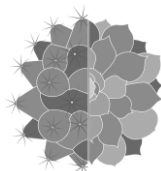


British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

September has gone by quickly and reports say that it was one of the wettest on record. It makes quite a change compared to last year where many regions were on hosepipe bans after a very dry summer. The days are beginning to draw in now, and our clocks will change at the end of the month. I have got quite a lot of new plants following the Warwick BCSS event and also “Cactus at the Castle” and hope all these plants will settle in.

Last Month's Meeting

The Portsmouth Branch show is to be held this coming weekend at Cosham, and it's well worth visiting if you want to see how a show is organised. David did email out the show schedules last month. The Mexican weekend at Lullingstone Castle near Eynsford in Kent would be a 2 day event in the middle of September with lots of sellers and also access to the World Garden run by Tom Hart Dyke which contains many cacti and succulent plants. David and Ben would be selling plants there.

We had received apologies from Andy Rooke. David did mention he would appreciate committee members letting him know if they would not attend a meeting so that he could ask someone else to fill in for them, if required.

Plant Focus Evening – *Thelocactus*, *Ferocactus* & *Haworthia*

We started the meeting and David mentioned that we have held these meetings since 2018. A year ago we had chosen *Thelocactus* and *Haworthia* as the genera to discuss today and since he was not confident about how many *Thelocacti* would be brought in, he decided to add *Ferocactus* to the mix and that seemed to have added around 10 plants

today. We did have a marvellous array of *Thelocactus* and 90% of these had been brought in by Geoff Penrose - so a special thank you to him for doing this, especially given how spiny some of them were.

David said we would talk about the cacti first. Some of these were very mature and some were over 40 years old. *Thelocactus* come almost exclusively from Mexico, in the northern to central areas of the country. *Thelocactus bicolor* does grow in Texas, near the Mexican border, and this also includes *v. flavidispinus*.

Thelocactus nidulans was Geoff's plant and bought from Southfields in the 1980s. *Thelocacti* are generally spiny plants and quite a few of them remain solitary in habitat. In cultivation, some of them will offset unnaturally. Geoff pointed to a couple of plants which he said he had bought at the same time - one had a clockwise spiral of tubercles and spines, and the other one had an anticlockwise spiral. In addition, one was offsetting and the other one wasn't. The plant was *Thelocactus lausseri*.

David said some plants like *T. leucacanthus* are naturally offsetting, but others like *T. macdowellii* or *T. lausseri* don't offset in the wild but can go bonkers in cultivation. The plant with a blue ribbon on it was one from Bruce Beckerleg and it was labelled *T. argenteus*, Geoff said it had a maroon flower.

David mentioned *Thelocactus bicolor* - he was at a nursery in Holland 10 years ago and there were some French people visiting (who he had met at ELK) and one lady asked him “do you know what this is?” David said yes, and he said “bicolor” and she looked blank, even though she seemed to know her plants. Sometime later she approached him and said “Oh *Thelocactus* beecolor” and he still remembers that incident whenever he sees this species. Another plant was labelled *Thelocactus wagnerianus* but it's just a version of *bicolor*. Many will remain solitary even if they get to a good age. Another plant white spines was just a variety of *bicolor*. The body is typically dark glossy green, Plants with smaller heads are sometimes labelled *T. commodus*.

Thelocactus bicolor v. *tricolor* is another name but it's just another variation with more colour in the spines. David said all the bicolors have beautiful rich purple pink flowers with a reddish centre. In the wild, it is a widespread species and although the plants from different regions might look different, they were all variants on a theme. Geoff mentioned that one of his plants grown from BCSS seed was called *Thelocactus setispinus* var. *robustus*. Next was *Thelocactus bicolor* v. *flavidispinus* which is a plant that Heather Taylor had shown us last month, growing in habitat in Texas. It was a small plant, single headed and no bigger than a golf ball. David said Geoff must have given it so much Tomorite feed that it's gone bonkers. *Thelocactus* are generally not difficult to grow but none are rapid growers.

David said Geoff grows his plants cruelly and doesn't water them early and he doesn't repot them or feed them much. Geoff said if he waters too early, they tend to abort the flowers, and when you have plants in large pots like the ones on the table, you have to be careful with the watering. There is a large volume of compost and the plants are not strongly rooted. David said judging by the weight, he must grow them in John Innes compost. Geoff mentioned he uses #2, but David said the number makes little difference, the feed is gone in 2-3 months. Geoff also uses gravel and sand and Tesco's cat litter (he has some old stock). Grown in John Innes, they won't dry out as quickly as they might in lighter mixtures.

Cath asked how big do they need to be before they would flower? David said those in 3 inch pots should be capable of flowering. Some will flower even smaller (e.g. *T. bicolor* v. *flavidispinus*). The bigger they get, the more flowers they will form. The flowers are as spectacular as some of the big *Echinocereus* flowers.

This is another widely grown plant. We usually called it *T. nidulans* but it also goes under the name *T. rinconensis*. They have flat spines, and when they get old, the spines disintegrate and become fibrous. These generally are solitary. but they have flowered. Geoff said *T. nidulans* has a whitish flower and David said it is usually a silky satiny flower in either pale pink or white. Ben asked whether the plant was an absolute nightmare to repot? Geoff said he wraps a towel all around it and then puts it on its side and takes the pot off.

This is a favourite species for judges – *T. rinconensis* ssp. *phymatohelos* - it has tiniest of spines, and is incredibly slow growing. It is like a flattened disc and is a chalky grey green colour. If it

is grapefruit sized, it must be at least 30 years old, and it is a species to look out for. Geoff said it was raised from Mesa Garden seed (from Steven Brack). The plant was probably 25 or 30 years old. *T. multicephalus* was presumably named because it forms many heads but it was not showing any signs of offsetting yet. *T. buekii* is not a handsome plant – it always has a pinkish purplish tinge but David didn't think it was as attractive as some of the others.

David pointed out the only book on *Thelocactus* – it was written by John Pilbeam and published by the Cactus File. It is long out of print but there is demand for it and copies can cost £20. *T. x mirandus* is a natural hybrid between *T. multicephalus* and *T. tulensis*. *T. heterochromus* is his favourite *Thelocactus* – it's a handsome plant. It's a bicolor relative and he has never seen it larger than a tennis ball and you can win prizes at that size. It's one you might find as young seedlings and it's worth seeking out. It flowers reliably every year and has to be kept frost free. Another plant was called *T. tulensis* ssp. *vaskoanus*. David thought it was probably some Czech name - they tend to make up their own names. Geoff said it has a tiny white flower.

Next were some young *Thelocactus* plants grown by Mark Jakins. The seed was sown last year and there were also some seedlings which had been sown this year as well. They were doing very well. Mark said he grew them in John Innes mixed with garden soil and he puts some ericaceous compost in as well. Two of the pots at the front had been sown in April this year and they were already recognisable plants. David said when he used to grow 1000s of plants from seed, he used to try and sow in the spring and prick them out by June. By the 2nd year you'd have plants close to saleable size. If you prick out the plants and sow them in fresh compost, they will get a growth spurt.

At this time of the year plants often stop growing in the heat of summer but they will have a second spurt of growth. Tom said some of his plants were flowering again at this time (e.g. *Leuchtenbergia*). A lot depends on amount of sun we get and it's not predictable from year to year.

Next was *T. leucacanthus*, one of the least attractive ones. They do make big clumps but they are not as nice as some of the others. Next was a striking plant – it was called *Thelocactus matudae* but is now called *T. tulensis* ssp. *matudae*. David said he has never seen it offsetting. Geoff said it had formed a weird offset on the tip of tubercle near an areole rather than near the base. It has a rich purple flower

and comes from central Mexico. Geoff had talked to John Pilbeam about cutting off the offset but that could mark it or possibly cause the plant to form more offsets.

Next was a plant which was highly sought after when it was first described. This was *T. lausseri* - it is a bicolor type. Geoff said it has a white flower with a pink stripe and has paler supination. As mentioned earlier, Geoff had 2 examples of this - one was offsetting all around and other one was not offsetting at all. Both plants were bought at the same time - so they might even be from same seed pod.

A plant which for decades was called *Echinocactus macdowellii* and which seemed to be impossible on its own roots is actually considered to be *Thelocactus conothelos*. It is a handsome plant with dense white spines. It doesn't flower that freely. Around the base it looks grotty, but that is just aging. These other plants were relatives of *macdowellii* - they have different flower colours and different variety names such as *aurantiacus*, *argenteus* and *conothelos*. The flower bud is always produced in the crown on all of these.

One of the most attractive and popular species is this grey-green bodied plant called *Thelocactus hexaedrophorus*. Variety *major* is not a name which David recognised. It would normally be a single headed plant but Geoff said his plant had divided into two and then into 4 heads, now making a magnificent plant with wonderful spination. You do see it as a 6 inch single headed plant, and sometimes with straight spines and sometimes with oppressed incurving spines - these are geographic variations. Geoff said he got the plant from Tina Wardough. A plant labelled as var *roseiflorus* might have had a different flower. Geoff said he had got it growing again and it does flower every year. Geoff also said he collect plants with different labels and if one was called Fred he'd probably buy it. David said there wasn't a *Thelocactus* called Fred but there is a *Mammillaria* called Fred - Geoff has seen this and he considered it ugly. *T. hexaedrophorus* var *decipiens* is not a name David recognised. *Thelocactus hexaedrophorus* ssp. *lloydii* is a smaller growing shorter spined form, it is less grey and not as handsome as the true one which is always worth looking out for. *Thelocactus hexaedrophorus* var. *fossulatus* also had a bud forming. A plant here that is offsetting freely is *Thelocactus paradensis* (noma nudum) it was grown from BCSS seed and hasn't flowered yet.

Next was another form of *T. bicolor* - a typical one with the dark stems and recurving spines and a spiral in the ribs. which on some forms is really

apparent. Another plant that Ben had put down and which he had thought was a *Ferocactus* was actually *Echinocactus platyacanthus*, which can grow into a giant barrel cactus, a metre across and two metres tall. You often see this plant in garden centre cactus mixes.

Ben had a question on *T x mirandus* - the plant had received some slug damage - will it grow out? David said it will grow down the plant and should eventually disappear. It is amazing that slugs had gone for such a spiny plant. Ben mentioned he had a *Mammillaria boolii* with a dozen flowers - he went into the greenhouse the next day, and a slug had eaten the flowers and part of the body, and that is a plant with hooked centrals and spreading radial spines! David felt that as long as the growing point is intact then the bite should grow out.

We now moved to *Ferocactus*. David pointed to a book which was published by the BCSS and it was authored by John Pilbeam and Derek Bowdery. Derek was the one who really loved *Ferocactus* and he had persuaded John to work on the book, and he was thrilled when the book came out. *Ferocactus* are, along with *Echinocactus*, the true barrel cacti. Some of them can grow feet wide and even taller than him. *Ferocactus hystrix* is from central Mexico and it will grow to a foot across - the locals make candied cactus from it. some of the bigger growing species include *F. gracilis*, *F. stainesii*, *F. pilosus*, and *F. acanthodes*. They can get fantastically big and most are solitary but some will offset. *F. stainesii* and *F. pilosus* have bright red spines on the new growth and look very good - if you spray the spines or wet them, they seem to get even brighter and the plants can look stunning.

Next was *F. latispinus* - it grows amongst grasses and usually only the top half is visible. It remains smaller than some of the others and has flattened wide spines. *F. macrodiscus* is related, and there are two varieties of it in Mexico - one grows in the South and one in the middle of the country, but they are similar. It stays solitary and he has never seen it more than 6 or 7 inches across. It always makes a nice plant but stays short and flattened. Some of the others are round and some grow quite tall. Next we saw an unusual spineless form of *F. glaucescens* - it is eventually covered in straw coloured flowers and can become football sized and will offset. This spineless form was found and has been mass propagated by the Dutch and Japanese. He has seen it flowering when grapefruit sized and it produces a yellowish green flower from the crown. *Ferocactus* is not a huge genus with around 20 species and a few varieties. The rarest is *Ferocactus lindsayi*, a plant which is hardly ever seen in cultivation. It is

difficult to grow and he wasn't sure it was worth the effort. The other plants with the strongly coloured spines are better looking plants. The next plant is now a Ferocactus – it used to be called Hamatocactus - Mike had brought it in and it was a golden-yellow spined form, with yellow flowers - it appeared in nurseries 10 years ago and is quite handsome - they have showy flowers and are nice plants – it is now regarded as *Thelocactus setispinus*. Cliff Thompson used to have a very large plant of this. David mentioned it was time for our mid meeting break, and Ben Turner would cover Haworthias after the break.

At the start of the second half, David asked the audience about which genera we should cover next year. After some discussion it was decided that next year we will cover *Astrophytum*, *Lophophora* and *Turbinicarpus* for cacti and we would cover *Aeonium*, *Greenovia* and *Aechryson* for succulents.

Ben was going to talk about the Haworthias that had been brought along. There was quite a selection, and he thanked the audience for bringing in the plants. He mentioned that there been some renaming within the Haworthia genus and Haworthia has been split into *Haworthia*, *Haworthiopsis* and *Tulista*. He held up a plant called *H. cooperi* which was from Tom Radford but it had glossy leaf surfaces and looked more like *Haworthia comptoniana*. Other plants like *H. fasciata*, *H. reinwardtii* and *H. attenuata* have now been moved into *Haworthiopsis*. Other popular species that are now in this new family are *H. coarctata*, *H. glauca*, *H. limifolia*, *H. koelmaniorum*, *H. tessellata*, *H. venosa*, *H. nigra*, *H. viscosa* and *H. sordida*. These plants do not have windowed leaves and the leaves are smaller and coarser than the plants that are still left in the *Haworthia* group, and some also have tubercles on the leaves. One plant of *H. reinwardtii* was Ted's and he said it had been in that pot since 1985 - and Cath commented that the plant was older than her! *H. coarctata* is somewhat similar in appearance but it has more slender leaves.

Cath's plant was from Bruce's collection and it was probably *H. viscosa*. *H. glauca* v. *herrei* is also a *Haworthiopsis* and it comes from a valley in South Africa. *Haworthia herrei* v. *depauperata* is a synonym of *Haworthiopsis glauca* var. *herrei* and Richard said the latin name means stunted growth. *H. herrei* has a more open habit and fleshier leaves, the others had narrow leaves and hugged the stems.

H. foliosa was a plant that Ben thought looked like something else and it is often described as *Astroloba foliosa*. Haworthias and Gasterias and Aloes are all

inter-related (many will hybridize) and *Astroloba* is considered part of *Haworthia*. There used to be a journal *Alsterworthia International* for people interested in these genera, but it was sunset when Harry Mays passed away., although the material remains online There is also the *Haworthia Society* and they publish a good journal and also discuss Aloes and Gasterias occasionally. Next was another *Haworthiopsis*, Ben thought it might be *H. glabrata* or it might possibly be *Haworthia attenuata* var. *radula*. Instead of having pronounced tubercles / lines, it had white dots. Another plant looked like *H. reinwardtii*. Richard said it was his plant and he needs to chop bits off and restart the plant. The bits that looked dead were not, there is still life in there. Another one had dots on the leaves. We didn't have *H. coarctata* here today but it is a slightly different species. The next plant had been brought in by David and it was a fasciata type. David had brought it in to show off the flower - Ben said all *Haworthias* have the same sort of flower except for a couple which are different - one of them is *Haworthia woolleyi* which is rare and endangered in habitat, and which has some yellow in the flowers. However, in general *Haworthia* flowers are nothing to write about. Next was *Haworthiopsis longiana* - it had the longest leaves he had seen on any *Haworthia*. *Haworthia blackburniae* is a grass species with slender leaves which can be mistaken for grass. With *H. longiana*, it was named after someone called Major F.R. Long. Richard said it reminded him of the name *H. parksiana* which was named not after a Mr Parks but because it was sent from the parks department of the city of East London in South Africa.

Next was another *H. attenuata* type, called cv "Super White". The striations are broad and joined together. There is also another similar variety called cv "Broadband" and David has sold these from time to time. *H. tessellata* is named after the tessellated markings, which are like tiles on a pavement. There were a couple of different forms brought in. This label had Ben's writing on it so it must have been bought from him. David said it has now been placed under *H. venosa* so the new name is *H. venosa* ssp. *tessellata*.

Now for some hybrids - a lot of these come from Japan and Korea these days. *H. emelyae major* had frosting on the leaves, and this might be a selected species rather than a hybrid. Next was *H. truncata* cv "Lady Yu" which was an Ian Armstrong plant. Ian imports many plants from the East (there's good variety but they come at a price) and he also sells nice fluted pots from China. This particular hybrid had substantially bigger heads and better markings than a normal *H. truncata* and it cost £50. This

species is called “horses teeth” because that’s what the truncated leaves look like. Next was *H. venosa tessellata* - with broader leaves. One attractive plant with striations is *H. limifolia* - this was the regular form and there was also a variety with light green leaves which is known as *H. limifolia* v. *ubomboensis*. There was also a variegated version of *H. limifolia* with yellow and green markings through the leaves. Another variegated plant was bought from Stuart Riley and it was *H. cymbiformis variegata*, with white and green markings in the leaves. With these variegated plants, when they form new offsets, the amount of variegation on the offset will depend on where they emerge from - some might have more variegation, some might have less. A hybrid called *H* cv. “*Sugar Plum*” was a hybrid of *H. retusa* - it offsets quite well. In shade it is green, but the leaves gain a purple-red colour if grown in the sun. Another plant similar to *H. truncata* is *H. maughanii* - this plant was over 25 years old and it had a dozen heads but it had not been repotted for a long time. Richard mentioned that the leaves of *H. maughanii* grow in a spiral. It is considered a variety of *H. truncata* these days.

David said he had been in habitat in Oudtshoorn, and the leaves of the *Haworthia truncata* he saw there were starting to spiral. A few more hybrids brought in by David were obtained from a continental nursery who had created random paintbrush hybrids with some *H. truncata* or *H. maughanii* in them. A plant of *H. obtusa* had a lot of offsets on the plant. Next was *Haworthia pumila* or *H. maxima*, which is now considered a Tulista. It is one of the bigger growing Haworthias and can form quite a large head. *H. mageratifera* can grow to 6 inches across and even a foot tall. The leaves are very rigid. Another plant was a cultivar called “*Donut*” - there is an indentation in the centre of each tubercle and hence these tubercles look like ring donuts. David said it originally came from Australia. Richard said the name *pumila* means small because the plant was originally called *Haworthia*. For a *Haworthia* it is quite large, so it appears to be misnamed. Ben said that story reminds him of a bulb called *Scilla peruviana*, which was brought back from the Mediterranean on a ship called HMS Peru and hence it had nothing to do with Peru.

A plant of *H. retusa* had the clear windows on the leaves. *H. decipiens* was Tom’s plant - but Ben said his plant with the same name looked quite different - his was forming a spiral. David mentioned that in one cultivation meeting, Bruce did a session on propagating Haworthias, and with plants like *H. decipiens* or *H. arachnoidea* - plants with thin non-fleshy leaves - he just sliced them down the middle

of the rosette (into 4 sections) which he proceeded to pot up. He showed us plants in his sales tray which had been propagated in exactly the same way. Ben said he had got the next plant at a Wiltshire raffle but he wasn’t sure what it was - it had more rigid leaves. He also mentioned that Cath had brought along some plants which she had planted as seeds a few years ago but they were growing well and would go on to form some interesting plants.

Ben said that Richard has brought along a selection of plants and a diagram showing the relationships between the *Haworthia* species, and he had brought along some *Astrolobas*. His were still labelled *Astroloba* and he advised that even if you decide to change your label, you should keep the old names - they sometimes give you more information about the plant’s history and origins. Even if the plant has been renamed, you can continue to use any previously published name on the label. He had brought along 4 species, although 2 were labelled the same (*Astroloba spiralis*). The plants grow as tall plants. Richard said there is also another related genus called *Poelnitzia* and Ian Acton had given him a plant once - it had red flowers which were upward facing and tubular, so they were more interesting than *Haworthia* flowers.

Ben said that *Haworthias* form intergeneric hybrids with *Gasteria* and *Aloe* and next was a *Gasterhaworthia* produced by Verhoeven Jozef and called “A1” - this plant was originally from Geoff Card and it was probably a plant Geoff may have obtained at ELK.

With books he mentioned John Pilbeam’s famous book which was called “*Haworthia and Astroloba – A Collectors Guide*” and also “*Haworthia Revisited*” by Bruce Bayer - Bruce has done extensive work in the past and is an acknowledged expert. There is a painting of *H. bayeri* on the front of the book. There have been some newer books but the library does not have them.

The *Haworthia* Society hold a convention and one is due to be held in the UK this October - Geoff Penrose has attended them in the past.

Vinay Shah

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **November 5th** and although there are not expected to be any fireworks, **David Neville** will be showing us a selection of the impressive and mature plants that can easily be admired in some of the Cactus and Succulent gardens that can be enjoyed whilst on your holidays in the Canary Islands. Outdoor plantings give the plants optimum conditions in which to flourish and grow, often at an astonishing rate, and the climate on the islands gives them the opportunity to grow almost all year round. In the UK we rarely see any large growing species enjoying free root run conditions, so maybe we should just forget just how large some of our favourite plants can grow when they are given a chance!

Forthcoming Events

Sat	5 th	Oct	Portsmouth	Autumn Show: Christ Church Hall, London Road, Cosham, PO6 3NB
Sat	12 th	Oct	Isle of Wight	Madagascar (Hazel Taylor)
Sat	19 th	Oct	Portsmouth	TBC (Cliff Thompson)
Tue	5 th	Nov	Southampton	Cactus & Succulent Gardens in the Canaries (David Neville)
Sat	9 th	Nov	Isle of Wight	Another Year another Slideshow. A year in plants and flowers
Sat	16 th	Nov	Portsmouth	AGM & Social Evening
Tue	3 rd	Dec	Southampton	Annual General Meeting, followed by Christmas Social

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