

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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## Editorial

July finally saw some typical summer weather – and we had a stretch of around 3 weeks without a drop of rain. It was quite a job to keep watering various plants in the garden during that period, but thankfully we appear to have returned to some less extreme weather, with reasonable temperatures interspersed with the odd shower of rain.

As I hinted last month, extreme hot weather does seem to cause plants to shut down their growth, but during the past few weeks, there has been something in my collection in flower every day, ranging from Echeverias and Gasterias through to different cacti. I saw a Frithia in flower last week – and some of the other mesembs should start soon.

## Announcements

Our Secretary **David Neville** is continuing to recover from his operation in June and may make a brief appearance today. On the other hand, our publicity officer **Jim Roskilly** is continuing to have breathing difficulties and has also suffered one or two falls at home. At present, he is not able to venture out.

The Branch took part in **New Forest Show** last week, and it seems that things went well, with good interest from the public and plant sales being at levels similar to recent years. We also won a Gold medal for our display. Thanks are due to all those who helped put on the display and manned our stand for the 3 days that the show was on.

## Last Month's Meeting

### *Crassulas Everywhere*

Derek said it was nice to see a good number of people present at the meeting. So many of the branches around the country are quite small these days. He discussed whether the title of the talk “Crassulas everywhere” was a statement of fact, or whether he was suggesting that people should grow them everywhere? Well, it was both. Crassula is a big genus, perhaps neglected, especially on the show bench, but it contains a lot of interesting species and it was well worth spending an evening on it.

Before the main slides, he went through some of the literature that's available. There are some specialist books. The best one is Gordon Rowley's *Crassula - A Growers Guide*, but it is out of print and now goes for £80-£90 which is criminal given the original price of £20. It is a nice coffee table picture book, and includes pictures contributed by him. The problem is there are quite a few errors in it, and some of the pictures are misidentified. The foundation of the genus was set by Hellmut Tölken, who studied the genus in South Africa in the 1970s. Derek said he had nothing but admiration for him, since he did a really thorough job and produced a 2 volume book in 1977 - *A Revision of the Genus Crassula in Southern Africa*. Tölken went through all the old literature thoroughly, went to various herbaria and studied seedlings and his work is a solid benchmark which is not challenged. However the book contains hardly any illustrations and no photographs. Also, Tölken was a person who never used a simple word there a double barrelled alternative existed, so instead of a crassula with flat leaves, we have ones with dorsally vertically compressed leaves. The full version is 2 volumes, Tölken also published a summarised volume called the *Flora of Southern Africa (Crassula)* in 1985, but it is not any better in terms of pictures.

Another work is the *Crassulaceae* volume of the *Illustrated Handbook of Succulent Plants*, but the photography in this is poor. Just to complete the set, in 1964, Vera Higgins produced a nice booklet *Crassulas in Cultivation* including water colour

pictures of quite a few *Crassulas*, this is a delight to own, and you can sometimes find 2<sup>nd</sup> hand copies for a reasonable price. However, some of the names mentioned in this book are no longer in use now.

Moving to the slides, we started with a picture of a lady who Derek identified as Amanda Whitaker from Hook in Hampshire. Her collection of *Crassulas* – mainly cuttings at this stage – has recently been awarded National Collection status. It was Amanda and Alice Vanden Bon who challenged him to do a talk on *Crassulas*. Derek showed us a list of the topics he wanted to cover, ranging from where does the genus fit in the plant kingdom, the variety of forms, where they grow, details on cultivation and propagation, special adaptations, types of flowers and then a run through members of the genus.

An initial view of the family *Crassulaceae* was set up by Berger in 1930, he organised it into 6 subfamilies consisting of *Crassula*, *Kalanchoe*, *Cotyledon*, *Echeveria*, *Sempervivum* and *Sedum*, the last group including things that didn't fit elsewhere. That was a very good first attempt, only changed recently following DNA analysis. In the new classification by Ham and T' Hart, *Crassula* is recognised as the most primitive clade and now also includes *Tillea*. *Adromischus* includes *Kalanchoe* and *Cotyledon*. Some new clades have been set up, with *Echeveria* interestingly kept separate from *Dudleya*.

Despite all the other interesting related genera, he was only going to talk about *Crassula*. The name means fleshy and nearly all of species have opposite leaves. If you look closely at them, the leaves are wrapped around the stem and they are fused. The flowers are generally a disappointment, ranging from small to very small. Virtually all are held upright and most have 5-fold symmetry. The flower spikes are described as thyrse – this is difficult to put into words but means “a compact branching inflorescence, in which the main axis is indeterminate and the lateral axes are determinate”.

Where do they grow? A flowery prose by George Don from *A General System of Gardening and Botany* (1831) suggested it was the “driest situations, where not a blade of grass, nor a particle of moss can grow”. We saw shot of Steinkopf in South Africa overlooking the Umdaus valley at the southern part of the Richtersveld, and on one day walking here, he saw 18 different *Crassulas*. Next we were presented with a list of niches where the species can be found – under bushes, in bushes, under rocks, some on the hot side of a hill and others on the cooler side. They have different shapes

– some are shrubby, others are scramblers, trailers, rosettes, tufted shapes with succulent leaves, compact buttons. There are some tuberous ones, others with deciduous leaves, groups of annual species, and even some aquatic species. *Crassulas* are more diverse than any other succulent. One of the biggest is *Crassula arborescens* – it can grow to waist height. We saw a shrub of this growing out in full sun. *C. cultrata* is more modest in size reaching a foot tall. *C. subaphylla* is a scrambler, and terrible in a pot – it grows sideways into other pots and knits them all together. *Crassula streyi* has a purple underside to the leaves and needs more warmth, it is more of a windowsill plant. *C. languinosa* is a little trailing miniature.

*C. montana* forms rosettes and *C. cotyledonis* is tufted. *C. columnaris* has a spherical shape – a sphere is a good shape to store water but it makes it difficult to lose heat, and in order to cope, this plant reduces the size of its leaves to the minimum. *C. capensis* is the Cape Snowdrop and is an example of a tuberous rooted *Crassula*. It is rarely seen in nurseries. The tubers can get quite big, an inch or two across. *C. dichotoma* is an annual species with yellow flowers, there are nice orange-flowered forms too. *Crassula helmsii* is an aquatic plant and was photographed at his mother's garden in Essex. The flowers have 4 petals. The plant is a rampant grower and a quote from the National Trust labelled this plant as a difficult species to eradicate and indeed it is illegal to sell it! *C. strigosa* and *C. umbellata* are both annuals.

At East Vanrhynsdorp in South Africa, he encountered green blobs in a pool of still water on top of sandstone. These were not moving and appeared to have roots. These were actually tiny seedlings and you could see they were breathing since there were bubbles of oxygen attached to some of them. This is *Crassula aphylla* which goes straight from seedling leaves to flowering since there is so little time before the water will be gone. The flowers are tiny, just 1mm high. Gordon Rowley says this is the smallest of all succulents.

So with annuals and aquatic plants, *Crassula* really is a global genus. On the global biodiversity website, a plot of herbarium records of *Crassula* shows them to be present in numbers on all the continents. This does include artificially introduced plants but serves to confirm these plants are found all over the world. If you zoom in, the majority of plants are in South Africa, especially in the South West corner, but they have migrated up the Eastern side too, all the way up to East Africa. There are 141 species in South Africa and the area of the Western Cape is clearly the centre of diversity and therefore

probably the centre of origin. Another chart showed the number of species per degree square, and there were not that many in the Traansvaal, but the number peaked in the South West Cape where the winter rainfall areas are, with one of the squares having 61 species - 40% of all the South African species. In general, the genus is very well established across the country. The distribution of the species also tells you something about the different types. The most successful of all the Crassulas is perhaps the money plant, which thanks to its popularity is grown all over the world.

*Crassula schimperi* ssp. *transvaalensis* is found east of Pretoria and something that looks the same is ssp. *schimperi* from the foothills of the Himalayas in Western Nepal. *Crassula expansa* is a little herbaceous weed which is quite widespread, and found in the Eastern Cape, East Africa and Madagascar. It is very interesting since it is the sort of thing Crassulas developed from – there is no wood in the stem and it is primitive because the flowers are single buds coming from the leaf axils. The leaves of *Crassula vaginata* mimic blades of grass, and it is also found thousands of miles away, in Arabia. We saw an example in Kew, in flower.

Now for a few words about Crassula evolution. A lot can be deduced from Tölken's work and analysis of their distribution. Norbert Jürgens has also done quite a bit of work on this. Historically, the family seems to have exploited rocky habitats amongst vegetation. The plants originated in the temperate (Mediterranean) regions of South West Africa and then spread to the summer rainfall areas and after that to the drier areas around 10 million years ago as the planet cooled. Adding to this, the annual species were distributed more recently by water birds, and that seems to be how they managed to spread from Africa.

The smallest herbaceous Crassulas tend to be opportunistic. They are limited to disturbed places. The larger more succulent Crassulas have bigger populations. While Crassulas are successful with so many species having established themselves, it's worth noting that the Mesembs are even more successful and have 10x the species in some areas. This may be because mesembs can cope with a higher pH and salinity - Crassulas tend to prefer growing in acidic sandstone.

Although there are some widespread Crassulas, there are also many specialised ones, tuned to niches, perhaps only growing on one mountain, and some have not even had photographs published. *C. elsieae* was found by a lady collector who climbed the mountains in South Africa and a description

made it into Tölken's book. *Crassula alcicornis* isn't in the Rowley book, but Philip Desmet managed to track it down. It is a tuberous rooted species, a winter grower with a very dissected leaf. Next was a picture of *C. vestita* given to him by David and Margret Corina, this is a sedum-like plant which he's never found – it was growing high on a plateau. A plant he did find himself in the Knersvlakte is *C. multiceps*, which is a relative of *C. pyramidalis*. A plant that Ernst van Jaarsveld tracked down north of Pretoria and Johannesburg on high sandstone mountains was *C. cymbiformis*. He couldn't keep it going, and also didn't see it in Kirstenbosch so it may be difficult to keep alive.

So how do we grow them? We turned back to 1831 for more words of wisdom from George Don : "Soil is to them a something to keep them stationary, rather than a source of nutriment. A mixture of loam, sand, and brick rubbish is good". Basically he was advocating giving the plants a fairly hard treatment. Because it's a big genus, you can't give general advice on how to grow them, and it's to be expected that some need to be treated differently from others.

Crassulas are particularly susceptible to insecticide damage and in general they should not be sprayed with chemicals - a systemic insecticide or soil drench is better. Also you have to get used to growing them for a relatively short period. The natural life cycle (for the majority of the species) is probably 10 years or so. This has good and bad consequences. They will grow quickly - but will also get leggy - so will need pruning. Having got your cutting, you'll have to think about how you want it to look after a few years, especially if you want a show plant. He also advised keeping them tidy by removing dead leaves and inflorescences, to prevent issues with mould in the winter months. For the most part, they just need frost-free temperatures. Derek advised keeping the humidity low by using heating and fans to keep the air moving.

Next was a reminder of the climate in South Africa, with a map showing the annual rainfall in South Africa, followed by a collage of 12 maps showing the rainfall on a month by month basis. As a basic rule, the East gets summer rainfall and the West gets winter rainfall. From late spring, the Eastern areas get rainfall for about 5 months. On the West, there is a good amount of summer rainfall. In the autumn, cold fronts come in from West, resulting in some winter rainfall in Namaqualand and the Cape. Hence the winter growers tend to come from these areas, or from the South Coast.

Next was a daunting chart which showed curves showing the amount of light received at different latitudes, for each month of the year. At the equator the curve was fairly flat throughout the year. Further north, light levels were low in the winter months, but decent at other times and in fact, in the summer months, we get more radiation than they will on the equator. So for summer growing plants our sunlight levels are not a problem. However for the winter growers it is a very different story. In winter, the plants in Cape Town (33°S) will get 5 units of light - but in London at (51°N) they would only receive 2 units. There are two times of the year when the light levels here are similar to those in Cape Town – these are February to March and October.

Continuing after the break, we saw a map showing the altitude in South Africa. Most of the Crassula species are found at the edges of the country, at lower altitudes - the centre is too high and too cold in general. There is however one plant (*C. sarcocaulis*) which is just about hardy in the South of England. In his mother's garden in Essex, he had 3 of these plants, including one which was probably a hybrid between the other two. They form cushions of flowers in the summer.

Propagation of the species is done mainly with cuttings, although some will grow from leaves, and we saw *C. cotyledonis* where baby plants had formed at the base of a leaf. Most will also propagate from seed, but the seed is tiny and quite difficult to get commercially. With cuttings, if unsure "which way is up", just leave the cutting in a in a pot (with no soil) in a cool place for a couple of weeks and roots will eventually form. With the tuberous species, the plants form additional tubers from time to time.

The next chart was a rather interesting one taken from Rowley's book, showing the various hybrids created from *C. perfoliata* 'Falcata'. This has the desirable characteristic of red flowers, so many of the hybrids have pink flowers. A couple of ancient hybrids worth growing are *C. "Marchandii"* and *C. "Schmidtii"* – these are good and reliable beginner's plants.

In 1985, Tölken stated "The range of variation & habitats occupied by species of Crassula are hardly surpassed by any other genus in the African flora". Apart from having developed succulence, they have also developed a range of miniature species. They also feature a broad repertoire of textures for the leaves and can change colour, or develop wax or hair to shade the leaves. Other factors which aid survival include Chromosomes, Polyploids, CAM and Hydathodes.

The primitive Crassulas have 8 sets of chromosomes, whereas the more succulent species have 7. However, an unusually large number are diploids or polyploids and Tölken assessed that 44% of the genus were polyploid. Plants uses 3 major methods of photosynthesis - C<sub>3</sub>, C<sub>4</sub>, and CAM (Crassulacean acid metabolism) is named as such because it was first discovered in this family. CAM allows plants to photosynthesize during the day while keeping their stomata closed, and most succulents use it. There is a price to pay - the plants are slower growing. Some plants can switch between methods – for example they can utilise C<sub>3</sub> and switch to CAM when stressed or as they mature. CAM can also be utilised by plants growing in water, where CO<sub>2</sub> supply is limited.

Hydathodes are a structure which only Crassulas have in the Crassulaceae family. They consist of holes in the leaves which are bigger than stomata and hence visible to the naked eye. There are various theories on the reason for their existence – they are used to either absorb water or secrete liquids or salts. The truth may lie somewhere in between. Derek mentioned that if you cut a branch off a Crassula and spray it, it can gain weight, which suggests the plants can absorb moisture and resume growth even without roots. It is because of these hydathodes that insecticides sprayed onto the leaves can directly enter and damage the plant.

The flowers typically have 5-fold symmetry. The primitive ones are star shaped, and the more advanced ones are tubular or urn shaped. Some are very fancy. Nearly all are insect pollinated. The most common flower colour is white. A close up of the flowers of several species showed them to be quite pretty, although some are ridiculously small - *C. perforata* 'Nealeana' and *C. elegans* have flowers barely 1mm across and you have to wonder what pollinator would bother with such a small flower. Some have gone the other way with flowers an inch long, and *S. coccinea* should be a florists plant with stunning red flowers which make a lovely display, even if the plant stems eventually become a bit tatty. It should be grown more often.

*C. umbella* is just about grown in cultivation – it has 6 petalled flowers and forms small tubers, as does *Crassula nemerosa*. Some Crassulas are mimics - *C. acinaciformis* looks just like an Aloe. It lives for 2-3 years then dies, but there are some clones that offset. *Crassula barbata* is covered in fine hairs and in dry conditions it looks like some sort of dry seed head. *C. barklyi* can be a good mimic of rounded stones. *C. namaquensis* only grows on quartz and has tiny little hairs over the leaves – the body colour

merges with the background. The moss-coloured ssp. *comptonii* has yellow flowers as does ssp. *lutea*.

*C. pyramidalis* is a nice plant and it can get to a decent sized shrub, but it's bad news when it starts flowering since the flowering and eventual death of all the stems is synchronised. *C. subaphylla* is a scrambler which is a brilliant mimic of a mesemb.

Now for a group of plants which are good for novices - *C. capitella* ssp. *thrysiflora* is one of the most variable of them all. Despite looking very different, all 4 examples on the screen were considered *thrysiflora* subspecies. *C. grisea* gets a nice suntan out in South Africa. At Wisley it stays nice and white - but can go floppy. *C. lactea* is an old favourite which survived in collections through the war years. In habitat we saw it growing on a shady bank. It is relatively primitive, producing white star-shaped flowers in January and February. Almost a sister species with a similar growth form is *C. multicava*. We saw it growing in a clay pot, approaching one foot in height. It is nearly hardy outside, and might get through the winter in a sheltered spot. A common one recommended for novices is *C. muscosa* (*C. lycopodioides*). 4 varieties were described by Tölken, including ones that look very different.

We saw a large example of *C. ovata* (the money plant) covered in lichens - the plant was over 6 foot high. A plant of this at Wisley in a clay pot 2 feet across was flowering beautifully. Next was an article taken from his local newspaper, apparently the fire brigade has been called out to a money plant which had spontaneously combusted! We also saw some feng shui advice on where to keep your money plant to be rich. This was "complete tosh" of course.

We saw a beautifully drawn example of *Crassula perfoliata* var. *minor* 'Falcata' taken from *Flowers of Southern Africa*. The plant can get floppy. Young plants have attractive red spots on the leaves, but these hardly ever appear on plants in cultivation. We saw another variety with narrower leaves, and also one (*C. perfoliata* var. *coccinea*) which was a yard high and might rank as one of the biggest of the Crassulas. With *C. tomentosa*, the best forms are very furry and attractive. *C. clavata* is very well known but poorly featured in the literature. It is a nice miniature species and needs a lot of sunshine to attain the rich colours seen in habitat.

*C. congesta* is tricky, it has a terminal flower so dies after flowering. We saw the skeleton of a plant with a clump of 4 new plants growing in the vicinity. *C. elegans* is a mat forming plant with tiny flowers. *C. nudicaulis* is very widespread, and we saw one of

the best forms growing in a 2" pot - this is the hairy leaved version from the Little Karoo. We also saw var. *herrei*, var. *platyphylla* and a cultivar with narrow leaves called "Hirta" - after 20 years it was still in a 5 inch pot. *C. subcaulis* is from Steinkopf and ssp. *erosula* is soft leaved very flexible. *C. exinis* has three attractive subspecies, the best known being ssp. *cooperi* from the Eastern Cape. It hangs over the edge of the pot and may prefer to grow in a hanging basket. *C. corallina* is another hanging plant, it is difficult to keep the whiteness of the leaves in cultivation.

Much easier is *C. socialis* - this can put on a nice display in a 2 inch pot. The best hanging basket plant is *C. rosularis* (*C. orbicularis*) which is a shade loving plant. It forms stolens, which is a good idea if you're possibly living under a big bush dumping dead leaves all over you. *C. pellucida* is nice in a hanging basket with the white star flowers. Although it is more upright, the stems of *C. rupestris* ssp. *marnieriana* will also lean over. Close relatives include *Crassula perforata*. Ernst van Jaarsveld described *C. perforata* ssp. *kougaensis* - which for years had been grown as *C. 'Nealeana'*. It is a very good hanging basket plant. *C. perforata* proper is a bit more of a scrambler and leggier. There is also a variegated form with tricolour leaves, which is often sold at garden centres.

*C. badpoortensis* grows leggy - it has stems a metre or so long, so that's not so good cultivation. It is closely related to *C. sladenii* which comes from the Richtersveld and has white meal on the leaves in cultivation. *C. tetragona* can be hard to find in the fynbos - it has lots of different varieties with different leaf forms. A crassula which he noticed for sale at the back was *C. mesembryanthoides*. One of the most abundant is *C. rupestris*, which is also very variable. *C. atropurpurea* is another shrubby plant. *C. pubescens* ssp. *radicans* is common in cultivation. *C. brevifolia* has beautiful colours in habitat but is green in the UK. *C. macowaniana* was fantastic in habitat, especially when in flower.

Now for a group of impossible-to-grow Crassulas. They all look lovely in South Africa, but are just green and leggy in cultivation, for example, *C. hirtipes* - *C. hemisphaerica* is too short lived and *C. ericoides* grows in acidic sandstone.

Derek now moved on to Crassulas "for showing". In the Guide to Shows, the genus is lumped with so many other things, so you end up competing with 500-600 different species, just in that subgroup! *C. mesembryanthemopsis* in habitat is miserable, just 1cm across, but in cultivation it can form nice

clusters up to 6 inches across. It might however be beatable by *C. susannae* which is rare these days. This is also very small in habitat and localised to a small area. *C. alstonii* grows along the Namaqualand coast. He rated *C. arborescens* highly and a plant of this was in a 4 inch pot after 9 years. *C. ausensis* is also a good choice, with ssp. *titanopsoides* being popular. Ssp. *giessii* has recently been doing the rounds in the Czech Republic – it forms 4-5 inch clusters. *C. columella* is a slow grower and a good sized clump would be rated well. *C. deceptor* and *C. deceptor* ‘Deceptrix’ are both good looking plants. *C. garibina* is another white Crassula. *C. pseudohemisphaerica* takes many years to get a clump. We saw a wonderful mound of *C. plegmatoides* (*C. arta*) grown by Gillian Evison and winning a prize at the 2004 National Show. *C. sericea* var. *hottentotta* & var. *velutina* are slow growing plants, and an old favourite is *C. tecta*.

Derek wound up the talk by referencing some of the web resources. The International Crassulaceae Network is a forum and website organised by Margrit Bischofberger. Cok Grootscholten’s photo albums are well worth viewing and there is also information in the Biota website. He finished by mentioning the latest Crassula discovery which had been featured in *Bradleya* recently. It was discovered in sandstone in the fynbos – It looks like *C. comptonii* but is from a different section and may be related to *Crassula clavata*. The mottled red leaves resembled strawberries so it was named *C. fragarioides*.

Ben asked a question regarding the identity of Crassula “Tresco Seaspray” – Derek thought this was just a form of *Crassula radicans*.

Derek ended by reminding us that during the course of the talk, we had seen the smallest succulent plant, the smallest succulent flower and also the succulent genus with the widest distribution!

*Vinay Shah*

## Table Show Results

There were 14 entries in the July table show.

	<b>Cacti – Echinopsis</b>	<b>Succulents – Aloe</b>
Open	(1) B Turner <i>Lobivia ferox</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Aloe haworthiodes</i>
	(2) I Biddlecombe <i>Helianthocereus hauscha</i>	(2) B Turner <i>Aloe ramosissima</i>
	(3) B Beckerleg <i>Echinopsis klingeriana</i>	(3) T Smith <i>Gasteraloe H907</i>
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Lobivia famatimensis</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Aloe erinacea</i>
	(2) I Biddlecombe <i>Echinopsis deserticola</i>	(2) T Radford <i>Aloe jucunda</i>
	(3) T Smith <i>Lobivia sulphurea</i>	(3) I Biddlecombe <i>aloe deltoideodonta ?</i>

*Ivor Biddlecombe*

## Bookworm Corner

Welcome to summer! Well if this sunshine and heat doesn’t make the cacti and succulents grow well this year I will just have to give up!! This weather is just a total contrast from last year’s wash out. Thankfully we have now had some good heavy showers which is nice as it was getting very boring having to water the garden every evening.

The house sparrows have had yet another brood, so lots of youngsters this year. Very sadly one fledgling flew into the side of the cacti house, only to be found dead on an agave plant. However the amount of sparrows that keep zooming in and out of the other greenhouse full of vegetables, it is amazing there have not been more disasters!

Red spider mite are a problem this year and a lot of squinting up close or through a hand lens has been going on lately. A good dose of some bug death (in our case just sprayed with Bug Clear) is satisfying although sometimes damage has been done before the horrors were spotted.

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

### July

July’s speaker was Derek Tribble on the highly variable genera of Crassula. The book ‘**Crassula – A Grower’s Guide**’ (Rowley G.) is a volume well

worth reading, with many of the habitat pictures that appear in the book taken by Derek! The book extensively covers the genera through a range of chapters including habitat, species description, propagation and structure. Each species description is usually illustrated with a number of photographs.

Other books worth borrowing are '**Succulent Flora of Southern Africa**' (Court D.), '**Succulents – The Illustrated Dictionary**' (Sajeva M. & Constanzo M.) and '**How to Care for Your Succulents**' (Pilbeam J.).

### August

This month we are having an informative talk on Aloes by Colin Walker. Once more we have another talented speaker as Colin co-wrote the weighty tome '**Aloes – The Definitive Guide**' (Carter S.; Lavranos J.J.; Newton L.E. & Walker C.C.). This book will be a must if you enjoy Colin's talk tonight on 'Aloes through the ages' as he wrote the extensive chapter on aloes history! The book is beautifully laid out with aloes grouped into different forms or growth habitats with many habitat photographs.

Other aloe books include '**The Aloes of Tropical Africa and Madagascar**' (Reynolds G.) and '**Aloes for the greenhouse and indoor cultivation**' (Noble W.C.). General books to take a look at include '**Lexicon of Succulent Plants**' (Jacobsen H.H.). All these books can be found in the '**Featured Book Corner**'.

*Sue Wilson*

## Next Month's Meeting

The next branch meeting will be held on September 3<sup>rd</sup> and will feature a talk by John Hughes, on the alpines and cacti of Merida, an area located in mountainous terrain, to the west of Venezuela.

The September Table Show will consist of the **Gymnocalycium** group (cacti) and the **Mesemb** group excluding Lithops (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 **Gymnocalycium** Group includes *Gymnocalycium*, *Brachycalycium* and *Neowerdermannia*.

The **Mesemb** family is large and includes over 120 genera, the names of which are listed in the Handbook of Shows. Lithops are specifically excluded, but plants belonging to the *Argyroderma*, *Cheiridopsis*, *Conophytum*, *Faucaria* and *Nananthus* subgroups are allowed. Some of the more common eligible species include: *Argyroderma*, *Gibbaeum*, *Pleiospilos*, *Cheiridopsis*, *Conophytum*, *Ophthalmophyllum*, *Faucaria*, *Glottiphyllum*, *Lampranthus*, *Trichodiadema*, *Aloinopsis*, *Fenestraria*, *Frithia*, and *Titanopsis*

A reminder for committee members that a committee meeting is due to be held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> August.

## Forthcoming Events

Sat 10 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Isle of Wight	Open Evening at Bary Boden's, 23 Kingslea Park, East Cowes
Sat 17 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Portsmouth	No meeting
Tue 20 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting (to be confirmed)
Mon 26 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Portsmouth	Display / Plant Sales @ Emsworth Horticultural Society Show
Tue 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sep	Southampton	Alpines & Cacti of Merida, Venezuela (John Hughes)
Sat 14 <sup>th</sup> Sep	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Romsey Show (Broadlands)
Sat 14 <sup>th</sup> Sep	Isle of Wight	Fuchsia (Gerry Smith)
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup> Sep	Portsmouth	Macaronesian Memories (Colin Walker)
Sat 28 <sup>th</sup> Sep	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Autumn Show @ Christ Church Hall, Widley, Waterlooville
Tue 1 <sup>st</sup> Oct	Southampton	5 Star American Habitats (Martin Doorbar)

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