

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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## Editorial

Summer seems to have gone into hiding over the last couple of weeks – although the rain we've had has made everything very lush out in the garden, sunshine has been quite scarce. Several of the cacti have put on repeat shows of flowers over the last month, but the lack of sun has slowed down the production of flower buds. A *Selenicereus* produced a couple of white flowers but true to form, each bud started to open one evening and the flower was dead in less than 24 hours. Notwithstanding the longer days afforded by summer, trying to photograph these nocturnal flowers under natural light turns into a bit of a challenge!

## Announcements

Our weekend at the **Sir Harold Hillier Gardens** in Ampfield in the middle of June went well, with a good level of interest from visitors on both days. I haven't seen the plant sales figures but I think they were comparable to previous years. A couple of people mentioned they came along because they had spotted the event listed on our website, which suggests that our on-line presence is serving the purpose of publicizing branch events.

Fourteen people attended the **2007 Branch Dinner** at Luzborough House. We were seated in quite a nice spot in their conservatory, and I think people found the food and service to be reasonably good.

At last month's meeting Glenn Finn mentioned that he has received information on ordering shirts embroidered with the official BCSS Logo. He has further details and spare copies of the order form,

so please contact him if you would like to know what's available.

Towards the end of this month, the Branch will take part in the **New Forest Show**. We will be putting on a display and have a plant sales table at the event for 3 days. Hopefully the organisers will have sent us an allocation of tickets by the time of our next committee meeting (16<sup>th</sup> July) and it's then that we'll decide who will man the stand on which day. If you'd like to help at the event, please inform Margaret Corina as soon as possible.

We will be holding a Branch Show at the Romsey Flower and Garden festival in August, and a show schedule should be available from the front table.

## Last Month's Meeting

At the start of the meeting, Peter asked members to observe a minute's silence in memory of David Corina.

### Plants of Interest

Ivor had brought along a selection of around 18 seedlings of Lithops “Stone Throw” which he had sown 5 years ago. After germination of seeds from a couple of seed capsules, he had picked out the types with more interesting markings. This experiment was intended to illustrate the tremendous variation you can get from seedlings of a cross which isn't very stable. The parents are *L. lesliei albinica* and *Dinteranthus van zylis* crossed with another Lithops. David Neville said it was a F2 hybrid which means that there will be high variation amongst the offspring. *L. lesliei* itself is variable and many different forms are available. Peter Down reaffirmed that it's well worth growing plants from seed because the outcomes can vary so much.

### Desert In Bloom

The speaker Barry Glover had come along with his wife Barbara – and since he helps to train guide dogs for the blind - there were also a couple of very well behaved Labrador guide dogs present.

Barry mentioned that this was a talk which he sometimes gave to non-cactus groups. It would consist of 427 colour slides (a combination of digital pictures and some scanned images) which would be shown on a digital projector. He had initially been reluctant to switch to this new-fangled digital technology but now finds it very convenient. The projector was a Dell 4100MP model and it was driven by a Dell XPS laptop.

Barry said the pictures would show the desert in bloom, and apart from pictures of cacti, there were also lots of annuals, biennials and perennials and items of interest, mainly from the Big Bend area of Texas. Most of the pictures were from a visit in 2000 – the show of flowers that year had been spectacular (the best for 60 years) due to rains following an El Niño year. When he visited the same location a year later, he only saw a couple of annuals in flower.

The first slide stated that a desert is defined as having less than 10 inches of precipitation in a year. We started with an image from Dante's View which is 5475 feet above sea level and situated in the Death Valley National Park in California. The salt pan is 282 feet below sea level and the Death Valley floor extends for 110 by 30 miles. In the summer months the ground is very hard and you can land a plane on it but in the winter it's a different story and the ground can suck you down. We saw stable dunes of white sand in Oregon, and also expanses of dried mud in the Great Basin Desert. Highway 50 must be one of loneliest roads in the US, you can drive for an hour without seeing any other vehicle. We also saw the Utah salt flats – this is where the world land speed record was set.

We saw our first plants - *Stenocereus thurberi* and *Agave harvardiana*, followed by a delphinium, daisies, poppies and owl clover. We also saw pink and yellow flowered clover, and the Californian poppy *Eschscholzia* which forms carpets of colour along the roadside at the Big Bend park in Texas. Barry said there were hundreds of miles of such colour. We also saw *Gaillardia* (some of these are scented) with flowers in red, white and blue. Many species of the Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja*) grow here and the featured plant had red flowers. The plant is partially parasitic and this makes it hard to transplant. It is also difficult to grow from seed, and yet it grows from Canada through to Mexico. The cone flower (*Rudbeckia*) also grows here. We also saw Phlox with pink and pale pink flowers – this grows from mountain tops down to the valleys and is quite variable. There was also a pink

flowered evening primrose (*Oenothera*, quite different from our bedding primroses which are from the *Primula* family).

There were some *Opuntias* growing amongst lupins, and *Echinocereus reichenbachii* was also found here. They also came across *Escobaria minima* and *Echinocereus davisii*. There was a ½" *Escobaria nellieae* and a tiny unidentified *Mammillaria*. Small plants of *Toumeyia papyracantha* was only ¼" in diameter and hence difficult to see, although his wife pointed out a larger 3" specimen which he hadn't noticed.

A warning reminded visitors that there are mountain lions in the park, and on the hiking trails, all food must be stored in bear-proof containers. A sign said "Danger - High Mountain Lion activity" so he bravely sent his wife ahead of him! They climbed to the top of a hill and found an *Echinocereus* in flower, although the flowers appeared to have been recently eaten by bears. There were beautiful views but in the distance one could see the haze of pollution from Mexico City. There was a nice sunset visible from the viewing platform above the campsite. We saw *Echinocereus enneanthus*, and a close-up of a *Weingartia* flower. *Echinocereus dasyacanthus* has greenish white flowers. The ground was very hot and you could burn yourself while resting a knee on a stone.

Cacti found here included *Thelocactus warnockii*, *Escobaria albicolumnaria*, *Escobaria vivipara* with magenta flowers, *Echinocereus coccineus*, *Echinomastus intertextus*, and *Echinocereus triglochidatus* with glowing orange flowers with characteristic green stigmas. They also came across a *Hamatocactus* and *Coryphantha echinus*. *Agave lechuguilla* is the indicator plant for the Chihuahua desert. The ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*) has red flowers. Chuporsa (*Justica*) is a shrub with tubular flowers which are pollinated by hummingbirds. Moving on, we saw *Greggia camporum* (mustard), the Mariposa lily, *Lygodesmia texana* (Texas skeleton), *Chicorium intybus* (Chicory) and *Baileya* (desert marigold). *Gilia rigidula* has flowers with blue/white centres. We also saw *Verbena halei*, *Gerea canescens* (desert sunflower) and a *Penstemon* with blue/purple flowers.

Carrilhoe is the poppy mallow and *Calylophus* is another type of Evening Primrose. We saw another Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja*) with a grasshopper on the stem. *Senecio ampullaceus* (groundsel) forms tall plants with yellow flowers. *Gaura coccinea* has exotic looking flowers. *Euphorbia*

*antisyphilitica* is used in the production of chewing gum and is still harvested by the Mexicans. *Coreopsis tinctoria* and *Potentilla thurberi* have colourful flowers. We also saw a desert hyacinth, *Phacelia crenulata*, a yellow flowered Bracketed paintbrush, and the Desert Paintbrush (*Castilleja chromosa*) which grows at higher elevations. *Wyethia mollis* has leaves which give the plant the nickname of Mule's ears.

*Datura wrightii* has trumpet shaped flowers, and although the plant is poisonous, some consume it in smaller quantities to try out its hallucinogenic properties. We saw *Agave havardiana*, and an *Agave parryi* whose tall flower spike had fallen over. This was followed by pictures of Dasyliirion, *Yucca treculeana* and *Echinocereus rusanthus*. *Sclerocactus uncinatus* would have been hard to spot without the flowers. Growing near the Rio Grande, there was the viscid acacia with yellow flowers and a verbena with lilac flowers, and some giant reeds which the Mexicans harvest for roofing.

We saw a rock ford at the village of Lajitas, and plants of *Escobaria albicolumnaria*, and *Thelocactus bicolor v. schotti* growing amongst *Jatropha dioica*. *Mammillaria pottsii* had red flowers. Damianita is covered in golden yellow flowers and *Gaillardia pinnatifida* (the red dome) has orange- red flowers. Arnica is yellow flowered as is Desert mentzelia (*Mentzelia multiflora*). They also came across the white flowered Prairie evening primrose and the Feather dalea (*Dalea formosa*). A mimosa was flowering with pink tufts. The yellow rock nettle is an awful, stinging plant.

At Pepper's Hill, they found *Ariocarpus*, *Epithelanthus*, *Mammillaria*, *Echinocereus* and *Sclerocactus*. The road here has been widened to lay a fibre optic cable for a length of 20 miles and Barry said that millions of plants which were growing here in the fragmented limestone will have been wiped out. They found *Escobaria albicolumnaria*, *Mammillaria lasiacantha* and the dense white-spined *Epithelantha bokei*. They also found *Ariocarpus fissuratus* in large numbers. Other plants found here included *Thelocactus*, and *Epithelantha micromermis* with a red seed pod.

Two plants of *Echinocereus dasyacantus* had pink and yellow flowers respectively. *Echinocereus stramineus* had magenta flowers, *Coryphantha macronensis* had pink flowers, *Cylindropuntia schotti* had yellow flowers and *Echinocereus apachensis* had magenta flowers. They also found *Echinocereus santaritensis*. *Echinocereus bonkeriae* had red cup shaped flowers and *E.*

*fendleri* ssp *rectispinus* had magenta flowers with a greenish centre. *Opuntia phaecantha* had orange/yellow flowers as did *Cylindropuntia echinocarpus*. We also saw pictures of insects such as bees and ants frequenting the flowers.

*Cylindropuntia versicolor* had tubular stems with dark magenta flowers. At Santa Elena canyon. peregrine falcons were flying overhead and making a mooring noise. They found a "cob" cactus – so called because the stem looks just like corn on the cob. They also found a 5-6 headed *Echinocactus horizontalonius* and *Ariocarpus* growing in the fragmented limestone. The ground here can be soaking wet after heavy rain but dries completely in 24 hours. The resurrection plant (*Selaginella lepidophylla*) grows here. It looks completely dead and shrivelled when dry but rapidly puts forth green leaves after a shower of rain. *Sisyrinchium* (blue eyed grass) has blue flowers and is related to the iris – it is usually found in the alpine section of our nurseries.

More colourful flowers were seen on *Calliopsis* (*Coreopsis*), white-eyed Phlox and a desert marigold (*Baileya multiradiata*). *Clarkia purpurea* has deep pink flowers, and they also found wild bergamot and *Argemone albiflora* (white poppy) and the yellow flowers of the Sundrop, *Calylophus hartwegii*. Rock fringe (*Epilobium*) was growing on cliff faces. *Gaillardia multiceps* has yellow flowers with red centres. They found a lilac aster, a False Nightshade with 5-petaled white flowers, and Fleabane with thin lilac petals.

*Pyrrhopappus* is a false dandelion, and the hoary aster has deep pink flowers. The sensitive briar (*Schrankia occidentalis*) has leaves which close if you touch them – the pink flowers are 1.5" in diameter. *Berlandiera lyrata* is called the Chocolate daisy (due to the smell from the anthers which is exactly like chocolate). There was a yellow wisteria and a red. lantana which grows over all Texas. McKittrick canyon is in the Chihuahua desert but is like an oasis thanks to a stream which runs through it. The stream goes below the rocks but you can still hear the water flowing. The honey mesquite can grow into a medium sized tree. A desert willow with pink tubular flowers is not actually a willow, and Ironwood has yellow trumpet flowers. Barry mentioned the weather here is such that you can go 20 years and not see these plants. We saw *Agave neomexicana*, the Sotol (desert spoon) which is a dasyliirion, a red flowered columbine, the Carolina spider lily, a showy Penstemon and the Mountain Marsh marigold, *Caltha leptosepala*. The

Fiddleneck is so called because the tip of the flower spike grows in the shape of a fiddle.

It was time for some fauna and we saw Tent moth caterpillars, a variegated fritillary butterfly (orange wings) and a Western tiger swallowtail which was yellow and around 4" in size. Monarch butterfly caterpillars like to feed on milkweed, and we saw a hawkmoth on a Penstemon. A desert millipede was around 4" long and 3/8" in diameter and we also saw a female Mormon cricket with a conspicuous egg tube.

The Apache plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*) forms seeds with pink feathery plumes. We also saw a white flowered Easter Daisy (*Townsendia exscapa*) growing in the Davis Mountains. *Gaillardia pulchella* has orange-red petals and the desert chicory has white flowers. We saw a Blue gila (a type of lizard), a virtually stemless evening primrose, a bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), a creosote bush and an *Opuntia rufida*. We also saw a yucca in flower - the inflorescence can weigh up to 60lbs! *Neolloydia conoidea* has neat spines and forms magenta flowers. *Echinocereus reichenbachii* had spectacular 4" magenta pink flowers with lots of anthers. We saw *Thelocactus sextispinus* and *Mammillaria pottsii*. There were red flowers on an *Opuntia phaeacantha*. *Echinocereus dasyacanthus* had yellow flowers with green centres. We also saw *Escobaria strobiliformis* and *Mammillaria heyderi* and *M. lasiacantha*. *Opuntia versicolor* had formed seed pods but the seeds tend to be sterile. *Ferocactus wislizeni* had yellow flowers and featured a ripe seed pod but this was devoid of seeds – often, ants burrow into the seed pods and take the seeds as soon as they ripen. Along with *Mammillaria multiceps*, we also saw *Carnegia gigantea* with a group of flowers at the top of the stem - these are large and white and pollinated at night by bats.

Back to some animals - we saw a turkey vulture along the banks of the Rio Grande, eating litter left by some careless people. We also saw a red tailed hawk, and a road runner in full stride – a picture which was hard to take since they really do move at quite a speed! We also saw a gilded flicker, an American kestrel, a golden eagle and a collared lizard which Barry said was quite aggressive, along with a regal horned lizard, a 6 foot long snake and also a diamond back rattle snake which he admitted was dead. There was also a shot of a desert tortoise and a white nosed coati mundi – these are very cute. There were also cottontail rabbits, a porcupine, jack rabbits and pronghorn antelope. They saw desert big horn sheep at Davis

Mountain. White-tailed deer, originally from Mexico are now trapped in the confines of the Chisos mountains. Javelina is a type of wild pig and although small, they were quite nasty. Other animals seen included a yellow bellied marmot, a mule deer fawn, a chipmunk and Townsend's Ground squirrel, and also a bear.

At Mammoth Mountain in the Sierra Nevada (California), Barry showed a picture of a lake surrounded by dead trees which he said had died over the last few years. These have been killed by a form of global warming – beneath the ground, a bubble of magma is pushing towards the surface and pushing out large amounts of carbon dioxide. This is a skiing area and if you fall over, you must get up quickly otherwise you will die.

The talk ended with an image of two Labrador dogs superimposed on a flower - Barry mentioned that he is a keen supporter of the Guide Dogs for the Blind charity.

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With the talk finishing early, Barry stated that he had other talks on his laptop and could show us something extra. Offered a choice between Uruguay, Argentina and Chile, the talk on Uruguay was selected. He started with a picture of a hand-held Garmin Legend-C satellite tracking unit, loaded with lots of waypoints (markers of areas to visit). This type of device has revolutionised field trips since if someone gives you latitude and longitude co-ordinates of a particular location, you can visit the exact spot (to an accuracy of just a few metres).

Uruguay is located between Southern Brazil and Argentina. From Buenos Aires, there is a 50 mile wide stretch of water at the mouth of the Rio de la plata - and this can take over 3 hours to cross. Buenos Aires is beginning to recover its prosperity and we saw a few shots around town, including the Casa Rosada (Pink Palace) where Eva Perón gave her speech. He found the Argentineans to be friendly people. The food was good with some great steaks.

They eventually arrived at the port of Colonia in Uruguay. It seemed more affluent than Argentina. Here they found the common Kalanchoe, and airplants and orchids were growing in the trees. The streets were cobbled which means that you needed sensible footwear to walk around. The Uruguayans seem to like to collect old Classic cars and use them as ornaments outside their houses and

one car had even been converted into a large planter! A Ceibo tree bore red flowers and there was a blue/lilac flower on a morning glory. There were Jacaranda trees everywhere. At a quarry where black granite was being mined, they found a Wigginsia. It was likely this habitat would be gone in 2-3 years. We also saw a desert Verbena and a Teasel which was the same as the plant which happily grows here in the UK.

At Punta Ballena, they found another Wigginsia, with yellow flowers, a notocactus and the weird-looking *Opuntia aurantiaca*. They also came across an oxalis with pink flowers, a white flowered sedum, a miniature iris, a blue lupin and an attractive member of the Compositae with grey stems/leaves. They also found *Notocactus scopa*, *Notocactus ottonis* bearing yellow flowers, *Wigginsia corynoides* and a nice specimen of *Notocactus scopa* which was 6-7 inches in diameter. They also came across *Cereus uruguayensis*. Everything here was very lush and it appeared that the region received lots of rain.

Piriapolis is a popular beach resort on the Southern coast and we saw a nice sunset. There's a hill called Cerro San Antonia which offers some nice views. In this area they found *Wigginsia sellowii*, and *Frailea pygmaea* growing in the footpath. They also came across *Notocactus ottonis*, *Wigginsia erinaceus* and another huge Wigginsia.. This was not desert terrain at all - several of the cacti were growing in very wet conditions. A huge moth had a 7" wingspan and they found quaking grass, groundsel, morning glory and lantana – the latter being the same plant as in Texas.

At Castillo de Piria, they came across a large dragon tree (*dracaena*) which the locals were very proud of. Playing with a 3 foot long lizard proved not to be wise and resulted in blood being drawn! Growing amongst the cacti were fungi – you'd never see that in a desert. Some of the cacti were growing in pools of standing water, and we saw *Wigginsia corynoides* growing amongst grass. At Valle Eden, they found geodes which could be cracked open to reveal interesting crystals inside. We finished with *Gymnocalycium uruguayense*, a fiercely spined dyckia, and a pink flowered *Notocactus herteri*.

I think most of the members will have found the talk interesting. For me, it was interesting to see the habitat of many of the colourful flowering plants that we take for granted in our gardens.

Vinay Shah

**Table Show Results**

There were 20 entries in the table show at the June meeting.

	<b>Cacti – Parodia Group</b>	<b>Succulents – Crassula Group</b>
Open	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Parodia mairanana</i>	(1) J Burnay <i>Echeveria agavoides</i>
	(2) J Roskilly <i>Parodia nivosa</i>	(2) J Roskilly <i>Crassula hottentot</i>
	(3) P Clemow <i>Notocactus magnificus</i>	(3) J Roskilly <i>Adrom. Halesowensis</i>
Intermediate	(1) J Roskilly <i>Parodia microsperma</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Crassula sussanae</i>
	(2) P Clemow <i>Parodia maasii</i>	(2) J Roskilly <i>Ardomischus nana</i>
	(3) P Clemow <i>Parodia betaniana</i>	(3) J Roskilly <i>Crassula ausensis ssp. titanopsis</i>

Ivor Biddlecombe

## “Ariocarpus et cetera”

The latest addition to our library is this book by John Pilbeam and Bill Weightman. It is unusual. We have books in the library which deal with individual genera. We have encyclopædias which cover all genera. This book falls in between and addresses itself to smaller ones which do not justify a whole book to themselves. The plants in the genera chosen are not only small in number, but also small in size. They all come from Mexico.

The genera included are: Acharagma, Ariocarpus, Astrophytum, Aztekium, Cumarinia, Epithelantha, Geohintonia, Leuchtenbergia, Lophophora, Neolloydia, Obregonia, Ortegocactus, Pelecypora, Stenocactus, Strombocactus, Toumeyia and Turbinicarpus. Of these, Turbinicarpus, including Gymnocactus and Rapticactus, occupies about one-third of the book.

There is an interesting foreword on cultivation. John Pilbeam recommends a very porous medium: perhaps 60% grit. He also finds a slightly alkaline mix beneficial.

The comments on each genus start with a review of recent taxonomic developments, which alone is reason enough to want to read this book. This is followed by descriptions of each species, where it is found and notes on any special cultivation requirements. Each species is accompanied by excellent colour photographs, both in habitat and in cultivation.

*Philip Clemow*

## Next Month's Meeting

Our next branch meeting will be held on August 7<sup>th</sup> and will involve us in hosting the Zone 11 Quiz. We last ran the Quiz two years ago and it wasn't our turn to host it until next year, but an oversight by one of the other branches means that we were asked to step in and run it this year.

Because of the Quiz, there will be no table show next month.

A reminder for committee members that a committee meeting will be held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> July – this is one week before the New Forest Show.

## Forthcoming Events

Mon 16 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting @ 79 Shirley Avenue
Fri 20 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	Isle of Wight	"Continental Nurseries" – Ian Woolnough
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup>	Jul	Portsmouth	"Cacti" – Leo van der Hoeven
Tue 24 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	New Forest	Display & Plant Sales @ New Forest Show, New Park,
Thu 26 <sup>th</sup>			Brockenhurst
Fri 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Aug	Southsea	Display & Plant Sales by Portsmouth Branch @ Southsea Show
Sun 5 <sup>th</sup>			
Tue 7 <sup>th</sup>	Aug	Southampton	Zone 11 Quiz
Sat 11 <sup>th</sup>	Aug	Romsey	Southampton Branch Show (11 <sup>th</sup> ) + Display (12 <sup>th</sup> ) & Plant Sales
Sun 12 <sup>th</sup>			@ Summer Flower and Garden Show, Broadlands, Romsey
Fri 17 <sup>th</sup>	Aug	Isle of Wight	Open Evening @ Janet & Peter Collard's
Sat 18 <sup>th</sup>	Aug	Portsmouth	No Meeting
Tue 4 <sup>th</sup>	Sep	Southampton	"Asclepiadaceae" – Tom Radford

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