

We saw *Frailea gracillima*, and also a *Buddleia*. A large palm tree had many plants growing on it, including a *Cereus*, orchids and mosses. *Fraileas* tend to grow in areas where there's plenty of moisture. The moss in the picture was *Selaginella*

lepidophylla, the resurrection plant. *Frailea gracillima* ssp. *gigantea* had a large flower bud. They grow on the fringes of rocky outcrops where there is some moss. The mud is not very deep usually an inch or less. Next was a member of Iridaceae. People were lying on the ground with their expensive cameras. We saw a Verbena and a Petunia and some shrubs as well. It was wet and there was plenty of vegetation growing beside the cacti. A road edge represented a manmade area for plants to grow and some had done quite well and were in flower, including *Notocactus ottonis*. In another outcrop was a Cereus, a Frailea, bromeliads, ferns, orchids, petunias and Peperomia (and more). It is moist here all year round and there is a short dry season. Next was *Parodia langsdorfii*.

He managed to back into a *Jatropha urens* and this was a painful experience, we also saw the small flowers on this plant. *Cypella brasiliensis* formerly *Kelissa brasiliensis*) had a spotted pattern on the purple flowers. Another purple flower was *Herbertia lahue*. We saw Marlon standing at the site of the newly described *Notocactus gaucha* - they are not large, the biggest was 3 inches tall and they were looking in great condition - looking lush and pumped up in size. Bromeliads are another plant which frequent the area. *Eryngium pristis* was a fine leaved plant with small white flowers. We also saw *Parodia concinna*.

Vast areas of Brazil are being dedicated to growing Eucalyptus, which grows at a rate of 25 feet a year. It is mainly used to produce charcoal since the wood is no good for building. To make room, conifers were being cleared. Amongst the conifers there were *Gymnocalciums* growing here – and we saw mature clumps of *Gymnocalycium horstii*, the largest heads were around 3 inches across. They also found *Frailea gracillima*. When you see rocks, so and investigate. They found some amazing lichens here. *Myrrhinium atropurpureum* has exotic flowers.

A group of cattle caused a traffic jam. A spiky rosette plant was not a bromeliad but *Eryngium serra* (sea holly). A yellow flowered plant seemed to be a member of the Compositae. A view of the landscape could easily be from Yorkshire. If you see a rocky outcrop, go and have a look. David asked about the temperatures and Cliff said they were around 25°C - so mildly tropical rather than hot. A tillandsia was in flower. A Frailea was growing near *Parodia ottonis*. *Frailea angelica* had hooked spines and has plumose radial spines. Someone shouted “snake” so many of them rushed to go and see it.

Frailea pygmaea was a tiny finger-tip sized plant, growing in substrate an inch deep at most. A

parasitic plant was a species of dodder. A cowpat had a fungus growing on it. *Lepismium lumbrioides* was growing on a tree and it needs a lot of room - we saw a close up of the flower. We also saw *Frailea gracillima* ssp. *horstii*. Ants fascinate him and we saw some looking busy. Weathered sandstones looked quite architectural. We could see plants growing all the way to the top. We also saw an abandoned farmhouse.

Frailea phaeodisca was his favourite Frailea and we saw several shots of how they grew and how neat they look. There were 100s of them here and a close up showed detail of the spine. The pebbles on top trap the seeds and moisture, and they are weathered out from the rock deposits. The plant is easy to grow from seed. We saw *Parodia crassigiba*. He was obsessed with Fungi and cowpats. *Gymnocalcium denudatum* was growing under Pine trees. Fraileas were also growing here and we saw *F. gracillima* ssp. *horstii* again. A lapwing bird had red eyes.

Echinopsys oxygona is endemic here and it had pale pink flowers. We saw several people trying to photograph one plant and this was *Parodia crassigiba* with a deep pink flower. We could see the rock layers fragmenting and plants growing in the cracks where vegetation had deposited. Some plants had multiple flowers open and also there were more buds due to open later. An area Marlon took them to allowed comparison between the yellow flowered form *Notocactus crassigibbus* and the purple flowered *Notocactus uebelmannius* - the plants with purple flowers were growing a foot away from the ones with yellow flowers. Cattle roam here and all the plants were in thin layers of soil.

A portulaca had pink flowers and a member of the Solanaceae (potato family) had white flowers. Calliandra was the name he was given for a plant with bottle brush flowers. Always check the trees – the ones with rough bark is where everything settles including orchids and bromeliads. Big toad tadpoles in a wet ditch were 6 inches long. We saw *Frailea pygmaea* and *Parodia (Wigginsia) sellowii* - he considers this to be one of the more difficult ones to grow well. We also saw the sellowii growing next to *P. ottonis*. A *P. crassigiba* with Marlon’s fingers for scale had dozens of flower buds and it would be incredible when it flowered. We saw *F. gracillima* ssp. *horstii* and a Petunia. Oven birds build their nests on tree branches and we saw left handed and right handed versions, and also one on a fence post. We saw *Notocactus neobueneckeri*, a *Sinningia* and *Parodia horstii* with a green insect on it. Portulacas were growing all over the place and had flowers in different colours. *Echinopsis oxygona* was in flower

and another species of *Sinningia* had red flowers – this bush was 4-6 feet across and the stems were 2-3 feet tall. Hummingbirds visit the flowers.

A horse was being bathed in a river. We saw *Parodia ritteriana* and *Gymnocalycium denudatum* with twisted spines. A gaucho turned up on a horse. “What are you doing here?” “Cacti” “Why?” He left them to it. We saw *Frailea mammifera* and *Wigginsia langsdorfii* and *Echinopsis oxygona* with different spine forms - one had hardly any spination and another one had short spines – these were growing on the periphery of the scrubby area. The *Notocacti* were growing in nothing. A *Verbena* had bright red flowers. *P. (Wigginsia) langsdorfii* was growing in dust and one was growing dichotomously. Cliff asked can you spot the eggs? They were well camouflaged but had been abandoned - Pumas do roam here. Another form of *Frailea mammifera* had twisty tubercles. A population of *G. denudatum* had large flower buds. A tall rock with two smaller rocks placed on either side was perhaps a fertility symbol!

Another gaucho turned up, shook his head and left. An oven bird had built a nest on a large sign which mentioned this area was being re-established. There is a lot of Portuguese influence here and we saw a couple of old farmhouses. Another man-made habitat had been created between the fence and the road, and these plants were either *P. ottonis* or *P. linkii*. We saw a green lizard. The gold-spined form of *Frailea mammifera* was growing in rotting detritus. Several beetles were having an orgy in a *Frailea* flower. With *Frailea densispina* they saw a big clump and this was probably not one plant but a load of plants growing in the same spot. It has plumose spines and is not threatened – there were lots here. We also saw *Notocactus succineus*.

The black ibis is not uncommon but you don't see groups of them very often. *Notocactus minimus* was renamed to *Parodia tenuicylindrica* since there was already a *P. minima*. Cliff thought a shell was a fossil, but Marlon said it just belonged to a giant land snail. There was moss and lichens here so the humidity must be high We saw *P. (Wigginsia) erinacea*. David asked why there were no trees here and Cliff said they had all been cleared.

They found a *Dorstenia* growing in the grass, while looking for *Frailea pumila*. *Tillandsias* were also growing here. Why build a nest in a cactus when there's a tree nearby? The plants here looked like *G. denudatum* but the flowers were different and this was actually *G. uruguayense* – it has different tubercles and a yellow flower. We also saw *Parodia fusca*.

The Southern screamer *Chauna torquata* – are large birds – they can stand up to 3 feet tall and they are one of the heaviest flying birds. *P. mueller-melchersii* is easy from seed and difficult to kill. We saw some more pebble habitats and some large pieces of quartz that Cliff had found and hoped to bring back – but they weighed 14 kilos and he decided to throw them away. They also found *Frailea perumbilicata*. There were some huge ants nests here. They also found *Frailea phaeodisca* – this remained solitary and are very small plants. This was a more colourful form, perhaps aided by some recent rain. They found one specimen of *Notocactus buiningii* - they were just 15 miles from the Uruguay border. *Frailea castanea* is a plant he can germinate but they don't survive long. Here they were growing in wet mud or dust. He might be keeping his plants at too low a temperature for some of these tropical zone cacti.

They found examples of *F. perumbilicata* ssp. *aurispina* and *N. mammulosus* and *Wigginsia sellowii*. Next was a cockroach nymph but it was 2 inches long. A cold lizard was pictured in someone's hand – it was only 3 inches long. They came across a *Dorstenia* – the leaves looked like those of *D. lancifolia* – but that's from Africa. We saw *Frailea phaeodisca* “perbella” and *Frailea pumila*, and a *Portulaca* in flower. Another man-made artifact – a fence post with rocks around the post was a haven for plants, the seed can get in there and germinate. *Parodia minima* is not that small, each head was 4-5 inches tall We also saw *P. mueller-melchersii* growing on the rocks. Next was a picture of millipede – you need to proceed with caution since some are poisonous. We saw *Frailea castanea* with *Notocactus mammulosus*, followed by a white butterfly of the skipper family.

Next was a *F. castanea* with different supination. A plant with longer spines was forming seed but they were not ripe. Another *dorstenia* had urn shaped fruits. A picture showed how well some of the small plants were camouflaged. In amongst the cattle and sheep are the rheas – Cliff said it was amazing how they could run and get through small gaps in fences without any damage. A small snake was a constrictor of some sort. Lichen means high humidity. A plant with blue flowers was not identified.

In the distance were some fully grown palm trees, and we could see big the arch was. *Tillandsias* are very adaptable and very hardy in habitat. A mimosa had feathery leaves and we saw some pink bottlebrush flowers. With *Notocactus glaucinus*, you can almost see through the epidermis – it has nice flowers too, yellow with orange outer petals. Cliff

said he wished he had the temperatures and patience to grow bromeliads - this plant was probably a Dyckia - they have sharp teeth on the leaf edges.

Frailea fulviseta was growing in sand and rain had splashed the sand up onto the lower part of the body. Some were 4-5 inches tall. A massive dark moth had an 8 i saw a wasps nest, the wasps went for him and he got stung. Some white flowers might be *Myrciaria dubia*.

A yellow flower might belong to *Calea uniflora*. A red and yellow flower was probably *Jatropha gossypifolia* - it's called the bellyache bush and is considered a pest in many countries. A species of Erythrina had long flower spikes. They visited the habitat of *Frailea cataphracta* - there were many plants around and some were fairly plump, growing in the sand. A large open yellow flower provided shade for the Notocactus which had produced it. As they got to a rocky area, they found *Echinopsis oxygona*, *Gymnocalycium horstii* and *Parodia stockingeri*.

They found a big population of *Frailea pumila* about half a mile from the road. They grow quite big heads and always grow in or on rock. *Parodia linkii* looks like *P. ottonis* but the seed capsules are very different. *Parodia muricata* is something he's never grown. We saw *P. linkii* with Petunias alongside along with a curious lizard. We also saw a shrubby Petunia. They also found a nice population of *P. umbricata* - there was a story concerning Graham Charles who had driven up to the base of the cliff but had stayed in the car and missed the plants which were happily growing under pine trees. The seed had cascaded down the cliff and the plants are now growing everywhere at the base of the cliff.

They visited the town of Mata - fossil wood is used everywhere, since there is a huge deposit nearby (the word mata means forest). The fossil wood has turned to rock millions of years ago and its very hard and very heavy. The Holy Square Brugalli in Mata featured a bust of someone mounted on the petrified rock. Cliff was taking pictures of this church and some kids from a classroom ran out and chatted to them while posing for a couple of photographs. They visited the type locality of *Notocactus magnificus* - these plants grow on vertical cliffs - and some plants are huge clumps consisting of over a 100 heads. On the left hand side the plants get the morning sun, and there were none on the right hand side since it was probably too warm. Cliff said 4-5 different Notocactus species have evolved this way in the different river systems. A white flower was probably *Zephyranthes mesochloa*, the rain lily. Orange spheres on a stalk

were probably snail eggs. An exotic flower was *Feijoa sellowiana* (the pineapple guava). A few landscape shots made Cliff comment on how some of the scenery looked the same as in England.

We continued after the mid meeting break - they were due go and see *Parodia marsii* - it was a hot day and he had the choice of climbing a mountain for 4 hours or staying in an air conditioned bar. Next we saw the Horst nursery in the town of Imigrante. The produce huge amounts of seed there - we saw a lady going around with a paint brush - but the place is open to bees and birds (we saw a hummingbird perched on a wire) so the purity of the seed is doubtful. There were some amazing plants to see and there were also some displays of collections of plants. Originally owned by Leopoldo Horst, it was eventually taken over by his son Kurt-Ingo Horst.

They set off to visit the classic site for *N. lenninghausii*. These were growing at the top of a cliff. We saw a begonia and a *Rhipsalis* of some sort. They had to tie a rope and abseil down the cliff face. Cliff didn't do this - with his weight it was too risky. We saw shots of Paul going down and photographing the plants. John Senior panicked and half the *N. lenninghausii* plants ended up at the bottom! We also saw a picture of Ingo Horst and Leo van de Hoeven who recently passed away. The *N. (Eriocactus) warasii* grows in a different river valley. We saw Peperomia, Oxalis and the cacti were again growing down the cliff faces, with roots anchored in the rocks. We also saw one growing epiphytically.

A large begonia was photographed from a distance, it was a telephoto shot so a little fuzzy. Sinningias were growing here. We also saw examples of Araucaria - the young trees are pointy conifers and when they age they develop a flat top of branches. It was quite lush with various other plants growing alongside the cacti. *Parodia linkii* had yellow stigmas and many ribs and *P. oxycostata* had much fewer ribs and red stigmas - and then we saw a plant with red stigmas and many ribs - so do they hybridise? Cliff showed a cross section of the flowers of the two species. Another man made cutting had thousands of Notocacti growing here and they were all flowering at the same time. We also saw a yellow mimulus flower.

They visited the Canyon Itaimbezinho - and on the way in they saw massive bromeliads and lots of orchids along with lichens and ferns. A close up of a fungi growing on rotting wood might have been *Lentinus crinitus*. The canyon is 600 feet deep. and we saw the river that feeds the canyon. The bromeliads are huge, 3 feet across and had

developed some amazing colours. We saw the waterfall again and it has a drop of 160 metres. amazing colour. the waterfall again. 160 metres. There were lichens growing in the branches of the trees. We saw half a dozen shots of different bromeliads and the knobbly bark provided lots of resting places for seeds. There were also Tillandsias and mosses growing here. A *Gunnera tinctoria* was not the one we grow in this country.

Brasiliparodia bueneckeri is not easy to grow, it's rare in habitat as well as in cultivation. We saw a couple of *Rhipsalis* in flower (½") and a *Tillandsia* in flower with amazing blue petals. He was always amazed at the Church architecture, they were usually the best buildings in a town. but this one had a few weeds growing amongst the roof tiles. The next sight was a little sad for him – a pizza shop had nailed vinyl records to the wall, and we saw one of his favourite bands featured with "The Wall" by Pink Floyd. We moved on and saw Paul standing amongst some large rocks. We saw *Parodia (Brasilicactus) graessneri* – there had been a fire through here and some of the plants were showing a big band of scar tissue but the central core containing the meristem was not damaged, so the plants were burnt but still alive. Around the other side the plants had not been damaged by the fire and there were some amazing plants, with green flowers. playing green flowers. Other populations had different coloured spines but these had very green flowers. An asclepiad with flowers was covered in ants searching for nectar. Another plant with yellow flowers and red stripes was a member of the pea family. We also saw a yellow poppy and a pink petunia. They found another population of *Brasiliparodia buenckeri* but the seed pods were not ripe - this was growing on one isolated outcrop.

The went on a trek to find the last remaining population of *Parodia ricensis* - however since that trip, other populations have been found. As they walked up the path they found a large bird eating spider - it was dinner plate sized but it wasn't too interested in them since it was busy courting a female which was down a burrow. The females are larger than the males. They found the endangered plants, which at that time were only known from this hill, but fortunately they are not as endangered as once thought. There was a beautiful circular fungi growing on some wood. There were also tree ferns growing here. Because of the rain, the road cuttings sometimes have landslips and collapse - fortunately they were not held up too often. At another site for *Parodia graessneri*, growing alongside a red flowered *Sinningia*, these plants were 2"-2.5" in diameter and there were large number of plants in a small area, and a lot of young seedlings too. We saw

the *Sinningia* again and could see the large tuber. The flower colour was lighter green for this population, and tending towards yellow - there must have been 1500 plants here.

One of his pictures featured a hummingbird pollinating the *Sinningia* the exposure was 1/500th of a second but the wings were still blurred. We saw the *Sinningia*'s massive tuber wedged in the rock - it was football sized. There were plants of *P. graessneri* on the left and a wasp's nest on the right fortunately it was a dormant or dead nest. In a wooded area, a *Peperomia* was in flower. On the way to see *N. lenninghausii* again (a different population) they found the red flowered *P. (Brasilicactus) haselbergii* - these plants were actually growing in captivity, in a tray. They also found *Parodia linkii* ssp. *megapotamicus*.

Human activity had created another favourable habitat for all sorts of plants in a drainage ditch – there were all sorts of including tree ferns and a legume (some sort of lupin) and a pale violet petunia. There was a stunning church and went inside and found that parts of the structure were not supported by anything. They found more large tree ferns by roadside, but he no idea what species they were. They had been told the yellow spined form of *P. graessneri* was over the border near a ravine, so they decided to go look for it.

We saw a young *Araucaria* and at this stage they look just like a regular pine - its only later that they form the canopy of foliage at the top. You can't tell the age of them since the tree has pith inside, instead of rings. A nearby sign said these trees of *Araucaria angustifolia* were estimated to be 400 years old.

Using binoculars and telephoto lenses, they saw a blurry *P. graessneri* on a remote rockface – they detected that these plants had a different spine colour - they were yellow spined and had yellow flowers. Growing nearby was *Lepismium houlettianum* as well. They found a *Parodia linkii* with an oddly flushed stigma - yellow with tinges of red at the stigma tips. They came across a sign saying "Snow Valley" and it appears you could go skiing in these mountains. A concrete bridge had been repaired with planks of wood. A large spider was well behaved – they poked it and turned it around to get a better picture and it didn't do anything. We saw another *Sinningia* and David commented that Cliff had shown us more *Sinningias* than Mike Hill had done at the January meeting. A yellow flowered exotic flower belonged to *Cypella herbertii*. The next shot showed a local holding up a bus and creating a traffic jam by walking his two cattle in the middle of the road. Lichen was growing

with moss and there were also some dead branches of *Araucaria* lying on the moss. we saw *Parodia linkii* in flower growing under an *Araucaria* and next we saw the cones on the *Araucaria* thanks to a broken branch - the cones are huge, bigger than grapefruits.

There were some semi-tame coatis at a viewing point on the road - there was a meat stall and fruit stall and cheese stall nearby and they kept stealing food from there. The locals feed them crisps and all sorts of rubbish as well. The stall offered as much cheese and sausage as you could possibly want to eat. Just as Cliff was preparing to go to bed at the hotel that evening, he heard a croaking outside and decided to investigate. he found a massive toad outside - it was 8 or 9 inches long and it stayed there a while.

We saw a VW van parked outside and they are common there because the presses were taken out there and you can get spare parts easily. A view in the countryside showed golden fields, which looked similar to a cropped wheat field back home. A yellow-headed Caracara was standing on a fence post and these birds are scavengers rather than hunters. He took a picture of a rock grinder, and they next visited a lake system which was used to generate hydroelectric power. The dam created here had required large areas to be cleared and we saw a large population of *P. linkii* growing nearby. Unfortunately they had finished flowering. A begonia featured white flowers on stalks which were a few inches high. We saw overalls of the dam further on. We saw large ceroid plants and *Zephyranthes* and *Sinningias*. They dug one up for scientific purposes to look at the tuber and it was a large gnarled lump. They found another spider and someone was brave enough to put their hand just a few inches away from it to give us an idea of scale. Cliff said it was "more or less" harmless.

The next morning saw a foggy start to the day in their search for *Parodia (Eriocactus) claviceps*

Access to this was something else - they were all growing on the other side of the river. You could see massive plants hanging on for dear life. Many plants were lost here when the river levels rose after the dam was built. Nearby were tiny wasps clamouring over their nest - they were only 10-12 mm long. Marlon had organised a boat for them to get to the other side of the river but unfortunately the people at the dam did not have any authorisation to let them cross so that idea had to be abandoned.

We saw a few more shots from the Horst nursery at Imigrante, including large plants of *Echinocactus grusonii* and a hummingbird visiting a *kalanchoe* flower. We ended with a sunset.

Cliff said he enjoys bringing these trips to us. He would be happy to come back and show the other parts of this trip - part 2 covers the state of Minas Gerais. As a closing comment. David mentioned that Marlon Machado had given a talk at this hall - I checked and one of his talks was given to us in October 2009.

Vinay Shah

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **April 2nd** and the title of the talk is "American Shows, Nurseries & Collections" and the speaker is **Stuart Riley**. Stuart has been a regular speaker at our branch, and he makes regular trips to both Europe and the USA, and he often brings back interesting plants from those regions. This talk will focus on events in the US and I assume we will get to see some of the nurseries and collections he has visited there. Stuart also brings along a good selection of sale plants, including things that other sellers might not offer.

Forthcoming Events

Sat	9 th	Mar	Isle of Wight	TBC (Cliff Thompson)
Sat	16 th	Mar	Portsmouth	Los Angeles County Arboretum and The Huntington (Ben Turner)
Tue	2 nd	Apr	Southampton	American Shows, Nurseries & Collections (Stuart Riley)
Sat	13 th	Apr	Isle of Wight	Question Time. Your cacti and succulent questions answered
Sat	20 th	Apr	Portsmouth	Plant Auction
Tue	7 th	May	Southampton	Annual Cultivation & Propagation Evening

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