

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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## Editorial

The last few days have finally seen some summer-like weather, and the indications are that this may persist for a few days. Although I'm glad to see a bit of sun, the 3 days of warm weather were unfortunately enough to wipe out some seedlings I was growing on a windowsill at work. Luckily, others in a shadier spot have survived.

## Announcements

Portsmouth Branch's summer show will be held on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> June (the last newsletter inadvertently indicated Sunday). As David Neville mentioned at our last meeting, this is one of the few local opportunities to see a full selection of show quality plants. Further details (including the show schedule) can be obtained from:

<http://www.portsmouth.bcss.org.uk/shows.html>

In two weeks' time, on May 18<sup>th</sup>, the branch will be putting on a display at the Sparsholt Countryside Show, at Sparsholt College. We already have enough volunteers to help man our stand. In previous years, the event has been very interesting, with many activities to occupy children and parents for a full day - well worth a visit if you happen to be in the area.

Last month Dot had indicated she was intending to host an open day in June, so that Branch members to visit her collection – however, her garden plants have got off to a slow start and she will be delaying the timing of this event.

## Last Month's Meeting

Mark Larter mentioned that he had brought along some *Echinopsis* plants. The first was labelled

*Echinopsis* sp. Lau 400 and this dated from the 1980s. The 2<sup>nd</sup> plant was a lot younger (and smaller). He had crossed these two (the mum had 7-8" pink flowers, the dad had smaller white flowers) a couple of years ago, and now the seedlings from the cross had reached a decent size, so he had brought these in, for members to take and grow on.

## Small Opuntiads

Tony Roberts started his talk by saying that it was always nice to visit Southampton Branch – it was the best attended branch he had visited a couple of years ago, and it seemed like it again. Being treasurer of the Haworthia Society, he mentioned that he had brought along a couple of publications for sale – a checklist of accepted *Haworthia* names and the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special Edition booklet illustrating *Haworthia* Hybrids & Cultivars.

Today he was going to talk about *Opuntias*. He asked the audience how many had an *Opuntia* in their collection, and quite a few hands went up - impressive evidence of their popularity. However, David Neville cheekily suggested that he would get the same response if he was to ask "How many would like to get rid of the ones they've got?" !

He was planning to show us some of the smaller *Opuntias* – those that were enough to grow in a greenhouse in a pot. Normally he brings along display plants - but this year his plants just hadn't started growing so he was unable to bring any. As for sources of information on the genera, he mentioned there was lots of literature and information on internet. There are a few books around, the first being *The subgenus Tephrocactus* by Morden from 1973. This is a very useful book even if the names have since changed. *Tephrocactus and other prickly pears* was published in 2000 by Michael Kiesling and this was really a growers guide. Although out of print, it is available for free download: <http://www.cactuspro.com/biblio/en:kiessling>

*Studies in the Opuntioideae* was published by Hunt and Taylor in 2002. There is also a specialised society called the Tephro Study Group, although it is currently in hiatus. It used to produce 4 journals a year. Following the *New Cactus Lexicon*, Hunt

published new names for a number of *Opuntias* in *Cactaceae Systematic Initiatives #25*.

Kiesling has a sales page and gallery of plants in cultivation: <http://www.tephrowelt.de/starts.engl.html>. A Swiss site by Cyrill Hunkeler is worthy of mention, despite not having been updated for a couple of years: <http://tephroweb.ch/>. Thomas & Gilmer have some quite good habitat shots: [http://www.opuntiadel-sur.de/02englisch/index\\_eng.htm](http://www.opuntiadel-sur.de/02englisch/index_eng.htm)

If interested in the larger North American plants, then Joe Shaw and Dave Ferguson maintain <http://www.opuntiads.com/> - this was formerly the Opuntiads web. Other links of interest can be found at: <http://www.tephrowelt.de/links/index.eng.htm>

So where do *Opuntias* grow? A map of the Americas showed that they grew from Canada down through most of South America. You also see them in countries with Mediterranean weather. Many years ago, Tunisia introduced them to prevent desertification, and now you see lots of examples there. You also find them in South Africa and Western Australia, however they are less welcome these days. Of the 14 declared succulent weeds in South Africa, 10 are *Opuntias* and the plants are "prohibited and not tolerated". It is even worse in Western Australia, where the plants must be destroyed "until none remain". Quite sad if you were interested in growing these plants over there!

When he started growing them, the classifications were simple, with groupings of just *Opuntia* and the smaller ones labelled as *Tephrocactus*. However, various new genera were set up, and following the publication of the *New Cactus Lexicon*, a further update in October 2011 and then the scientific study published in 2012 by Dr Christiane Ritz, the list now includes 18 genera. He was going to talk about species from about a dozen of these, and would cover them in alphabetical order.

**Austrocyliindropuntias** in the main grow in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador. There are 6 accepted species. *A. cylindrica* is one of the oldest in his collection, and we saw photos of just the tops after having been re-rooted. These will turn into trees and are not recommended because of their eventual size. *A. floccosa* is one you feel like hugging but this is probably not a good idea. We saw images of these in habitat in Peru. We also saw different variants, one with a Knize number, and a brown-spined one by Swabodae (HS30a) growing in a 2.5" pot. It had formed a bud in April. The plant tends to grow well in August to December. A different form goes under the name *Opuntia crispicrinata*. He mentioned that he had a disaster 3

years ago – his plants were sitting under a skylight, and they had snow on the roof for 2-3 weeks – unknown to him, water was dripping onto the plants and as with most plants, cold and wet don't mix. He had to start most of them from scratch. Another form with the name *Opuntia atroviridis* has hardly any hair. His grew lots of offsets last year and it now has 12-14 heads. These examples showed there were lots of different forms of *A. floccosa*, but if you only wanted to grow one, it should be *A. pachypus* - this eventually forms nice columns and has reddish flowers. He showed a photo of flower buds which had started to form in September 2011. In November he was due to fly out to South Africa, but the flowers had not opened so he instructed his wife to take pictures while he was away - but in the event they did not open, until eventually one opened in January 2012 - the other bud aborted. There were no seeds in the fruits, but they can be rooted down. You also see cristate forms of it and he explained how he got a small piece from Terry Edney but left it too long without attention and the graft eventually threw up normal heads around the cristate part. He mentioned he used *A. subulata* as a rooting stock for grafts. The rest of the *Austrocyliindropuntias* are fairly boring, tall growing plants - manageable in a pot but they will grow large if planted out. A monstrose version of *subulata* looks like a mini Christmas tree and can often be found in garden centres. The most boring plant is *A. subulata* ssp. *exeltata* - it is the type species for *Austrocyliindropuntia* and has no vestigial leaves. *A. vestita* has fine hairs which give it a unusual appearance, but it has a habit of stopping growing and also going black and mouldy in the winter so you need to keep propagating it. *A. teres* is a non-hairy mini version of *A. vestita* which flowers.

**Corynopuntia** hails from Mexico and Southern USA. Coryn means club-shaped - so the plants have club shaped segments. *Opuntia invicta* belongs here and there are also a few new names, introductions by Davide Donati. The smallest segments - ¾" belong to a John Pilbeam clone of *C. bulbispina*. It will fill a 6 inch pan in 10 years and is supposed to have a yellow flower. It has one central spine and some radials. One of the new names is *C. bulbispina* ssp. *basileocephala*, and we saw it growing in habitat with an *Epithelantha*. The type species is *Corynopuntia clavata*. He finds it slow growing and it has poor roots. *C. emoryi* is a bit different and has brown spines, and the segments go purple with age. If you go close to it, the segments seem to fall apart. *C. guccinii* is different from *C. grahamii* and has elongated segments and red flowers. Next was *C. invicta* which was previously placed under *Opuntia* or *Grusonia*. If you want it to flower, you need to start watering in February. However, there are other

Opuntias which if you water in February will just produce new segments and won't flower at all, so you need to know what you are dealing with. The new segments have bright red spines which fade to grey. The plants look like Echinocereus when not in flower. *C. marenae* used to be a Marenopuntia. He missed seeing it flower and the segments are not very club shaped. In the wild it can create a large shrub. An "upside down" plant which is related to *C. bulbispina* is *C. moelleri* – it has a pendulous habit and has flowered occasionally for him. One of the new names from Donati is *C. nigrispina*. It looks like a smaller *C. invicta* and has a typical pale yellow flower. *C. parishii* has brown spines, which are reddish on the new growths. Finally there was *C. pulchella*, growing on a graft. It has a tap root but he's failed to grow it on its own roots. The flowers are magenta pink. In habitat it grows amongst Pediocactus and Sclerocactus.

**Cumulopuntia** contains plants taken from the Tephrocactus group. The name means heap – and the plants tend to grow in mounds. The genus also includes part of Puna which is no longer one of the 18 species. *C. subterranea* fits here too. The first plant we saw was *C. boliviana* and when you look at the segments closely, you will see that the areoles are concentrated in the top half of the segment, rather than evenly spaced. The seed capsules are dry and the seeds form as dry clusters - many of the other Opuntias have wet seed capsules. *C. pentlandii* is the new name for *Tephrocactus subinermis*. It never seems to flower for him, and the new segments break out of the sides of the old ones quite rapidly. *C. corotilla* was known as *C. mistiense* and is slow growing. *C. iturbicola* is distinct from the others and has orange flowers. With *C. rossiana*, every 4 years you see a huge example at the National Show, but it doesn't show signs of flowering. The more common form of *C. rossiana* is variety *fuauxiana*. It has not been discovered in the wild but it does flower. The names subsumed under *C. sphaerica* include *berteri*, *dimorpha* and *pseudorauppianus*. In the wild, the top segments dry out and then the wind blows these pieces around. It has yellow flowers which turn orange as they age. The bigger headed 2.5" segments fall apart easily. *C. subterranea* has white to pale pink flowers, and sometimes you get a darker pink flower. Then there is the scarlet flowered ssp. *pulcherrima* from Incahuasi which might be a good species in own right. Most of the plant is underground – it has a big tap root. *C. zehnderi* is a tatty plant which he can't grow well.

With **Cylindropuntia**, unless you like spiny plants – don't bother. They grow in the Caribbean, and Venezuela and some are naturalised in South

America. There are 22 names and he realised he had 15 of them. He had picked out a couple which are sturdy and safe. We saw *C. californica*, followed by *C. imbricata* which was actually pictured in South Africa, where he was looking for Gasterias. *x kelvinensis* is a natural hybrid between two much bigger plants, *C. fulgida* and *C. spinosior*. Next was a spiny plant with an apt name – *C. molesta*. *C. tunicata* is another best grown in someone else's greenhouse - the spines have a sheath, so if the spines stick in you, they can't be removed completely.

The former **Grusonias** have been moved to Corynopuntia, leaving only *Grusonia bradtiana*. It typically grows a single segment along the ground - then grows a new segment along the ground and also one growing up. His pictured example was trying to exhibit this behaviour. It is attractive and distinctive.

**Maihueiopsis** has wet seeds and has areoles which are distributed evenly over the pads. The genus includes *M. glochidiata* and *M. clavorioides*. We started with *M. archiconoidea* in a 3" pot. This often looks like it is dead, and just as you are about to throw it out, you see signs of life. It has a sizeable tap root and new segments grow from low in the ground. For *M. clavorioides*, he showed 3 different examples, photographed at various shows. The plant has clavate heads and in nature it just grows a single little plant, so it behaves quite differently in cultivation. We saw a picture from the 2008 National Show, where it had won "Best Opuntia in Show". At last year's National, it didn't look as good. We also saw a clump of *M. conoidea*. A new one named by Graham Charles is *M. glochidiata*, which has yellow flowers – it might have gone under the name *M. minuta* previously. *M. glomerata* is the most common – it has a slender ellipse-shaped body, and sometimes the spines are recurved or sometimes they point straight out. The variety *longispina* flowers occasionally and has yellow flowers. Repotting of all of these plants needs care. There are some odd plants, for example a proliferating monstrose *M. glomerata*. *M. hickenii* is a form of *M. darwinii* from Patagonia – he was hoping to go there next year. *M. minuta* is one with small segments, comfortable in a 3" pot. He considered it a star for the second half of the year when he got it to flower for the first time. It has a 2"+ flower and these open in September and last a few days.

There is also a relative of *M. minuta* called *M. mandragora*. In general these are a group of cacti which you shouldn't water until later in the season. If you water them in March or April, they tend to

form offsets or new growth - so if you want flowers, try and hold off watering as long you dare. *M. molfinoi* was recently discussed by Charles/Hoxley. *M. hypogaea* is like *M. minuta* but the segments are larger, at 1" across. *M. ovata* can have intense spines, and we saw a fly caught amongst them. *M. platyacanthus* is the largest padded Maihueniopsis.

***Miqueliopuntia miquelii*** is not really a small Opuntia, but it is an attractive feature plant which can form forests of shrubs. It has a distinctive blue body colour and can easily be grown from seed – the featured plant had been grown from BCSS seed.

Now for some **Opuntias**. With *Opuntia chaffeyi*, you can't be sure where the roots end and the body starts – glochids and areoles grow underground. You can cut off the top growth and root this down, and also take root cuttings. *Opuntia elata* is another of his grafting stock – until it flowered, he thought it was a Nopalea. The one padded Opuntia you should grow is *O. pycnantha* - it forms nice chunky pads 6-7" across, has nice flowers and does well on the show bench. You can take the seed pods and root them down, and within a few weeks they produce roots and after a few more weeks, you get the new pads. One opuntia you probably don't want to grow is *Opuntia robusta* - after cutting it right back it took only 4 years to reach the top of his greenhouse. Each seed pod can contain 500 seeds and we saw some seedlings of these. *Opuntia salmiana* occurs in South America and it flowers readily - it produces scarlet red seed pods which can form chains with successive flowering.

**Pterocactus** means winged and this is due to the shape of the seeds. There are 9 species recognised. He admitted he was not very good at growing them. *P. australis* was photographed at Michael Kiesling's nursery – it has attractive flowers for a small plant. A form of *P. fischeri* had pale pink/salmon flowers. *P. skottsbergii* is similar to *P. hickenii* but has a different length of spination. *P. reticulatus* is an oddity, with longish segments which make it look almost like a stapeliad. It is found north of Mendoza, in Argentina. *P. tuberosus* is sometimes called *P. decipiens* or *P. kuntzei*. You can take off all of the top growth and root it, and the original plant will produce new top growth next spring. The young growth on this species gives you an abundance of flowers. The orange colour we saw on a cut section of the body of the plant is its natural colour when you scrape the skin off.

A new genus called **Punotia** (an anagram of Opuntia and also a reference to where the plant is found) was set up for *Punotia lagopus*, which is considered as the missing link between

*Austrocylindropuntia* and *Cylindropuntia*. We saw Brian Bates standing on one of these in Peru. It grows near *Austrocylindropuntia floccosa* and you can also a natural cross between the two species. What we grow as lagopus in our greenhouse is actually *Opuntia malyana*. This is another plant he can't grow very well.

We finally got to **Tephrocactus**, which contains the true small Opuntias. The word Tephro means gray. There are nine species, and the genus contains *T. bonnieae*, the third of the Punas. We saw *T. alexanderi* in habitat and Tony commented we don't see it with that amount of spination in culture. If you take all the spines away, you get *T. geometricans*, and we saw habitat shots and an example of a specimen in his greenhouse. It occasionally grows new offsets and flowers but more often than not, it goes backwards. It forms sizeable showy flowers, 3½ inches across. Like some other Tephros, it suffers from a black oozing disease – you first get a black coloration on the outside of the pad and then the black can break through the surface. It seems to be related to the plants being too warm. He was sent a photo of a prize-winning plant from the Sacramento Cactus Show (California) in September 2012 and this was a really nice plant with nice new segments, flower buds and it was in a nice pot. *T. aoracanthus* is very bristly and has a typical white Tephro flower. Another form goes under the name *T. pediophilus* – this needs to be need to be watered to avoid the segments falling off. He took part in a competition between 3 growers at Dartford branch and he got his to seven segments. The nicest form of *T. articulatus* is the variety *papyracanthus* – it has wide papery spines. He flowered it last September and got 2 flowers, one after the other. Tony showed us an example in a 6 inch pot, with 10 or 11 consecutive segments. He also showed the ring of glochids which is a tell-tale sign of where a pad has fallen off, and showed us a tray of segments, the typical yield from collecting pieces which had fallen off in the greenhouse. All you need to do is half sink them into some soil in a seed tray and you will end up with lots of *T. papyracanthus* for sale. There are also other forms of articulatus – the illustrated variant had the occasional central spine, flowered like crazy (with white flowers) and had persistent flower remains. The forms without any central spines go under the name "*inermis*", and another variant with ellipsoid segments is called "*strobiliformis*", which means shaped like a pine cone.

*T. Bonnieae* in the wild grows as tiny little plants and the featured was on a graft. It flowers well - he gets flowers on it in both Spring and Autumn. We saw a spineless form in the wild, on the road from

Peru to Chile. This form never tends to flower. If you look carefully at the bodies, they are made up with pentagons adjacent to 5 hexagons and adjacent to those are 3 hexagons and 3 pentagons – this is the same pattern as a football, and the name for this shape of 32 panels is a truncated isosahedron. This design helps the plant to contract or expand, depending on availability of water, without splitting. Finally there is *T. molinensis* – this tends to blown away by wind in the wild, so it is rare to see a big plant in habitat. It has attractive flowers which go well with the green bodies. A form with ginger glochids produced a flower for him, and we also saw one at the Princess of Wales greenhouse in Kew. There are some odd-ball plants. With *nigrispinus*, it's not certain whether it is a Tephrocactus or a Maihueniopsis. Next was an unusual shot of *T. verschaffeltii*. In full growth it has lots of vestigial leaves, and if grown in the right conditions it has globular segments. *T. weberi* has a number of varieties with different spine colours, so there are white-spined, brown-spined and pink-spined examples. It flowers with terminal flowers - and then after a year or two, new segments grow through the floral remains.

**Tunilla** used to previously be called Airampoa. These are small padded Opuntias which crawl along the ground. They are found in Argentina, are quite hardy and can be grown outdoors. Other species include *T. erectoclada*, *T. longispina*, and *T. tilcarensis*. We saw *T. corrugata* with typical yellow flowers, and another form with orange flowers, and another with a two-tone orange-yellow flower. *T. macrodisca* is a tatty plant but it flowers nicely. *T. chilensis* tends to falls apart when you touch it. *T. tilcarensis* has the most pronounced spination, and the cultivar “Fuchs” from Germany is very floriferous, with peach coloured flowers.

Tony ended with slide thanking the many contributors to his talk, who had provided information or photographs for inclusion. He hoped that his talk had shown that there was more to the Opuntias than big padded plants. We had seen a large variety of different plants today, and if not hooked on the spines (pun intended), then perhaps people had been impressed by some of the flowers we'd seen.

Vinay Shah

### Table Show Results

There were 23 entries in the April table show.

	Cacti – Echinocactus	Succulents – Agave
Open	(1) B Beckerleg Sulcorebutia canigueralii	(1) B Beckerleg Dudleya brittonii
	(2) T Smith Weingartia sp.	(2) S Wilson Echeveria sp.
	(3) I Biddlecombe Rebutia pygmaea	(3) I Biddlecombe Echeveria lauii
Intermediate	(1) D Neville Sulcorebutia hoffmannii	(1) B Beckerleg Dudleya pachyphytum
	(2) I Biddlecombe Rebutia cv. “Bo Jangles”	(2) I Biddlecombe Echeveria lauii
	(3) Ted Smith Weingartia neocumingii	(3) S Wilson Echeveria crenulata

Ivor Biddlecombe

### Bookworm Corner

Spring has finally arrived along with the cuckoo, swallow, turtle dove and nightingale. It is such a welcome treat to hear these birds singing and calling again after such a long winter. The cacti and succulents are suddenly breaking into flower, not that we are competitive or anything in our household, but my collection of plants are currently in the lead beating Mark's in the total number of flowering plants stakes!



May of course means it's the great annual cultivation workshop and so we have plenty of books for you to borrow from the library.

### 'ENJOYED THE LECTURE? THEN ENJOY THE BOOK!'

#### April

Tony Roberts gave us an inspiring talk on small opuntiads. We do not have any genera specific books but we do have plenty of encyclopaedias and general interest books that include the opuntiads. A selection includes 'Cactus and Succulents' (Mace T & S), 'The Illustrated Reference on Cacti & Succulents Volumes 1, 4 & 5' (Lamb E & B), 'The Cactus Family' (Anderson F) and 'The New Cactus Lexicon' (Hunt D et al).

May

We are spoilt for choice this month! Are you interested only in particular genera such as *Mammillaria* or *Haworthia*? In that case look out for books that feature just these plants and you will find a wealth of cultivation information relevant to your chosen subject. However if you are happy to taken a broader view on the subject you may be interested in the following titles. The two titles by John Pilbeam, although now quite dated, are still a valuable read for newcomers in particular. These are **'How to care for your cacti'** and **'How to care for your succulents'**, both have a very user friendly format with general cultivation and easy to use two page spreads on different plants with specific cultivation and common problems highlighted with potential solutions. For the hard core growers there is the little green book **'Cultivation table for succulents- cacti included'** (Noltee F.). This is an interesting and absorbing little paperback once you have worked out how to use the codes. There are tables giving the monthly watering regime for species and a separate table for temperature, light, additional notes and tolerance (difficulty for growing). For example *Echeverias* are listed as recommended winter daytime temperature of 5-10°C and night 3-5°C; light: full sun; notes: likes to be grown outdoors in the summer and more than average susceptible to mealy bugs. Tolerance: reasonably to very tolerant (suitable for beginners).

Other books worth looking at include **'The Complete book of cacti and succulents'** (Hewitt T.) which covers potting and propagation as well as discussing various species. **'Cactus and succulents in the garden'** (Bell S.A.) includes planting them in the garden such as in combination with other garden plants, in containers and used as bedding. At the back of the book is a list of frost resistant plants. If you have visited the botanical gardens on the Isle of Wight this book provides a good read and a source of further inspiration. In addition we have **'Cacti**

**and succulents'** (Andersohn G.) and **'Cactus culture based on biology'** (Buxbaum F.). Look out for these books in the Featured Book Corner!

Sue Wilson

## Next Month's Meeting

The next branch meeting will be held on June 4<sup>th</sup>, and will feature a talk by Chris Davies on "Mammillarias in Flower". Mammillarias are perhaps less popular than they used to be, but the genus contains many gems worthy of inclusion in any collection – hopefully we will get to see some of these!

The June Table Show will consist of the **Parodia** group (cacti) and the **Crassula** group (succulents). Please note that members can submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

The Parodia group contains *Parodia*, *Brasilicactus*, *Brasiliparodia*, *Eriocactus*, *Malacocarpus*, *Notocactus*, and *Wigginsia*.

The Crassula group is large and contains several subgroups (*Adromischus*, *Aeonium*, *Echeveria*, *Sedum* and *Sempervivum*). Hence it includes many genera, such as *Adromischus*, *Bryophyllum*, *Cotyledon*, *Crassula*, *Kalanchoe*, *Rochea*, *Tylecodon*, *Aeonium*, *Greenovia* and *Monanthes*, *Echeveria*, *Dudleya*, *Graptopetalum*, *Pachyphytum*, *Tacitus*, *Sedum*, *Sempervivum* and *Jovibarba*.

## Forthcoming Events

Sat	11 <sup>th</sup>	May	Isle of Wight	Brazil part 3 (Bahia) (Cliff Thompson)
Sat	18 <sup>th</sup>	May	Portsmouth	Brazil Part 2 (Cliff Thompson)
Sat	18 <sup>th</sup>	May	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Sparsholt College (Countryside Day)
Sat	1 <sup>st</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	<b>Portsmouth Summer Show @ St Colman's Church Hall, Cosham</b>
Tue	4 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Southampton	Mammillarias in Flower (Chris Davies)
Sat	8 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Isle of Wight	Plants of Merida, Venezuela (John Hughes)
Sat	15 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	Socotra (Bob Potter)
Tue	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Jul	Southampton	Crassulas Everywhere (Derek Tribble)

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