

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Branch Secretary

David Neville
6 Parkville Road
Swaythling
Southampton
Hampshire
SO16 2JA
davnev@btopenworld.com
(023) 80551173 or
07974 191354

Newsletter Editor

Vinay Shah
29 Heathlands Road
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO53 1GU
sotonbess@gmail.com
(023) 80261989

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Editorial

The longer winter nights are very obvious now, but the shortest day (and Christmas) is only three weeks away. As for the weather, I have noticed ice on the car on a few occasions when I was working late so I suppose the chances of colder weather will continue to increase at this point.

Below are the committee reports that were submitted to me for inclusion in the newsletter. Cathryn has just given birth to a boy and I think she can be excused. Peter Down usually submits a report but he was recently hospitalised.

Committee Reports

Secretary's Report

With 2024 drawing to a close it is time to look back and assess the past 12 months. Although the Branch has attracted a number of new members during the year, this hasn't resulted in any increase in attendance at our monthly meetings. In fact, we have had less than 20 people at some meetings this year, which is among the lowest number we have attracted over the past 15 years or so. This is very disappointing, and we don't really know why. One factor could possibly be the fact that we have less visiting speakers nowadays than in years gone by, but since Covid the number of speakers willing to travel long distances to give talks has reduced dramatically, and all branches of the BCSS are dealing with the same problem. At least we still hold 12 meetings each year, whereas many branches only hold 10 or 11. Most Branches charge a monthly attendance fee, and they charge for refreshments..... we do neither of these things. If anyone has any thoughts about the reduced

attendance at meetings I would be interested to hear your ideas.

I have been arranging the Branch Programme for around 15 years, and have been Branch Secretary for almost as long, and I think that perhaps it would be best for the health of the Branch if I were to stand down as Secretary, but I have been suggesting this since 2019 and no-one has expressed any interest whatsoever in taking on the role. I feel that a new Secretary might come up with ideas to re-invigorate the Branch, but there seems to be no interest from any of our members. I have increasing responsibilities attending to my elderly father, and I am concerned that if more of my time is taken up in that regard, I shall be unable to reliably attend all meetings in the future.

I would like to thank the members of the Branch Committee, along with the other members of the Branch who have helped ensure that our meetings run smoothly, and I hope that we can rely upon your assistance throughout the coming year.

Much of the Branch Programme for 2025 is on our website, and I hope to be able to complete the remaining dates in due course.

Can I please remind everyone that our January meeting is always made up of 5 or 6 short talks or presentations by Branch members; please give some thought as to whether you could put together a 10 to 15 minute long talk, and let me know ASAP. Currently I have just one volunteer (Tom Radford), so I am very keen to find some more people to fill the empty spaces.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very enjoyable and Happy Christmas and New Year, and look forward to seeing you at our meetings in 2025.

David Neville

Plant Sales Report

Plant sales at branch meetings were a popular activity in 2024 with around 8 different members bringing plants to sell over the course of the year. Out of this number, 5 members were regular sellers,

and we also handled plant sales for our visiting speakers. Unfortunately, due to the absence of the Plant Sales Manager at the May, October and November meetings there is no plant sales data for these months.

We turned over more than £500 over the course of the year in member sales, excluding any sales for the months of May, October and November. One name stands out on the sellers list and our very own Ted Smith brought along a superb selection of plants throughout the course of year. A big well done to all sellers, our meetings wouldn't be the same without you!

Ian Acton very kindly brought along his superb plants to at least 5 of our meetings with all proceeds going to the branch. Ian's plant sales raised a total of £64 for the branch (excluding any sales at the May, October and November meetings), with many unusual and choice species on offer. A big thank you to Ian for his kind generosity towards the branch and for allowing members to purchase such superb plants at very reasonable prices.

Thank you to everyone who brought plants to sell over the course of the year. Plant sales at the monthly meetings are a big draw for all our members and I hope we will continue to see a full plant sales table at our 2025 meetings.

Ben Turner, Plant Sales Manager

Last Month's Meeting

David mentioned we had apologies from Jane, Alice, Ben, Peter Down and Ian Acton. Our next meeting in December will be the AGM. David said he needed to know if people currently on the committee were willing to re-stand. He believed that the branch does need some changes. The number of people attending our meetings have decreased and are now only around 20, which is half the attendance that we used to have before Covid. David said he had been secretary for 10 years and some new blood might rejuvenate the branch. We don't do displays any more because we don't have members with big collections, and we haven't held an open day since Mark and Rebecca held one a year or two ago. Every month he does get notified of new members who have joined the society and who live in this region but they just don't come to the meetings. He did mention that Stuart has moved to this area from Wiltshire Branch and was at the meeting today.

Richard mentioned that Roger and Linda Labbett were present today. They had come along since the talk might feature a few Aeoniums. They were both on the committee, as Chairman and Treasurer a couple of decades ago. They also ran Cirio Publishing, which produced a few cacti and succulent handbooks. David mentioned that Ted Smith had brought in runner bean seeds - there were two types. "Black Knight" and "White Lady" - help yourself to them. However do not plant them until next spring when the danger of frost is past. (They can be started indoors in April). It was good to see Cathryn at the meeting - her baby was due in under a week. (And David did confirm that baby Francis was born in the middle of November and both Cath and the baby were doing well).

Cactus & Succulent Gardens in the Canaries

David said he intended to talk about three different cactus and succulent gardens in the Canaries. Apart from the fact that several succulents originate from the Canaries, a large range of cacti and succulents enjoy the conditions which are present there. The larger growing plants seem to do well and are successful and spectacular, but the smaller shallow rooted plants like Rebutias do not do so well in the hot conditions. David said quite a few people from the branch had visited the islands and he showed some maps which illustrated the relative size of the islands. Tenerife is his favourite, and Gran Canaria is also beautiful. Fuerteventura and Lanzarote are the more eastern islands and it can be quite windy there, especially off-season in early spring or winter. La Palma is a place where Ian Acton has been a few times - it is the greenest of the islands. La Gomera is a small island where you can go on day trips and he has been there a couple of times. El Hierro is not an island he has visited, it is supposed to be nice but it is quite small. There's one more island called La Graciosa, but it's not inhabited.

Tenerife used to have a famous cactus park in the tourist area in Los Cristianos a few hundred yards from the coast. It was high maintenance and there were some magnificent plants there. Twenty years ago, it was at a peak, but 10 years ago everything was dead. There had been financial issues and they were not watering the plants. He is not aware of any decent parks in Tenerife at the moment. You can wander around and see a few plants planted out in the middle of a roundabout or in hotel gardens. There are couple of smaller gardens near Santa Cruz - and Tom Radford talked about the Palmetum which is a palm garden - it has been building up its collection of cacti and succulent plants but it is a relatively new venture.

The most famous garden is Le Jardin de Cactus at Lanzarote - he had shown us pictures of this at the talk in January 2023, having been there a year before so he wouldn't cover it today apart from some brief details. It was designed by César Manrique in 1990 - he was a famous painter, sculptor, architect and artist, although he passed away in 1992, so it was one of his last projects. He had a lot of influence on the islands. There is a large green sculpture of a spiky cactus on the main road outside the garden. There aren't that many tourist attractions in Lanzarote - it is quite barren - so all the coach trips and day trips seem to include a visit to the garden. It's the same for cruise ships which visit the island. A porthole window looking at the reception area contains some metal artwork of a cactus. Some pictures showed the overall layout. The whole of the gardens are in a sunken pit, and it will take you about an hour to wander around. We could see from the height of the people in the photograph that some of the plants are quite tall, perhaps up to 25 feet in height. There were some succulents too. These large plants are Euphorbias. The signs at the venue say 10,000 species but David said he'd be surprised if there were more than 500. There was terracing and pathways and some of smaller growing plants were planted there, and most people don't wander there, so they would miss seeing them. The larger plants like the Cerei were doing well. The weather conditions mean the plants grow virtually all year round. They are watered in the summer months and they also get some seasonal rains as well. David said the hillsides in the region look bare, and it depends on the amount of sun they receive - Lanzarote is barren compared to Tenerife or Gran Canaria.

The next botanic garden was the Jardin Botanico on the island of Gran Canaria, and it is just south of Las Palmas. Entry is free, and it's a really nice place to go to. There are a lot of cacti and succulents and also native plants growing here. The sign mentioned David Bramwell and he has written a book on the flora of the Canaries and there is also an Aeonium (*Aeonium davidbramwellii*) named after him. There was a second, more modern sign for the garden. There are two entrances, a lower entrance and a higher entrance where you can park and there's also a café. That is at the top of the hillside and it is quite an effort to visit both the entrances. His first visit here was with Margaret Corina. *Dracaena draco* is the dragon tree, and these plants would have been transplanted here - they usually grow on steep hillsides. They seemed to be settling in. In Mexico "cardon" refers to tall cacti but here it refers to plants of *Euphorbia canariensis* which grows on most of the islands - this is a young clump which is about 6 foot high, they grow really huge. It's an

easy plant to grow and also used as a grafting stock. Grafting Euphorbias is tricky because of the sap but people do manage it. Next was *Euphorbia stenoclada* - it's good as an alternative to barbed wire. They are usually plain green but this one had a grayish appearance. It's a very unfriendly plant and this was head height as well. There were bedded out aloes and these always seem to be in flower. It was January/February and many were in bud with some flowers opening. It's difficult to name these plants - they cross with each other easily and many are not true species - but this was still an impressive clump - it was something like 6 feet high and 8-10 feet across. There was *Aeonium lancerottense* in the foreground - the genus Aeonium originates in the Canaries. Kleinia is the name given to Senecio from the Canaries - we saw *Senecio kleinia* which is now known as *Kleinia neriifolia*. The bare, multi-branching stems were tipped with clumps of leaves and it is deciduous - it was a metre or so across. You could see various aloe flowers around. *Opuntia galapageia* from the Galapagos was grown here and there were a number of mature specimens - the base of the stems form trunks and they have spines on them for protection (from the tortoises?). These were 10-12 feet tall plants. David said Stuart Riley propagates this and it sells for a good price but if people saw these plants they might be less inclined to grow them. *Kalanchoe beharensis* is usually a brown leaved plant but the plants here were green - it will grow to 8 feet tall and it's a native of Madagascar. The stems are 2-3 inches in diameter and it had lots of flowers - it's handsome but gets big quickly and it would be too large for a greenhouse. *Aloe dichotoma* normally would have a single stem and this plant had multiple stems so it might have been damaged or it could be multiple plants. Richard wondered whether it might be *Aloe ramosissima* which is a miniature version of *A. dichotoma* and which does form multiple stems.

There was a plant of *Agave victoria reginae* - it was very handsome but it isn't the best form - you can find plants with more white markings on the leaves. These persists as the plant grows, so if you are looking at a young plant, do find one with the best markings because they will look better and a plant without the white markings won't develop them later. Next was *Aloe filifera* (or one of its relatives) it has peeling filiferous hairs on the leaf edges and it also has needle sharp leaf tips. *Aloe ferox* and *Aloe marlothii* are two plants similar to the ones in the photo - you see that the 2 plants are similar, but the flowers on the two are different. The plants here are different, they form a single woody trunk, many of the old leaves are retained and they never branch but it takes a while to form a good specimen. Next was *Aloe saponaria* - it's one of the smaller spotted-leaf

aloes and this form is very successful in the Mediterranean and the Canaries, and you will see them naturalised in waste ground and even the beach. It's a pretty plant but it's a tough old thing and you can see it forms offsets and branches, eventually they make big low growing clumps and they have lovely flower heads. Next was *Agave titanota* - plants of this can have nicely adorned leaf forms. It comes from Oaxaca in southern Mexico so it's tender in the winter - it needs to be in a heated greenhouse. It has bone or horn like patterns around the leaf edge and some exotic versions are coming in from Thailand and Japan and selling at very high prices. He has seen it in the wild and it grows in the same hills as *Echeveria laui* and *Mammillaria huitzilopochtli*. The young plants of *A. titanota* have this pattern on them but the larger mature plants have 3-4 feet long leaves and the pattern disappears. *Agave attenuata* is the friendliest of the agaves - it has no spikes and soft fleshy leaves. You frequently see this growing in hotel gardens and in window boxes and balconies anywhere it's warm - it's a friendly plant compared to the others. They offset from the base and can have a clump of 50 or more plants.

Next was *Abromeitiella* - it's a bromeliad. They have thick succulent leaves and in habitat you will see mounds with 100s of heads. Being bromeliads they are not allowed in our shows. It comes from the Andes and you can find lovely spreading mounds with thousands of heads. There are some smaller growing plants dotted round. There were some *Mammillarias* and *Coryphanthas*, but they get lost in a collection of big plants. This is *Cephalocereus senilis*. We also saw an *Espostoa* and *Pachycereus pringliei*. If you look at the hillside behind, you can see plants of *Dracaena draco* and the palm *Phoenix canierensis*. He saw that growing in Spain everywhere. He had grown them here but lost all three plants - they all died after a severe winter. Has anyone else tried to grow it? Someone from the audience mentioned that there are a few of them growing at Southsea Common, apparently they were planted in 1996. We saw *Cephalocereus* again - there is a global shortage of *Cephalocereus* seed but he wasn't sure if these would produce any seed. We saw another big *Euphorbia* - the trunk looks like a tree trunk and he was able to walk under the lowest branch, but he wasn't sure of the species name. The next plant looks like an *Agave* - but it's not - it was a *Furcraea* plant - these grow in southern Mexico and Central America - they are cold sensitive but can grow very large. They are popular in warmer countries, and he has seen them in Brazil being grown as ornamental plants with giant rosettes. They set lots of seed but they also produce 100s of

bulbils which can be a problem. It sends up a spike like a telegraph pole.

Euphorbia milli is sometimes also referred to as *Euphorbia splendens* and it is "the crown of thorns" with coloured "flowers" which are actually leaf bracts. This was a low growing one, the thicker stemmed plants are more common these days. *Echinocactus grusonii* is a plant that would be found at every cactus garden. And usually not just one but lots. These plants were not as large as some he has seen. They are usually solitary unless they have been damaged or are very old. They produce flowers but these are not that impressive. Next was an *Aloe* with spectacular red flowers. You can see lots of shrubbery in the hillside behind. David mentioned there are large lizards (15-18 inches long) which can make you jump if you hear the rustle when they make their sudden movements. Another *Aloe* wasn't in flower yet but it had a cone-like flower head. *Oreocereus celsianus* comes from Argentina and southern Bolivia and it's a tough plant that can take some frost. There were a few dried flowers on some of these stems. A *Cyphostemma seitzianum* had made a large caudex and the stems and leaves are annual growths. *Pachypodium lamerei* had formed a bottle shaped stem - it is single stemmed until it flowers then it starts to branch. Another *Cyphostemma* was dormant - they are in the grape family and they are strong growing plants. A *Ficus* had hanging roots. Growing in the shade was *Didierea madagascariensis* is from Madagascar. *Ficus socotrana* comes from Socotra. Next was another *Didiera*. We saw more *Pachypodiums* - *Pachypodium geayi* will grow even larger than *lamerei* and it has white perfumed flowers. *Notocactus magnificus* comes from Brazil, there are forms with more blue colouring to the bodies. *Opuntia invicta* is from Baja. A big plant of *Mammillaria scrippsiana* had tufts of white wool in the axils between the tubercles and it was growing around the rock. *Espostoa lanata* also produces a cephalium but it is lateral rather than apical. It grows on the side of the plant facing away from the sun so that the flowers can survive a little longer.

Next was *Echinocactus grusonii*, and *Ferocactus glaucescens* which grows in the same valley as *Cephalocereus senilis*, in Hidalgo in Mexico - it makes nice clumps. *Echinocactus ingens* is now called *Echinocactus platyacanthus* - it has flat topped ribs when it gets larger. He has never seen it flower in the UK. It is much slower than *E. grusonii* but in habitat it can grow to 6 feet in height and 3 feet across. They flower from the crown rather than a ring like *E. grusonii*,

There were heads of yellow flowers on the aeoniums - they produce clusters of flowers and go on to form lots of dust-like seed if pollinated. There was a large *Yucca elephantipes* - it is not a hardy one but it can grow very large and was twice as high as a nearby building. A couple of species of opuntia produce these red seed pods, and people in the US call it the Christmas cactus - it was *Cylindropuntia leptocaulis*. It has spines 2 inches long and they are very sharp and painful. There were some nice plantings in the lava - with Aeoniums and *Dracaena* and *Euphorbia balsamifera* in the front. This plant had turned into a partial cristate. When aeoniums grow really well, that's how many flowers they can produce - every rosette can produce a terminal inflorescence. After this the stems then become very unsightly, but the younger stems will grow larger. Next was *Aloe dichotoma* and so the previous one may indeed have been *A. ramosissima*. *Phoenix canierensis* was dwarfing the large plants of *Dracaena draco*. Up on the hillsides, each of these green mounds are *Euphorbia canierensis* and they are probably 6 feet by 6 feet. There were lots of palms here but he doesn't know much about them. There was automatic irrigation buried in the soil to keep them going. Other ornamental plants included the bird of paradise *Strelitzia reginae*. A native Ceropegia was a stick ceropegias with slender stems - this one has a yellow flower, another one has brown/purple flowers. They have long linear leaves. The flowers are produced from peduncles which flower year after year. At one of entrances there were some nice iron gates with the Ceropegia lantern flowers on them. These must have cost a lot to produce.

We resumed for the second half of the talk. We were in Gran Canaria previously, and now we were in Fuerteventura, which like Lanzarote is just a barren rock, there's not much to see in terms of natural vegetation except down in south in the Jandia peninsula where there is more moisture and where *Euphorbia handiensis* grows. There is one cactus garden there which is quite extensive with succulent planting and it's part of a zoo as well - it's called Oasis Park. There are hordes of camels which give people camel rides but they do stink. There were Giraffes here as well and they are beautiful and there is a feeding area where you can feed and stroke them but they have a 15 inch long tongue which can be a bit of a surprise. There were elephants and zebras as well. There seems to be a problem with the crocodiles - there were 2-3 pens full of crocodiles and lots of babies - there were some pretty big ones there.

You go in to the park by the entrance near the zoo. The cactus garden is several hundred yards from the

zoo entrance. He has been there two times - first in 2015/2016 and he also went there in February 2024 - unfortunately, everything had gone downhill. He did talk to one of the staff, and was told that they were not allowed to use as much water as in the past due to the cost. So the plants are unfortunately suffering. The pictures he would show were all from his first trip. Most of the plants are in slightly raised beds. They were all growing in ground up lava - they have plenty of that, and it means that the plants do need to be fed. This is *Echinocactus platyacanthus* - it will eventually get more taller than broad. There were lots of Cerei, and again the smaller things don't really do as well as the larger specimens. Next was a *Stenocereus* from Mexico. Some of them branch from low down and others are like candelabras. Knowing their habit gives you some clue as to what they are. A *Furcraea* was offsetting around the base. *Pachycereus pringliei* is a tall cactus and it can get bigger than the Saguaro (*Carnegiea gigantea*) - these come from Baja, California. There was a younger *Dracaena draco*, with some *Echinocactus grusonii* in the background. The plants were well maintained but they aren't well watered. There's no natural water in the soil and only occasional rain. These were some bigger older *E. grusonii* and a big Euphorbia - he was told it was *E. ammak* - but he thought it looked more like a *E. trigona* form. Given the size, it's not suitable for a small pot or a small greenhouse. This is *E. grusonii* but it's the spineless form - sometimes this is called variety *inermis*. There were plenty of typical golden barrels here. In Tenerife he has seen farms growing acres of *E. grusonii* and *Ferocactus* and *Melocactus* for export to Europe, so it's not hard for them to get hold of these plants. They have gone overboard here so they must have got a cheap lorryload. These had gone bonkers with flowering - the brown area is filled with dried flowers. This multi-headed golden barrel must have been damaged as a young plant since there is no main head. Or it could be a group of plants growing together. In the long term they will make magnificent plants.

Someone had done some serious pruning on a plant of *Stenocereus stellatus* from Mexico (which can be used as a spiny hedge) - it was probably spilling onto the path. A young *Nolina recurvata* plant (this used to be called *Beaucarnea recurvata*) was flowering, probably for the first time. They do get very large eventually. The next cactus - *Stetsonia coryne* comes from Argentina and it has a sprawling habit and long sharp spines. Next were some aloes - those that form clusters were in the foreground - and those that remain solitary and form trunks were in the background. We then saw an *Adenia spinosa* - it was in its dormant state and had no leaves on the stems above the caudex. It comes from east Africa

and is touchy in cultivation since it needs some warmth. *Adenia glauca* is easier to grow and can get to a few inches in just one year from seed. Another plant of *Adenia spinosa* did still have some green leaves on it. You can't beat a bit of colour and *Ferocactus pilosus* (used to be called *Ferocactus stainesii*) always grows columnar and can reach 6-7 feet in height. It will eventually cluster. In habitat it can make huge clumps with 50 heads, and the new heads are always brightly coloured since the new growth is covered in red spines. If you had a spray bottle and sprayed the plant, the red colour intensifies. This is a Moringa which forms a bottle tree - it has a swollen base. When he was at Lullingstone a couple of months ago, he met Tony Mace who said that he had a new interest, and he was growing bottle trees now. He's in his late 70s and they also need a lot of warmth as well so David was quite surprised. *Trichocereus atacamensis* is a sturdy stemmed Ceroid plant from Chile which forms large plants in habitat, the plant here can be considered a baby. Next was a spineless *E. grusonii* in flower - it's lovely big plant with silly little flowers.

Next was a *Cyphostemma* - some come from Namibia and this one is completely dormant - *C. seitzianum* which seem to grow nicely in this climate. It is one of the smaller ones - some do get large in the wild. Next was a larger species and this was either *C. bainesii* or *C. juttae*. On a trip to Namibia he saw some which were 6-7 feet tall with trunks so large you couldn't get your arms around them. This plant was turning brown and would shed its leaves soon. Next was a pony tail palm (*Nolina recurvata*) when it gets large. Some have a reddish pink tinge to the flowers and others are yellowish. They have this typical shape, which looks like it continues underground but that's not the case. These were 12-15 feet tall. He has seen them in Mexico growing amongst oak trees. Jim Roskilly used to grow one on his veranda and Roger Labbett said he grew one to 7 feet under a card port. David said he remembered seeing huge ones in Balboa park in San Diego. This is a *Cyphostemma* with seed pods but they only have one seed per pod which is why the seed is expensive. This one looks like a *Yucca* but it's not a succulent. Next was *Hamatocactus hamatacanthus* which is now classified as a *Ferocactus*. These are nice sized plants with offsets around the base. We saw some of the views and vistas that make this place attractive. There was a *Pachycereus* in the foreground. Some of the plants had a pile of rocks around their base. perhaps it was for support. An *Espositoa* from Peru was an elegant plant, one of branches had no cephalium - but the main stem did have a cephalium, growing from a low point all the way to the top. You could see the

remains of flowers in the cephalium - that is the region in which the flowers are produced. This one had a ginger-coloured cephalium and it was *Espositoa guentheri* (previously called *Vatricania guentheri*). It looks attractive but you wouldn't want to stroke that area due to the spines. This is another of the big growing *Trichocereus* (now placed in *Echinopsis*) - they have these long tubed nocturnal flowers. The flowers, just like *Echinopsis* only last one night and fade the next day. We saw another sign mentioning cardon again. When they flower, they seem to open them all at the same time. There were various other plants here. *Stenocereus* had upright slender stems branching only from the base. This is *Aloe saponaria* - they are spotted Aloes, the group includes *Aloe saponaria*, *Aloe khamiesensis* and others. They have the same habit but different patterning on their leaves. This is *Aloe broomii* - you do see it in garden centres as young plants. The plant suffers from leaf tip die back - if they don't get enough water or if they are too stressed. That die-back won't ever go away. It's quite attractive, and this one has reddish brown thorns or teeth on the leaves. It stays solitary and never makes a stem, it will grow as a low-growing rosette.

This is another flowering *Cephalocereus* but it's on a different island to the last one we saw. The plant behind it had a big hole in it for some reason. We could see the cephalium but we didn't see any flower remains. There are some *Adenias* here - they come from Africa and Arabia. *Adenium obesum* is the most famous one. They are in the *Apocynaceae* and produce a couple of seed horns which are filled with wind-borne seeds. We saw a stand of *Ferocactus pilosus*. There were some signs of flowering on the top, and just look at the intense colour of the new spines.

Next was *Didierea trollii* - it's unusual because when young the stems sprawl from the crown but then when it's mature it sends up the stems vertically - this happens after a few years. David said there used to be a couple in Verwood who owned a nursery, Joan and Dick Smeaten, and she had a mature plant of this. They had a magnificent collection. Another plant from the spiny forest of Madagascar is *Alluaudia*. Some more of the *Opuntia galapageia* was here, and in the foreground was a golden form of *Opuntia microdasys*. We saw plants of possibly *Aloe ferox* and *Aloe marlothii* with thorns on the back of the leaves and *Aloe dichotoma* again - the quiver tree from northern south Africa and Namibia. Next was a relative of *Aloe saponaria* with a flower, but he couldn't think of the species name.

Next was a *Monadenium* which is a member of the Euphorbiaceae - they have recently all been renamed as Euphorbias. They have a hooded flower. A lot of these are from Tanzania and Mozambique and need at least 10°C in the winter. This is *Euphorbia handiensis* from the Jandia peninsula which is just 20-30 miles from this park. It's a very remote place and no people live there. He tried to find out about buses to visit it, but there was only one bus down per day and one bus back. Ian Acton has seen it in habitat. We saw another adenium seed pod - they grow in pairs, rather like on the Stapeliads. A plant of *Aloe dichotomoa* or *ramossissima* looked small - *A.ramossissima* normally has masses of stems.

We saw some short leaved agaves. These are offered for sale as *Agave potatorum* or *Agave verschaffeltii* - some forms stay with that leaf form - but some others revert to a mature leaf shape. One of the plants had dozens of offsets. Agave flower spike have two shapes - they can be simple unbranched and multi-branched. This is a big Mexican agave and it looked like *Agave salmiana*. A couple from the Isle of Wight branch - Wally and Dagmar Gilkerson used to have a large plant of this in their back garden in Ryde - it was 4 foot high and 4 foot wide. We saw the flower spike of *Agave attenuata* - the flowers open from the bottom and work their way up. Quite attractive, especially to insects. Next was a larger plant, more than 6 feet tall. It was *Agave franzosinii* which has a silvery blue look and a giant rosette. Another plant showed the other form of the Agave flower spike. Next was *Agave nizandensis* which grows in the southern coast of Oaxaca in Mexico. A large columnar Ferocactus was covered in a very large number of dried flowers. *Agave angustifolia* was an attractive plant but it is not hardy enough for our gardens. We saw a typical *Agave americana* on the left and the right a *Furcraea* showing how similar they appear. However the leaves are not as thick or succulent for the *Furcraea*. We then saw a very pale variegated *Agave macroacantha* - but it probably won't survive since it has a very pale green midstripe and not enough chlorophyll so it is going to be prone to scorch. The last side showed a glass of aperol spritz back at the hotel.

We had run out of time, so we didn't get a chance to see the pictures from the third garden - David said those were at Cactualdea Park in Gran Canaria, in the village of Aldea. They have big plantings of plants and you do have to pay an entrance fee. Oasis is good for a day trip, with the plants and the animals to entertain you.

David Neville

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **Tuesday January 7th** and it will feature Members' Mini Talks - Short Talks by Branch Members. This is usually quite an interesting meeting because of the variety of talks.

We do need a few more volunteers to present at that meeting, so please have a word with David if you have some slides or material that you can share with us at that meeting.

Forthcoming Events

Sat	14 th	Dec	Isle of Wight	AGM and American Supper
Sat	21 st	Dec	Portsmouth	no meeting
Tue	7 th	Jan	Southampton	Members' Evening - Short Talks by Branch Members
Sat	11 th	Jan	Isle of Wight	TBC
Sat	18 th	Jan	Portsmouth	Why are there no fossil cacti? (David Martill)
Tue	4 th	Feb	Southampton	Brazil Part 2 - Minas Gerais (Cliff Thompson)

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

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