

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

It seems like a very short 4 weeks from our previous meeting - August just seems to have whizzed by. We have not had a hot summer but some plants in the garden still need regular watering. I had some Acers in pots which I didn't water for a week, thinking the occasional rain shower would be enough for them, but they dried out too much and some are showing some of their autumn colours a little bit early due to being stressed out.

Slugs have been a major nuisance this year. I had bought a pack of 6 dahlias, planted three out in the front garden and left the other three outdoors in the back while I decided where they should go. Within a week, my problem was solved – all that was left of the plants was some spindly stalks – every single leaf had been eaten!

I was in Homebase at the weekend and was amazed to see them selling Schlumbergera (Christmas Cacti) at this time of the year! The plants were in flower so I assume they must have been grown under special conditions to make them bloom this early. (Schlumbergera normally initiate production of flower buds in October, when the days get shorter.)

Announcements

Oxford Branch, in association with the Haworthia Society, will be holding an **Open Show and Haworthia Society Show** at Langdale Hall, Witney on Sunday 20th September. After the end of the show, there will be a talk on Sansevierias by Alan

Butler. A show schedule and map is available from the front table.

At last month's meeting, David Neville mentioned that if people were thinking of going to the **National Convention** next year, they should make their bookings now. Currently the number of bookings is below the threshold needed to go ahead with the event, so more people need to apply and register their interest in order for the organisers to proceed.

Next month's meeting will feature guest speakers from South America. We were due to have Marlon Machado and Florencia Senoret speak to us, but unfortunately Marlon is no longer able to travel to the UK because of illness within his family. Florencia will be now be accompanied by Juan Acosta.

The **Zone 11 Quiz** is due to be held next month (Saturday 17th October) and will be hosted by Portsmouth Branch. This is usually a fun event with plenty of food laid on, so I would encourage members to attend if possible (I'll provide maps of how to get to their meeting hall at our next meeting.) The teams usually consist of 3 people per branch and we would like some volunteers to represent us! In the past the questions have tended to be a mixture of general knowledge and botanical questions and it doesn't require any specialist knowledge.

Recently, our meeting attendances have been high, and this means that **car parking** outside the hall can be a problem. If you find there's no room in the hall car park, please go up the road and round the corner, and use the main church car park – the walk from there to the hall is not much longer. Another consequence of the higher meeting attendances is that you may find copies of the branch newsletter have run out. If you need a copy of any of the issues, let me know and I can re-print extras. As a reminder, PDF downloads of the newsletters are available from our website.

Recently, Mr. Amante Darmanin from Malta contacted me because he wanted to buy the new branch lapel badge – he also collects "everything regarding cacti". He was on the lookout for our old

NCSS badge, so if anyone has a spare which they no longer need, he would be willing to buy it or do a swap. For the benefit of members who have joined recently, there are examples of the **new badge** on the front table - these are high quality cloisonné types and are available for £2.00 (or £3.50 for two).

At last month's meeting both Peter Down and David Neville mentioned that Margaret Corina's battle with cancer had taken a turn for the worse. I saw her yesterday and although she looked OK, she does tire very easily, and she has lost some weight. She's unable to tend to her plants and would like them to go to people who are better able to look after them. An **Open Day** to sell off the plants is being held at her house this coming Saturday (5th September). David Neville had provided further details later in the newsletter and there's also a map on the front table.

Last Month's Meeting

Work commitments last month meant that I was only able to attend the first few minutes, but I missed most of the meeting. Mark Jakins did take some notes of Alice Vanden Bon's talk and he'll make these available to me in time for the next newsletter.

Table Show Results

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

	Cacti – Mammillaria Group	Succulents – Mesembs excl. Lithops
Open	(1) B Beckerleg Mammillaria petterssonii	(1) B Beckerleg Glottiphyllum oligocarpum
	(2) T Grech Mammillaria bocasana	(2) R Walmsley Faucaria tuberculosa
	(3) T Grech Mammillaria spinosissima	(3) –
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg Mammillaria lenta	(1) B Beckerleg Bijlia cana
	(2) T Grech Mammillaria sp.	(2) J Roskilly Fenestraria rhopalophylla ssp. aurantiaca
	(3) T Grech Mammillaria sp.	(3) J Roskilly Frithia pulchra

Ivor Biddlecombe

Snippets

This is an article written by the late Bryan Hoadley and which was originally published in our 1993 Yearbook. Although it's too late in the year to sow seeds, some of you may be interested in his methods and results.

The Year of the Seedling

In the September 1989 Journal of the BCSS, our president, Gordon Rowley, called for 1990 to be "The Year of the Seedling". I agree very much with what he says. Raising plants from seed has been one of the greatest joys of my life since some kindly aunt gave me a packet of Nasturtium seeds when I was three years old. In 1981, after raising just about everything else from seed - from Sequoia gigantea to Mustard & Cress - I started on the unsuspecting cactus families. Varied success with packets of mixed seed led me to purchasing named varieties from the BCSS list each year. A wider and wider range has been tried with on average only about 25% of the seed from each of the varieties producing plants. Then in 1989 sunshine and eureka! - cacti growing like radishes.

I must admit that I have refined my techniques over the years, and perhaps the extra attention to detail, and nature being kind, has made all the difference. Our water is very chalky, so problem number one is how to keep an acid soil environment. The water butt does not supply enough rain water for all the cacti when we go more than ten days without rain.

This was my method last year (1989). I took two standard plastic seed trays without drainage holes and half filled them with damp moss peat which was soaked in a solution of malathion. Into this were 'planted' the 2" square seed pots which had been filled as follows. About 1/3 at the base with moss peat, topped up to within 1/4 inch of the pot rim with a 50/50 mixture of coarse sand and John Innes No. 2 compost. The mixture was pressed level very gently and about 1/8 inch of the coarse sand put on the top, and this was gently pressed level. The whole lot was watered with chinosol solution through a fine rose, then the seeds were spaced as evenly as possible in each pot, and the label added. The layer of seeds was pressed very gently into the surface with a piece of smooth plastic. The whole trays were put into a propagator base with 2 inches of damp sand in it. The cacti seed trays had clear plastic covers with rotary ventilators, which were left closed. The propagator temperature was set at 75°F. This was on the 11th March, and I would think that the temperature ranged between 65-85°F during the germination period. By the first of April, all but two

out of 32 pots of seed had germinated at rates from 25% to 100%. The ventilators were opened and the covers propped up 1 inch to allow more air to circulate. Incidentally, my seed raising is done on a bench at the back of a lean-to greenhouse which never gets direct strong sunlight as the roof is double-skinned polycarbonate.

All watering was done via the peat bedding with chinosol solution. At the first sign of mushroom fly, a further dose of malathion was given. At the end of April, with the seedlings romping away, the trays were transferred from the big propagator into a 2 tray 25 watt uncontrolled base unit, which was only switched on at night. Most of the cacti grew like radishes in May, so that in June I had to prick out many into 6 per 2 in. pot. The heat was switched off when the heat wave came in June and watering became daily. In mid-July, nearly everything had to go singly into 2 in. pots. I now have eight trays of seedlings with very few multiple occupancy pots. The covers came off at the second potting. In no previous year have I potted cacti seedlings on before the first anniversary of sowing!

Writing now at the beginning of October, I am easing off the water and the pots are in dry trays; some will be brought into the house for their first winter as it is my custom to keep them ticking over on a south facing window sill. The rest will take their chance at about 40°F. Today, I measured the plants and the following table lists the sizes they have reached in seven months from seed.

Species	Diameter	Height	
<i>Gymnocalycium gibbosum</i>	15 mm	18 mm	
<i>Sulcorebutia steinbachii</i>	20 mm	15 mm	
<i>Lobivia marsoneri iridescens</i>	20 mm	35 mm	
<i>Rebutia pygmaea</i>	18 mm	20 mm	
<i>Pseudolobivia cardensiana</i>	15 mm	23 mm	
<i>Sulcorebutia breviflora</i>	25 mm	25 mm	
<i>Echinofossulocactus crispatus</i>	20 mm	20 mm	
<i>Acanthocalycium violaceum</i>	23 mm	23 mm	
<i>Sulcorebutia de la villa</i>	12 mm	14 mm	
<i>Haageocereus aureispinus</i>	15 mm	20 mm	
<i>Mammillaria heidiae</i>	15 mm	22 mm	
<i>Aporocactus sp.</i>	10 mm	70 mm	
<i>Sulcorebutia breviflora</i>	20 mm	20 mm	
<i>Coryphantha calipensis</i>	12 mm	15 mm	
<i>Oreocereus densispinus</i>	25 mm	30 mm	
<i>Oreocereus magnificus</i>	3 mm	40 mm	
<i>Aloinopsis vittatus</i>			still in original pot
<i>Gymnocalycium mazanense</i>	5 mm	8 mm	still multi-occupants
<i>Frailea asteroides</i>	8 mm	6 mm	
<i>Frailea cataphracta</i>	8 mm	6 mm	
<i>Parodia catamarcensis</i>	8 mm	5 mm	
<i>Parodia penicillata</i>			still minute
<i>Gymnocalycium ragonessii</i>	13 mm	6 mm	
<i>Mammillaria magnifica</i>			still minute
<i>Hildewinteria aurespina</i>	14 mm	20 mm	
<i>Rebutia violaciflora</i>	12 mm	20 mm	
<i>Gymnocalycium spegazzinii</i>	5 mm	5 mm	multi-occupants
<i>Coryphantha pallida</i>	10 mm	15 mm	

All pots except those with minute seedlings are now dressed with fine gravel. Are the plants too soft? If they are, the winter will sort them out; if they survive, Branch members will probably see some of them on the sales table next summer.

Bryan Hoadley

Open day to re-home Margaret Corina's plant collection

As members are already aware, Margaret Corina is unwell and has decided that she would like to find new homes for her large collection of plants. There will be an open day at Margaret's house on Saturday 5th September, from 11am until 5pm. We would like to find new homes for as many of the plants as possible, and there is a very large selection of plants to choose from. There are far too many plants to be able to price them individually, but no sensible offers will be refused. Some of the plants are old and choice, and David Neville will be the mediator in helping determine sensible prices for these, although all will be sold for less than you would pay at a nursery.

Please make an effort to come along any time during the day, because we would like to re-home as many plants as possible to help Margaret in this difficult time. There are also many pots and trays that will be available for purchase on the day.

Please do not telephone Margaret with any queries, but contact David Neville on 023 8055 1173 or on his mobile 07974 191354. The address for the open day is: 79 Shirley Avenue, Shirley, Southampton SO15 5NH.

Those who read the original issue of the August newsletter may have noticed that my article on the Open Day at the Flanagan's wasn't quite complete ... the last paragraph petered out to nowhere. I've corrected this in the August re-prints but here's what I had intended to say!

Open Day at the Flanagan's

On July 11th, a number of our members took up the offer to visit Keith and Kathy Flanagan's collection. They live in the village of Overton, which is around 20 miles north east of Winchester.

I got a lift with David Neville and as we passed through the village of Overton, we noticed that every pub or hotel had a scarecrow tied to its front! Some scarecrows had been put onto telegraph poles and others were positioned in people's windows. When we got to the Flanagans, they explained that a Scarecrow Festival was due to be held in the village in a few days time. (You can view a youtube video of this at : <http://tinyurl.com/overton-2009>)

They have a single large greenhouse, and several plants such as agaves were planted outside. In their garden was a South African Leopard tortoise with black and yellow markings. These do not hibernate and have to be kept indoors in the winter. As each year passes and the tortoise gets larger, Kathy said it becomes more and more of a struggle to carry it up the stairs.

Out in their garden there was a very nice collection of Japanese maples. I lost count but there must have been thirty to forty different forms, leaf shapes or colours to admire. Keith explained that the oldest of these were only around 10 years old and that all had originally been bought as small trees, at a size you'd find at most garden centres.

The cacti collection was housed in the large greenhouse and there were some superb plants in there. It housed an excellent collection of mammillarias and related genera, and also groups of other plants, such as sulcorebutias. There were many choice plants and plenty of these were an impressive size or in excellent condition – or often both!

All in all, it was an enjoyable afternoon out, and I am sure all members who came along found something to admire and inspire.

Vinay Shah

Next Month's Meeting

The next meeting will be held on October 6th and we have some guest speakers from South America (Florencia Senoret and Juan Acosta) who will be giving us a talk on Chile.

Both these speakers will also be giving talks at nearby branches (Portsmouth, Reading) so we're trying to ensure that they give different talks at the different venues!

There will be no table show at the October meeting.

A reminder for committee members that a Committee meeting will be held on the 21st September.

Forthcoming Events

Sat	5 th	Sep	Southampton	Open Day at Margaret Corina's, 79 Shirley Avenue
Fri	18 th	Sep	Isle of Wight	Little Karoo - Rodney Sims
Sat	19 th	Sep	Portsmouth	Talks from Florencia Senoret & Juan Acosta
Sun	20 th	Sep	Oxford	Branch Show + Haworthia Society Show, Langdale Hall, Witney
Mon	21 st	Sep	Southampton	Committee Meeting
Sat	26 th	Sep	Portsmouth	Autumn Show @ Christ Church Hall, Widley, Waterlooville
Tue	6 th	Oct	Southampton	Talks from Florencia Senoret & Juan Acosta
Fri	16 th	Oct	Isle of Wight	Society Slides - National Show 2000
Sat	17 th	Oct	Portsmouth	Zone 11 Quiz
Tue	3 rd	Nov	Southampton	A Taste of France - Suzanne & Tony Mace

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