

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

April 2008



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Editorial

British Summer Time started this weekend and Sunday was quite a nice day, especially in comparison to what we've experienced over the preceding fortnight! I've given my plants a couple of drinks of water this year and there are signs of new growth and buds on some of the cacti, although the only flowers out at present are those on some Aloes and Haworthias. Some Echeverias have started to form flower spikes too.

Announcements

Our participation at the **Spring Flower and Garden Show** at Broadlands can be considered a success but the weather was about as unhelpful as it could be. On all three days, there was a chilly wind and temperatures hardly rose into double figures. The public stayed away, and plant sales ran at around half the level of previous years. This also applied to Prickly Potting - last year almost 400 children took part but this year the number was nearer 200. Thank you to all the members who braved the freezing conditions by attending or helping out at the event!

Zone 12 (Sussex) will be hosting the Derek Desborough Memorial **Lecture** at Crawley Horticultural Hall on the afternoon 13th of April. The speaker at this event will be Graham Charles who will give two talks (*Copiapoas in Habitat* and *South American Habitats Under Threat*). A poster detailing this event is on the front table. Tickets cost £5 and include a mid-afternoon buffet.

Zone 9 will be holding a **Convention** on Sunday 20th April, at Hardwicke Village Hall, near Gloucester. Speakers include Martin Lowry (*Rebut's Jewels of the Andes*), Petr Pavelka (*Plant Hunting in Madagascar*) and John Miller (*Turbinicarpus in Habitat and Cultivation*). There will be plant sales and tickets are £12, including lunch and tea.

The **Having Cactus Mart** will take place at the usual venue (Dukes Halls in Hornchurch, Essex) on the 10th of May. Admission is £1 and at least 14 nurseries will be selling plants there. Portsmouth Branch will be running a coach up to this event.

Mark and Rebecca Jakins are planning to hold an **Open Day** on the afternoon of 10th May. They live in Hedge End, about 3 miles east of our meeting hall. Visitors will be welcome between 2pm and 5pm, and refreshments will be provided. A map will be provided at the next branch meeting.

A date and venue for the **2008 Branch Dinner** has been decided. It will be held at the same location as last year (the Luzborough House), on Friday, 11th July. Please let a member of the committee know if you plan to attend.

Please note that we will not be taking part at Whiteley's Garden Event in May.

Last Month's Meeting

Plants of Interest

Margaret Corina had brought along some *Plants of Interest*. She mentioned that she had picked out things that were in flower, although many of the flowers has closed in the evening. *Kalanchoe rauhii* was 18 inches tall and had orange yellow flowers. *Babiana pygmaea* is a member of the Iris family and had yellow flowers. *Aloe variegata* had produced a 12" spike bearing a dozen orange flowers. *Cephalophyllum subulatoides* was a mesemb bearing 5 magenta flowers. *Ruschia stenophylla* was another mesemb, with pink flowers. The yellow flowers of *Aloinopsis schoonesii* had closed up.

Delosperma sphalmanthoides was a miniature in a 2" pot and it had magenta flowers. *Cheiridopsis amabilis* was also in a 2" pot and it had white flowers. Finally there was a *Sansevieria* plant which Jim Roskilly had brought along – it was unusual because the leaves were arranged in a fan shape, rather than the usual spiral.

The tape recorder which I use to record our talks decided to give up the ghost (and for good measure, chew up the tape!) midway through last month's talk but fortunately I did have my written notes to rely on. In addition, Tom Radford was kind enough to provide me with a list of the slides he showed.

Asclepiadaceae

The talk at the March meeting was given by one of our own members - Tom Radford. He mentioned that when he first started collecting cacti, Mammillarias were a big thing, along with a few Notocacti and Gymnocalyciums, and succulents, apart from a few mesembs were rather scarce. He tried growing a wide variety of plants and started dabbling with the Stapeliads, and had mixed success for a few years but eventually the plants became infested with mealy bug and he lost everything. After a long gap of almost 20 years he re-started growing them a few years ago.

He commented that it seems to be harder to grow them these days because it is damper and warmer in the winter and the plants don't like this – they are quite susceptible to rot or botrytis. He also stated that "some are difficult" and "some are very difficult"! The other thing he finds difficult is the naming - 3 people in South Africa (Plowes, Bruyns, Leach) have been coming out with new names. A new checklist (*A Checklist of Brachystelma, Ceropegia and the genera of the Stapeliads*, available from the International Asclepiad Society for £17) has come out, and some of the plants have undergone 3 or 4 name changes in recent decades.

We started with a picture of the Little Mermaid in Copenhagen, Denmark. It is quite a small statue and Tom said he was surprised no one's nicked it yet. Also, it was positioned in a shipyard and not a romantic harbour. The reason for showing this picture was that he was working in Copenhagen at the time when his interest in Stapeliads started. The only book of note at the time was the *Handbook of Succulent Plants* by Hermann Jacobsen, and Jacobsen happened to be the director of the Botanic Gardens at the University of Kiel. Tom decided to visit this collection, and he showed us a map of his route. He had to catch a train and a boat, and at

Lubeck, the train split into two sections. It was only by chance that he talked to someone about his destination and learnt that he was in the wrong section - he had to rush up the platform and board the other half of the train!

Tom stated that Kiel is a university town, a bit like Cambridge, but at the same time, some parts are rather like Middlesbrough (we saw a picture of a gas container being constructed). He only had three hours in the Botanical Garden which only opened to the public on Sunday mornings. In those days there were no digital cameras, so it was a case of taking lots of photos and hoping that they would come out OK when they were developed.

We saw a plant of *Cyphostemma cramerana* which was 2 metres high - somewhere in Jacobsen's book, it was claimed that this plant was a few hundred years old. We also saw a general view of various succulent plants bedded outside, and it was worth bearing in mind that Kiel is at the same latitude as Newcastle, and this was long before global warming had been thought about! Some of the plants were showing signs of damage due to frost but plenty of them were growing well, probably because it was a relatively dry cold.

The main greenhouse was around the back. Most of the plants in there were growing as a random mixture of cacti, agaves and aloes. Some plants of *Echinocactus grusonii* were 2 feet across. This size is commonplace these days due to plants from the Canaries, but it was pretty rare to see that size in those days. Some of the cacti were 3-4 metres high. We saw a *Beaucarnea* (also called *Nolina recurvata*) which is nicknamed the Ponytail Palm due to its arching head of leaves. In due course it can reach a height of 20 feet. We also saw a nice specimen of *Agave ferdinandi-regis* growing.

In the greenhouse, there was a collection of plants on a high shelf and he had to climb on a step ladder to gain access - a lady there at the same time insisted on holding the ladder for him. There were several *Welwitschias* growing in sections of drainpipe. These are strange plants which grow on the Atlantic coast of Namibia and which are extremely difficult to grow (and impossible to transplant) in cultivation, whereas in the wild they seem to survive in very hostile conditions. They only ever grow a pair of leaves, but over time the leaves split into strips and it looks like the plant has several leaves but it never forms more than one pair of leaves.

Some parts of the greenhouse were growing plants such as Euphorbias, but there seemed to be no real

order, with things growing all over the place. Another part of the greenhouse contained ferns, and water lilies with pads a metre across. In Copenhagen, the local newspaper used to report on the status of the flowers, and at the Copenhagen garden they also used to put hardboard on the leaves and let small children walk across the leaves to get a better look at the flowers. A collection in the side house contained what he was really here for - some Stapeliads. The collection wasn't large but the plants were quite nice. The name Asclepiad derives from the American milkweed family and there is still some debate as to whether it is an acceptable group or not. There are approximately 61 genera in the Stapeliads, and there are additional genera such as Ceropegia and Brachystelma.

Stapelia leendertziae is one plant which has not changed its name for many years. It has a trumpet shaped maroon-red flowers which tend to hang downwards. *Stapelia schinzii* had big flower buds which had not opened yet. The photo was taken in late August and flowering for this species tends to be best in September. *Stapelia gettleffii* has star-shaped brown flowers which are up to 4 inches across. This species has now been rolled into *S. grandiflora*. There are lots of hairs on the flowers and we saw flies on the flower, attracted by the smell of rotting meat. We also saw a close up of *S. ambigua*, which he had grown from seed and flowered in just 2½ years. *S. grandiflora* had recurved petals. The flower of *S. flavirostris* has no central ring and is sizeable, being 4 inches from tip to tip. Flies had laid eggs on the flowers, and some had hatched into maggots.

Next we saw *Stapelia hirsuta*, followed by *Stapelia (Orbea) variegata*. *Stapelia* was named in 1753. It was thought that *Stapelia variegata* was used by Linnaeus as the type species but some now think that *S. hirsuta* might have been the type species. *S. variegata* is now positioned in *Orbea* due to the central ring on the flower and we saw a variant with a lighter flower. A small piece of *Stapelia nobilis* was starting to sprout. This was part of a large plant which had started to rot away. In Stapelias, the rot starts at the root but often stops, so it is possible to root the remaining section of the stem. This can be placed on coarse sand or vermiculite in a propagator and even small cuttings a centimetre high can survive. The only plant he hasn't managed to root is *Hoodia*. *Stapelia bicolor* is perhaps a hybrid of *S. mutabilis*, and we saw a close up of its flower.

Stapelianthus decaryi was growing in a 2" pot and the flowers are tiny. They are urn shaped and speckled with maroon on a cream background. With

most stapeliads, one sees the flower buds on the stems and sees them progressively grow larger and larger. But with this plant, the buds develop underground and then seem to suddenly appear from nowhere. *Stapeliopsis neronis* has reddish coloured flowers. There are hairs at the top of the flower which guide the insect in but prevent it from leaving. The hairs die off after pollination is achieved and the insect can then escape.

Stapelianthus hardyi has mottled stems and dark maroon flowers. It has undergone name changes to *Orbeanathus hardyi* and more lately to *Orbea hardyi*. *Orbea semota* is a smaller growing plant with green stems and a dark brown flower. Trickier to grow is *Caralluma socotrana* (now *Sanguilluma socotrana*) which comes from Socotra, an island off the horn of East Africa which is administered by Yemen. According to Tom, the Foreign Office states that this is the only country in the world where no parts are safe to visit. He grew the stems to 10" tall but never got it to flower. The lumpy stems look like pieces of green coral.

A smaller caralluma is *Frerea indica (Boucerosia frerei)*, an Indian plant with bold brown and yellow flowers. *Caralluma penicillata* has stems nearly 2 metres high and it's a plant which he has only ever seen once. It comes from Saudi Arabia / Yemen and was previously placed in *Desmidorchis* and *Boucerosia*. In dry conditions it produces clusters of green flowers. *Caralluma marlothii* has tiny brown flowers. *Caralluma plectaloboba* is now considered to be *Borealluma plectaloba* or *Caralluma tuberculata*. *Caralluma dioscorides* comes from Socotra and is now placed in *Duvaliandra*. It has stripes on the stems and glossy brown flowers, and is difficult to grow. Tom mentioned that *Caralluma* tended to be a favourite dumping ground for plants which couldn't be placed elsewhere.

Caralluma europea is the only stapeliad which grows in Europe (in Spain). It also occurs in North Africa. The plants always look tatty. The seed pods are very long and each flower produces two pods. *Caralluma lutea* is now called *Orbea lutea*. He had a big pan of this which grew extremely well but never flowered. Then the plant started to die in the centre, and he broke it up and potted it into several 2¾" pots and subsequently some of these flowered. The flowers opened with yellow hairs on the edge of the petals. He classified it as the worst smelling plant he has ever come across, and the smell lingered even after the flowers died.

Caralluma pauciflora has flowers with a white outside and a striped inside. This plant is from India

and is very tricky to grow. He did manage it in an old 8'x6' outhouse with striplights positioned 1 foot above the plants and the temperatures never falling below 20°C - it obviously likes dry warm conditions. In the wild it grows with the stems mainly underground, just occasionally throwing up vertical stems. *Caralluma sinaica* hails from the Middle East and has very small flowers on tall stems. *Caralluma sarkariae* is from India. It has tiny flowers and always looks etiolated. Another Indian plant is *Caralluma adscendens* v. *attenuata*, which has angular 4 sided stems.

Piранthus globosus was growing in an 8 inch pot saucer. The yellow speckled flowers have 5 petals but one in the picture had 6. *Decabelone elegans* is now known as *Tavaresia angolensis*. It has large cup shaped flowers. *Tavaresia barklyi* is the commonest species in this genus and we saw a cutting which had grown well 2 months after rooting. *Decabelone meintjesii* might be a hybrid between *Tavaresia barklyi* and *Stapelia gigantea*. The green stems were edged in white.

The genus *Huernia* was named after Justus van Heurne [1577-1652], a Dutch missionary and the first European to collect plant material from the Cape of Good Hope. However Robert Brown misspelt van Heurne's name in the initial description and the genus name remains as a legacy of this error. Tom pointed out that *Huernias* all have an interstitial lobe on the flower. *Huernia similis* has a spreading habit, and we saw another species with a white flower flecked with maroon. *Huernia pillansii* has fiery orange flowers and a close-up showed the flower surface consisted of raised white protuberances. It is a nice compact plant, and the flowers have very little smell.

H. hystrix has mottled yellow/brown flowers, and *H. arabica* has white bell-shaped flowers with maroon dots. *H. barbata* has lots of dark spots on a pale background and fine hairs which lead into a darker throat. The flowers last 2-3 weeks and the petal lobes bend backwards over time, changing the shape of the flower. *Diplocyatha ciliata* is now placed in *Orbea*. The stems appear to be cristate - it always grows like that. We saw some nice cream flowers on a plant growing in a bowl. The plant set some green/brown seed pods but the seeds did not prove to be viable. Tom pointed out a *Didierea trollii* in the background.

Duvalia procumbens is now placed in *Huernia* and has green/brown flowers. *Duvalia radiata* produces shallow rooted plants and has dark flowers - it is now considered to be *D. caespitosa*. The flowers of

Duvalia polita have a brown central dome and they look like they are made of chocolate. We saw a close up of the centre of the tiny flowers. *Duvalia sulcata* has stripes running along the length of the petals. We saw a couple of examples of *Duvalia reclinata* (now considered *D. caespitosa*). The first was in a 2½" pot and the second was growing in special compost of crushed brickdust from Roy Mottram. The latter plant didn't seem to be doing at all well - perhaps it needed more water and feed. Another plant was growing in a pot saucer and had 8 flowers/buds. One just needs to make a couple of holes in the saucer for drainage. Some of these plants only grow along the soil surface and an advantage of the shallow tray is that it reduces the chance of stagnant conditions. *Duvalia elegans* has tiny flowers and is also shy to flower.

His bogey plants were *Edithcolea grandis* which is from East Africa. He had tried various cuttings and found it to be very sensitive to water. It likes high temperatures but just rots off quickly. The pictures he showed were of plants owned by Tony Morris - the plants were growing and flowering in proximity to a soil warming cable. The flower is heavily patterned maroon/yellow in colour. *Echidnopsis scutellata* is a small growing plant with yellow flowers. *Echidnopsis nubica* (the name means viper-like) has twisting stems and seems to have both maroon and yellow flowered forms - it also goes under the name *E. cereiformis*. *E. urceolata* had been photographed against a blue background - Tom mentioned he was experimenting with the use of different backgrounds, and this wasn't one of the best. He had bought it from a branch of Woolworths, having found it amongst bulbs such as hyacinths and daffodils! It has a tiny maroon flower. Another example of *E. urceolata* had a lighter coloured flower.

Echidnopsis specksii is a new species from Ethiopia which was discovered in 2003 and named after Ernst Specks. It forms strange urn-shaped flowers on the tips of the stems - these have a narrow neck and are white with a maroon base. *Pectinaria stayneri* is now *Stapeliopsis stayneri*. It forms a mat by growing very close to the ground. A plant which he had grown was *Pectinaria saxillis*, which had dark brown buds and very dark brown flowers. *Luckhoffia beukmannii* is monotypic although some think the plant might be a hybrid of *Hoodia gordonii* and *Stapelia arenosa*. It has brown flowers which are cream on the outside. The featured plant was a graft, growing on a *Stapelia* stem.

Trichocaulon clavata was a green tub-shaped plant which looked like a grenade, with a flower on top. A

genus was set up to honour Leslie (Larry) Leach - however there were already plants called Leach so a new genus was set up called *Larryleachia*, and this plant also goes under the name of *Larryleachia cactiforme*. One of the plants he had seen on a shelf at Kiel was *Trichocaoulon pseudolithos*, and some of these were in flower. We also saw a couple of *Pseudolithos cubiformis* plants, including one in flower. These are not easy to grow and expensive - one of the plants at Specks was around a 100 euros.

We saw a close up of the flower of *Pseudolithos migiurtinus*. *Pseudolithos dodsonianus* has now been named *Anomalluma dodsoniana*. The stems were around 3 inches across. *Brachystelma nanum* is a deciduous plant which grows in the summer months. These command a high price in European nurseries but they are treated as edible plants in South Africa. It has a star-shaped white flower with yellow petal tips. *Brachystelma barberiae* has red flowers in a white capsule. It has furry leaves in the centre and after the annual dormancy is very tricky to start off again. *B. meyerianum* has star shaped flowers with hairs on the petals.

Ceropegia fusca has white flowers and grows tall stems - it comes from the Canary islands. *Ceropegia petignatii* is a low growing plant with the pale green capsuled flowers growing vertically. *C. armandii* grows flat and has tiny insignificant dark green/light green flowers. *C. bulbosa* has long stems and needs to grow on frames. *C. ballyana* has 3" flowers with maroon dots on a cream base - it has long climbing stems and spade shaped leaves. *C. leroyi* is from Madagascar and hard to flower. *Ceropegia stapeliformis* has slim star-shaped flowers which are held wide open - this plant was growing in a 8" pan. We also saw the large flowered form of *C. ampliata* - a plant which Tom has brought along to one of our branch meetings in the past. *C. multiflora* has lots of flowers.

Next we saw a *Sarcostemma* species, followed by *Rhytidocaulon macrolobum* which comes from the Yemen and always looks dishevelled. Hoyas make nice climbing plants but their flowers often drop sticky nectar. They can also have a strong perfume, especially late in the evenings which some find sickly. We saw pictures of *Hoya longifolia*, *H. carnosa* and *H. bella*. We ended with a picture of *Tweedia caerulea* - the only asclepiad with blue flowers. At the end there was some time for questions and someone asked how Tom took the close-ups of the flowers. He replied that there were various methods such as the use of extension tubes and back to back lenses.

Vinay Shah

[Ed] For those interested in seeing pictures of a large variety of asclepiads, I would recommend the following website, maintained by Chris Moore : <http://www.asclepiad-exhibition.org/index.html>

Table Show Results

There were 11 entries in the table show at the March meeting.

	Cacti – Echinocactus Group	Succulents – Agave Group
Open	(1) J Roskilly Echinocactus grusonii	(1) J Roskilly Agave utahensis v kaibabensis
	(2) T Grech Echinocactus grusonii	(2) B Beckerleg Agave victoria-reginae
	(3) J Burnay Ferocactus sp.	(3) T Grech Agave verschaffletii v. minor
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg Leuchtenbergia principis	(1) J Roskilly Agave titanota
	(2) -	(2) J Burnay Agave verschaffletii
	(3) -	(3) J Burnay Agave victoria-reginae

Ivor Biddlecombe

Branch Committee Meeting

A committee meeting was held on the 17th of March.

Branch finances remain healthy. The main item of discussion were arrangements for the upcoming Spring and Garden show at Romsey. The weather forecasts suggested it would be a cold weekend, so our plants would need protection overnight.

A date for the branch dinner was agreed (11th July). Last year's venue (The Luzborough) was felt to be quite pleasant so it was agreed we would go there again.

Spending on a new lapel badge for the branch was approved. Members had the opportunity to vote on some designs last year.

Vinay Shah

Snippets

Why Easter was so early ...

Easter is always the 1st Sunday after the 1st full moon after the Spring Equinox (March 20th), putting Easter on March 23rd this year. This dating of Easter is based on the lunar calendar that Hebrew people used to identify Passover, which is why it moves around on our Roman calendar. Easter can actually be one day earlier (March 22) but that is pretty rare.

The next time Easter will be this early (March 23) will be the year 2228 (220 years from now). The last time it was this early was 1913 (so if you're 95 or older, you are the only ones that were around for that!).

The next time it will be a day earlier, March 22, will be in the year 2285 (277 years from now). The last time it was on March 22 was 1818. Therefore, no one alive today has or will ever see it any earlier than this year!

(From the Internet)

Peter Down found the following article in the January 2008 edition of *The Garden* which was a special issue on "Gardening in a changing climate".

Belgian cactus collection to be given away

With rising energy costs, the National Botanic Garden of Belgium near Meise has concluded that two thirds of its cacti can be discarded as they have no research or conservation value.

Many of the 1,700 species and cultivars at Meise are being given away to reduce the work needed to look after them, and improve energy efficiency as they require high inputs of lighting and heating. The work brings into question the value of existing collections in other gardens, and has led the experts involved to describe the amassing of plants in collections for their own sake as a 'misguided indulgence'. The garden's David Alpin, responsible

for Science and Horticulture (Glasshouse Collections), said the Meise cacti represent about 10 percent of its total indoor taxa, much of which are not on show to the public. "There needed to be a good reason why these non-visited plants should be continued," he said.

David Hunt and Nigel Taylor, from Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, assessed the collection's merits. They concluded that two thirds could be thrown away because of poor or no accession data, duplications, hybridization and because the majority of taxa were common and better documented in other gardens. Visit: www.br.fgov.be

The Garden – January 2008

Next Month's Meeting

The next meeting will be held on the 6th of May, and will feature a practical session by Stuart Riley on grafting. He also tends to bring along sales plants.

The May table Show will consist of the **Opuntia** group (cacti) and the **Haworthia** & **Gasteria** groups (succulents). Please note that members are allowed to submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

The Opuntia group contains *Opuntia*, *Airampoa*, *Austrocylindropuntia*, *Brasiliopuntia*, *Consolea*, *Corynopuntia*, *Cumulopuntia*, *Cylindropuntia*, *Grusonia*, *Maihuenia*, *Maihueniopsis*, *Marenopuntia*, *Micropuntia*, *Nopalea*, *Pereskia*, *Pereskioopsis*, *Pterocactus*, *Puna*, *Quiabentia*, *Rhodocactus*, *Tacinga*, *Tephrocactus* and *Tunilla*.

The Haworthia and Gasteria groups contain *Haworthia*, *Astroloba*, *Chortolirion*, *Poellnitzia* and *Gasteria*.

Forthcoming Events

Fri 18 th Apr	Isle of Wight	"Argentina – Part 2" – Cliff Thompson
Sat 19 th Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Sale
Sat 19 th Apr	Reading	"Socotra 2007" – Bob Potter
Tue 6 th May	Southampton	"Grafting – Practical and Slides" – Stuart Riley
Sat 10 th May	Southampton	Open Day @ Mark & Rebecca Jakins
Fri 16 th May	Isle of Wight	no meeting
Sat 17 th May	Portsmouth	"Conophytums" – Terry Smale
Sat 17 th May	Reading	"Ferocactus" – Derek Bowd ery
Tue 3 rd Jun	Southampton	"Euphorbias for You" – Dr. Gillian Evison

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