

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

The weather has been changeable recently but it is steadily getting warmer, and also nice to have daylight well into the evenings. There has been a good show of flowers on my cacti over the past month, with several different genera including Rebutia, Mammillaria, Gymnocalycium, Notocactus, Echinopsis and Aporophyllum putting on a show. An *Astrophytum ornatum* also flowered, reminding me why I had bought it – the flower petals were almost salmon in colour, in contrast to the usual yellow colour.

Announcements

By now, most members will be aware that our vice-chairman and secretary, David Corina, sadly passed away on 14th May. Although in early April David attended all three days of the Garden Show at Romsey, his health started to deteriorate rapidly from the middle of April. The funeral was held on 31st May and many branch members and friends from near and afar attended.

We took part in the Garden event at **Whiteley Village** just over a week ago, but typical for a Bank Holiday, the weather was less than ideal. Indeed, on the third day, our gazebo was blown over and the sale and display plants got a good soaking from the rain. We sold a good number of plants on the first day, but it rained all day on the second. On the third day, after the gazebo incident and further rain, there was little point in carrying on, so the team packed up early.

Our next public event will be at the **Sir Harold Hillier Gardens** in Ampfield, where we will be

putting on a display and have plants for sale on the weekend of 16th – 17th June. Although we are likely to have enough people to man this event for both days, please do drop in if you are passing by.

The date and venue for the **2007 Branch Dinner** is confirmed as Friday 22nd June, at Luzborough House, which is situated between Romsey and North Baddesley - a map is available from the front table. Please let David Neville know if you would like to attend. As with previous dinners, please aim to arrive by 7:30pm for a 8:00pm start.

David Bennett (membership secretary of the Haworthia Society) died at the start of April, and his collection of cacti and succulents will be auctioned at his home in Bower Hinton, Somerset on 9th June. A leaflet with further details is available from the front table.

If you're into gardening and growing flowers or vegetables, then you may be interested to know that **Thompson and Morgan** are currently running an offer such that all seeds ordered from their website (up to 14th June) are available at half the normal price. In addition, if your order exceeds £10, then the most expensive seed packet is free. Most of their flower seed is foil packed so ought to be viable for a year or two from now.

Last Month's Meeting – Branch Mini Show

Brian Bates was an unexpected visitor at our meeting in May. He emigrated from England several years ago and now lives in Sucre, in Bolivia, but was visiting the UK. Peter Down introduced him and mentioned that Brian is an expert on the cacti and succulents in Bolivia and surrounding areas. Peter and Geoff have been accompanied by Brian during field trips to that region of South America.

Cliff Thompson started the evening by providing a brief explanation about various aspects of judging. A show is one of the fun things in hobby. He asked if anyone in the audience knew when showing of

cacti first started, and according to Brian Bates, it was probably in the 1950's.

Cliff said that the basic principles of judging are not too difficult. One of the most important things you need is the BCSS Guide to Shows, which defines the eligible groups and genera. Plants are grouped such that genera can be judged against each other without any genus being dominant.

The BCSS points system was listed on the back of the MiniShow marking sheets – although not used by most experts, it can be useful for novices. The general appearance of the plant - how it looks and its condition is very important. Some plants can look desiccated, especially early in the year. Problems to watch out for include scarring from scorch or pest attacks. Some plants can split from overwatering. Others might have necking due to poor cultivation. Generally, it's easy to see whether a plant looks well or not.

Maturity is always a contentious issue – some people can grow a plant more quickly than others and size can also vary between cultivars. Usually a plant is considered mature if it has flowered, but some plants will take a very long time before they flower in cultivation, so this needs to be judged accordingly. In his view, most globular plants flower within 7 years from seed, although *E. grusonii* is an exception as are some ferocacti. Genera such as *Melocactus*, *Discocactus* and *Buiningia* form cephaliums when mature. Cliff said he had once seen judges place a plant without a cephalium ahead of one with, and in his opinion, this was wrong. When assessing a group of plants, then use relative age/maturity.

Evidence of flowering is desirable. If people clean their plants very well, all the old flower remains may have been removed, but with a plant like *Echinocereus* there is usually a scar from the flower bud. With a show in spring you'd expect to see many plants in flower, but with an autumn show most things will have finished flowering.

It goes without saying that the plant should be free from pests and diseases. Red spider, mealy bug or aphids are easy to spot, but root mealy is not so obvious. Thrips are often found inside the flowers and they can spread a virus into the plant through the flower tube. Slugs and snails can wreck havoc in a greenhouse. A spell in a cold greenhouse in winter should kill many pests but now with milder winters, that doesn't seem to happen.

Assessing difficulty of cultivation is something which can lead to arguments. He tends to have a

higher regard for slow plants which take many years to grow. Rarity is not something he considers important – for example, although there are only a few *Yavias* in cultivation, there might be millions of them in habitat, so one should not automatically award a prize if one sees a *Yavia* in a class. Overpotting and underpotting can both be a problem, where the plant has been potted in a pot which is either too large or too small – he himself is infamous for underpotting his plants. If the plant is touching the sides of the pot, it may be restricting growth and damaging the plant.

He invited questions from the audience, and the issue of plants grown on a graft came up. Cliff said he would award low points since most things can grow well on a graft (except *Ferocactus*) and this needs to be taken into account. He also mentioned that when you have a limited number of entries at a Zone or National Show, you can refuse to award a first prize if you think the plants aren't up to scratch. Brian Bates said he once had to judge a *Lithops* which had been really badly cultivated with multiple leaves on a head and he didn't award a prize.

Finally Cliff mentioned that if plants were entered in the wrong class or were the wrong size, they should be marked NAS (not as scheduled). When checking pot sizes, measure the inside of the rim – the pot must be no larger than the specified size – a tolerance of 1/8" is allowed. With this, Cliff finished his introduction to judging, and invited the audience to start judging the 10 classes.

A total of 20 people handed me their marking sheets, which is something of a record. In fact I struggled to enter all the data (20 marking sheets each with 30 plant choices = 600 items of information!) into my computer within a reasonable amount of time, so after the tea break, Cliff started by discussing his choices for 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Once I had calculated the audience's choice, he did a second tour of the plants to discuss any major differences in the judging.

Results

Overall, there were a total of 56 entries in the 10 classes.

Class 1 – Mammillaria Group

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	NAS
Audience	P	B	F	-
Judge	P	B	F	-

P – *M. marksiana* + *M. candida*

B – *M. albilanata* + *M. densispina*

F – *M. albilanata* + *M. perez dela rosae*

Cliff mentioned that *M. marksiana* is difficult to grow well, and the *M. candida* was flowering well. Entry F might have got first prize, but something had happened to the *M. albilanata* near the growing point, so he had marked it down.

Class 2 – Parodia Group

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	NAS
Audience	P	F	D	-
Judge	D	F	P	-

P – *Notocactus nivosa* + *N. warasii*

F – *Parodia suprema* + *P. escayachensis*

D – *Parodia ritteri* + *P. aureicentra*

Cliff placed entry D first since he thought the *P. ritteri* was the best plant there, despite being slightly marked. With entry F, there was some marking on one of the plants which might become less noticeable if the plant was grown on. The audience had placed entry P first, but Cliff said that although the *N. warasii* was a nice plant, it would grow much bigger. Overall this was not an easy class to judge since the entries were close to each other.

Class 3 – Gymnocalycium Group

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	NAS
Audience	D	B	K	-
Judge	B	D	K	-

D – *G. spegazinii* + *G. carminanthum*

B – *G. mihanovichii* + *G. riojense*

K – *G. compactum* + *G. baldianum*

Brian thought entry B did not contain a true *G. mihanovichii* – there is a related species which looks similar. Cliff's choices for the top three were the same as the audience's - the other plants

entered in the class were either marked or damaged.

Class 4 – Rebutia Group

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	NAS
Audience	F	K	D	-
Judge	D	K	P	-

F – *Sulcorebutia rauschii*

K – *S. tuberculata chrysacantha*

D – *S. tiraquensis*

Cliff said he found *S. tiraquensis* hard to grow well and this was a nice single headed plant, virtually unmarked. The *S. tuberculata* was also growing well. Although the audience had placed entry F first, Cliff said that the plant was damaged - a number of spines had been knocked off on one side.

Class 5 – Echinopsis Group

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	NAS
Audience	F	D	B	-
Judge	F	D	P	-

F – *Acanthocalycium spiniflorum*

D – *Lobivia versicolor*

B – *Lobivia aurea*

The judging in this class was fairly similar between Cliff and the audience. Entry F had some small marks was in good condition generally and deserved first. Entry D was growing well and flowering.

Class 6 – Any Cactus

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	NAS
Audience	F	X	B	-
Judge	F	X	R	-

F – *Mammillaria compressa*

X – *Ariocarpus fissuratus*

B – *Melocactus* sp.

The large mammillaria was in good condition and was a fine show quality plant. The ariocarpus was also in good condition and mature.

Class 7 – Crassula Group

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	NAS
Audience	F	R	B	-
Judge	F	X	B	-

F – *Crassula suzanne*
 R – *Crassula lycopoides*
 B – *Echeveria tolimanensis*

Cliff said that he placed entry X, an *Adromischus*, in second since it seemed to have retained all its leaves. Entry B was not in great condition but it is a difficult plant to grow.

Class 8 – Haworthia Group

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	NAS
Audience	F	D	B	-
Judge	F	B	D	-

F – *H. maughanii* + *H. unicolor*
 D – *H. bolusii* + *H. limifolia* (variegated)
 B – *H. minima* + *H. pumila*

Again, the judging between Cliff and the audience was similar, with the same three plants placed. He mentioned that sometimes the leaf tips of *H. limifolia* die back, but the specimen in entry B was in good condition.

Class 9 – Euphorbia Group

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	NAS
Audience	B	D	P	-
Judge	F	B	P	D

B – *Euphorbia bupleurifolia*
 D – *Jatropha berlandieri* (NAS)
 P – *Euphorbia enopla*

Although the audience had placed entry D second, *Jatropha* is in the *Monadenium* group and not eligible for entry in this class. Cliff had placed entry F (*Euphorbia mosaica*) first - it was a bit marked but still a lovely plant which is difficult to grow and slow. Entry B is not a difficult plant to grow but it was mature. Entry P grows fairly large in due course.

Class 10 – Any Succulent

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	NAS
Audience	F	X	B	-
Judge	F	B	D	-

F – *Euphorbia valida*
 X – *Tylecodon* sp.
 B – *Echeveria agavoides*

Cliff mentioned that entry R – a *Lewisia* – was valid for this class. Although the audience had placed the *Tylecodon* second, these are winter growers and so really shouldn't be growing at this time. He gave third to a *Sarcocaulon*. A *sansevieria* has been entered in this class – the plant looked good but these are very easy plants to grow.

Overall, the best cactus in the show was the *Mammillaria compressa* from class 6, and the best succulent was *Euphorbia valida* from class 10. Bruce Beckerleg was awarded a trophy for gaining the highest number of points across the 10 classes. As for the audience, Brian Bates came closest to Cliff, next were Ivor Biddlecombe and Emily Finn, followed by Rob Courtney.

Peter invited the audience to have another look at the plants, so that they could check the winners. In closing, Brian Bates mentioned that about 10 days before a show - give your plants a damn good watering. This would help them to look better!

Vinay Shah

Committee Meeting

A committee meeting was held at 24 Brackley Way on May 23rd.

At the start of the meeting, a minute's silence was observed as a sign of respect for David Corina.

Geoff Card agreed to take on the role of vice-chairman.

The Spring Garden and Flower Show at Broadlands was discussed. The event was a success, although less children took part in Prickly Potting this year. This meant that some small plants were left over – it was agreed these would be distributed to members at the next branch meeting. Arrangements for the Whiteley weekend and the display at Hilliers in June were discussed

David Neville will review the list of books held by the branch library along with information on how frequently these are borrowed, to see if any further pruning is required.

Colour schemes for a new branch pin badge were discussed, and branch members will be asked to choose from a couple of potential designs.

The Branch Dinner will go ahead on 22nd June, at the Luzborough (situated between Romsey and North Baddesley). David Neville agreed to book a reservation once we had an idea of potential numbers.

Vinay Shah

Next Month's Meeting

Our next branch meeting will be held on July 3rd and will feature Neil Oakman, who will be talking about the "Wild West" which may be a reference to the western states of the USA, perhaps Texas, Arizona, Nevada or California.

The July table show will consist of the **Echinopsis group** (cacti) and the **Aloe group** (succulents). Please note that you can submit more than one entry in any of the classes.

The Echinopsis group contains *Echinopsis*, *Lobivia*, *Acanthocalycium*, *Acantholobivia*, *Chamaecereus*, *Helianthocereus*, *Hymenorebutia*, *Leucostele*, *Mila*, *Neolobivia*, *Pseudoechinopsis*, *Pseudolobivia*, *Pygmaecereus*, *Reicheocactus*, *Setiechinopsis*, *Soehrensia* and *Trichocereus*.

The Aloe group contains *Aloe*, *Bulbine*, *Chamaealoe*, *Guillauminia* and *Lomatophyllum*.

Forthcoming Events

Fri 15 th	Jun	Isle of Wight	"The Galapagos" – John Hughes
Sat 16 th	Jun	Portsmouth	"Three Men and a Condor" - Eddie Harris
Sat 16 th	Jun	Ampfield	Display & Plant Sales @ Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, Jermyn Lane, Ampfield, Romsey
Sun 17 th			
Fri 22 nd	Jun	Southampton	Branch Dinner – details to be confirmed
Tue 3 rd	Jul	Southampton	"Wild West" – Neil Oakman
Mon 16 th	Jul	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting, venue TBC
Fri 20 th	Jul	Isle of Wight	"Continental Nurseries" – Ian Woolnough
Sat 21 st	Jul	Portsmouth	"Cacti" – Leo van der Hoeven
Tue 24 th	Jul	New Forest	Display & Plant Sales @ New Forest Show, New Park, Brockenhurst
Thu 26 th			
Tue 7 th	Aug	Southampton	Zone 11 Quiz
Sat 11 th	Aug	Romsey	Branch Show (11 th) + Display (12 th) & Plant Sales @ Summer Flower and Garden Show, Broadlands, Romsey
Sun 12 th			

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