

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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### Editorial

Our wet summer doesn't seem to want to let go just yet, we've again had quite a bit of rain over the last month, and parts of the country were flooded last week. At least the temperatures are holding up well, although you can start to detect a chill some days.

This time of the year seems to be when Haworthias look their best and many of mine have coloured up nicely. A few Lithops have flowered and I hope a few more mesembs will soon follow. I guess I will continue watering everything for the rest of the month but it will depend on how much sun we have, and also when it starts to get really cold.

### Announcements

At the start of September, the Branch took part in the **Romsey Show**, and it was another successful event. Our display won a Gold Medal and there was good interest from the public. Thanks are due to all those who helped set up and participate in the event.

Next month, we will host the **Zone 11 Quiz**. This was originally scheduled last year but water damage at the hall prevented us from going ahead. Teams from Portsmouth and Isle of Wight will attend to fight over the Mealy Bug Trophy and we will also expect the audience to participate!

### Last Month's Meeting

#### Plants of Interest

Ivor Biddlecombe had brought along a few *Plants of Interest*. First was *Sempervivum pittonii*, which is one of the choice species. The plant had been eaten by something in the garden, and now the stem was

beginning to offset – not something he's seen on any of his other *Sempervivums*. Next was *Jovibarba heuffelii* cv "Bronze Ingot". He's had this 20 years and it doesn't grow very large but tends to form several separate clumps as it spreads. These two genera are similar in appearance but the flowers are different - *Jovibarbas* form bell-shaped flowers and *Sempervivums* have star shaped flowers.

When he first started growing cacti, there was a choice of perhaps 10 different types of *Astrophytum myriostigma* to grow – but nowadays there are 100's of variations, including many Japanese crosses. These are very nice plants to look at, even when not in flower.

Gasterias are plants he grows in his porch. He's not into hybrids generally but some are very attractive. These are easy low maintenance plants and they seem to prefer growing in the porch rather than the greenhouse, maybe because the temperatures are lower. The final plant he showed was a miniature aloe named Aloe "Pepe". It is a hybrid between *Aloe descoingsii* and *Aloe haworthioides*, and is useful if you only have a small space.

#### Shows, Collections and Nurseries in the USA

Geoff introduced our speaker for the evening, Stuart Riley. Stuart said it was nice to be back at a thriving branch – the audience this evening was twice as big as at most other branches. He mentioned that this was going to be him showing us his holiday snaps – he goes to the USA every year and ends up finding new material to add to the talk – it's easy to add more to the talk rather than take something out, so the talk is getting longer and longer and he hoped he wouldn't overrun.

For the first half of the talk he had also brought along a mixture of plants, nearly all of which had been obtained in the USA either this year or last. When moving plants within the EU, you don't need any paperwork – but when bringing plants in from outside the EU, then some documentation is needed. As a minimum, a phytosanitary certificate is required to indicate the plants are free of pests. A Cites permit is also needed if the plant is endangered

in the wild. These days he tends to bring back less and less cacti and more and more succulents. He comes through the customs red channel and at Heathrow, three years ago, there was a board there saying the position was unoccupied and people should carry on through. The following year, there was the same sign. This year, there were again no officers on duty but a sign said "use the red telephone" to summon an officer. He just walked through. So for the last three years, the documentation he's had with him has not been checked - but it's not taking the risk of not having it, since otherwise the plants could be confiscated. It's not difficult to get the paperwork but there are fees to be paid to obtain it.

He started by saying that "Most people in the hobby start with cacti and then mature into succulents". The first plant he showed was a hybrid aloe, called Aloe cv. "Christmas Carol". The leaves had a red texture and there were also red edges to the leaves. It flowers well and offsets nicely and soon forms clusters. It only turned up a few years ago and is now appearing in Garden Centres in the USA. This was grown by tissue culture and originally was one of Kelly Griffin's creations. With the next plant, Aloe cv. "Kent Blue", flower spike had formed but had then bent over. Another one was called Aloe cv. "Gargoyle" and Rob Wellens from Belgium probably had some tissue cultured examples of this for sale at our recent National Show. The offset on this plant was 3-4 months old and was still green, but the previous year's growth had coloured up nicely. If these plants are kept in the dark or away from sun for a few days they lose a lot of their colour, and this can be a problem when he takes them for sale to a place like the ELK conference.

The last plant you'd probably want in your collection is *Kalanchoe daigremontiana* - it can be a real pest due to the habit of forming hundred of plantlets along the edge of the leaves which then invade any pot they fall in. However, the cultivar "Pink Butterflies" has fine variegation along the edge of the leaf and the little plants which form do not have any green in them - they are not viable and hence not invasive.

He doesn't grow many Stapeliads but did get some recently. He drove around with them in the car for 4 weeks and was glad that none of them flowered! He likes the hybrids since the choice with the species is limited. He got some from Miles Anderson, who he's known for around 30 years. Miles gives them weird names, based on his interest of watching old English TV programmes, so he's used names like "Speckled Jim", "Crunchy Frog", "Spring Surprise". With cv "Pink Eye", which is a hybrid of *Huernia*

*keniensis* or *Huernia zebrina*, the flowers are almost as you'd imagine from the name.

There used to be one specialist Gasteria nursery in the USA which produced many hybrids. This was run by Rick Nowakowski, in Nevada. His nursery was called Nature's Curiosity Shop and he grew some really nice hybrids. Gasteria cv. "Alligator" was one of them and there's also a companion called cv. "Crocodile". Rick used to grow a lot of variegated plants.

Next was a monstrose *Leuchtenbergia principis*, grafted onto a stock which he didn't like because it grew throughout the year. The plant was growing a new plant on the end of every tubercle. It was not easy and he has lost this type twice before. He was planning to cut some of the offsets off and graft them when large enough. It is quite different and hard to work out what it is until you look at it closely. David Neville asked Stuart if he had ever seen a cristate *Leuchtenbergia*, since a person in Holland was claiming he had the first one. Stuart said he was aware of a large habitat plant being grown in the garden of Ed and Betty Gay in the USA. He was sure there were cristate or variegated forms of just about everything. Some plants don't make a good crest and *Leuchtenbergia* was one of them. You don't see any good *Ferocactus cristates* either.

Variegated Agaves are becoming more and more popular. He showed us *Agave parryi truncata* - this is normally a blue coloured plant growing in the shape of an artichoke. When growing conventional plants by tissue culture (as is done commercially by Rob Wellens), you end up with a few variegated plants, and these should send out variegated offsets. Next was one of the nicer forms of *Agave victoria reginae*, offered by the ISI/Huntington - it is compact with broad leaves and it probably already had 4-5 offsets if he was to take it out of the pot. Stuart mentioned that a lot of agaves do produce offsets when they are young, but as they get older, they stop offsetting. The Japanese growers like to give their plants exotic names and this one was called Agave cv "himesanoyuki" which translates into Agave cv "Snow Princess". These non-english names can get mixed up or miswritten, potentially leading to confusion!

Now for some more plants from Miles Anderson. The group of genera consisting of *Ferocactus*, *Leuchtenbergia* and *Thelocactus* can be crossed with each other, and *Ferobergia* is the result of a cross of the first two species. The plant had short tubercles. This was crossed with *Echinocactus grusonii* and he showed us 2 of the resultant seedlings - one with

red spines and the other with yellow – the plants matched some of the parent's characteristics. A *Ferocactus* / *Thelocactus* cross was called cv. "Spring Surprise", the name inspired from Monty Python. Perhaps it will have a nice flower. Paul Klaassen said he had set Miles the challenge of crossing *Leuchtenbergia* with *Ariocarpus*.

Next was *Mammillaria hernandezii* from a wholesale nursery called C & J which supplies many of the retail nurseries in the USA. The nursery is up for sale so supplies could dry up at any time if the nursery is sold and the new owners change their mix of plants or aren't as skilled as the current nurserymen.

A stapeliad called "Pink Eye" was one of the Miles Anderson creations. *Edithcolia grandis* has huge stapeliad flowers which are 6 inches across. He brought a few and kept one, thinking it would be easy to take a lot of cuttings and propagate the plant, but this seems to be harder than he had thought. Bruce said it needed 50°F min. When Aeoniums were first described, they were classified as Sempervivums due to superficial similarities. Some nice hybrids are being created now, and Aeonium cv. Plum Thumb was from John Trager at the Huntington. It branches very well, has pink leaves and each head is compact. He got it when he was collecting a box of plants for John Pilbeam. The Huntington run the semi-commercial operation called the International Succulent Introductions (ISI) and one of their recent offerings was Aeonium cv. "Martian Heads". This forms green blobs on the end of the stems which opens into a glorified Brussels sprout! There are also some nice crassulas around. *Crassula fragarioides* came from Steve Hamer who told him it was Latin for strawberries. It is a newish plant and discussed in *Bradleya* recently. It is pretty slow but the leaves go bright red in the winter and it has masses of white flowers, a bit like *Crassula ausensis*. *Crassula* cv. "Pangolin" was a columnar plant, similar in form to *Crassula* cv "Buddha's Temple" but with chunkier leaves. *Crassula marginalis* had variegated leaves and was originally in a 2 inch pot, but in the 2 months since he got back, it has sprawled all over the place. It looked nice originally but he wasn't so sure now!

A plant used as ground cover in the USA is *Aptenia*, which is a mesemb with red flowers. He found a variegated one but then saw Thompson and Morgan offer it and expected it to be widespread but he hasn't really seen it anywhere else yet. This year he brought back 2500 plants in 3 normal-sized pieces of luggage. Most are little plants from 2 inch pots, although he occasionally brings over a large plant. *Echeveria* cv "Chroma" was a little strange this year

– he has seen it as a mass of pink and orange leaves, but it does go through seasonal variation in the late summer and it was a bit non-descript this year. He wasn't sure whether it was heat or light that caused the colour changes.

Haworthias are a plant that when you start the hobby, you are given cuttings of, and these end up as big boring clumps. After a few years, you will eventually find some nice ones. *Haworthia attenuata* has bands around the back of the leaves and in cv. "Wet Paint", the white bands look all smudged. There is also cv "Cracked Glass". He got these from Miles Anderson. One Aloe called cv. "Sunrise" (there is also one called "Sunset") – has every possible colour of a sunrise. The flowers are really small in proportion. It is being grown for the house plant market.

Echeverias are another one of the plants where you need to see a good collection for inspiration. With some of the hybrids – you either love them or not. Some have wavy leaves and lumps and bumps on the leaves. *Echeveria* cv. "Red Glo" is one grown by tissue culture - the best ones tend not to grow from leaf cuttings. They are also magnets for mealy, with so many bits where the insects can hide. Provado spray works well but it needs multiple sprayings. Another approach is to use a hose pipe and blast them off. You won't get all the ones hiding in the roots but you can repeat this treatment a few times. The Provado spray uses butane as a propellant and this will take the bloom off. He mentioned that the Dutch take the bloom off *Echeverias* to changing the apparent colour of some of them.

Most of the plants he had shown are self propagating, and while reading through past articles on our branch website, he had come across a comment from John Watmough which implied that he (Stuart) only grew plants that could be propagated vegetatively and quickly. He stated that this is not the case - some of the plants he gets can be both slow and difficult.

In the second half of the talk, Stuart switched to a slide show. Some of the content was from 2008, with newer photos added from subsequent trips. The trips are not purely plant trips, it is also a holiday. He used to go with the children but as they've grown up now, the trips have changed. There are some great sights as you fly over Iceland and Greenland and you can see glaciers etc. It is surprising how few people look out of the windows.

He tries to pick different destinations for each trip. Last year they went to Lake Powell in Northern Arizona. Rainbow Bridge is a tourist attraction at

the end of a 50 mile river trip up Lake Powell and he took a picture of a Sclerocactus framed by the bridge. He likes to take pictures low down but you don't notice how many things are biting you - and when he got back on the boat his arms and legs were covered in bites! Antelope Canyon is nearby and accessed through a little gap in the rocks, it offers some unusual and spectacular views.

The next few pictures were taken at the flower section of an agricultural fair, and they showed succulents such as Aeoniums and Crassulas being used in creative displays, including some with running water. There were also other examples using various Sedums and Senecios.

His trips tend to last for 4 weeks and if you buy something at the start of the trip, it's hard to look after it for that length of time - the temperatures in the car will range from normal (with air conditioning on) to over 100°F in the sun. In a motel room there's usually not much opportunity to put out the plants and let them have some sun. He showed us some Echeverias and the Aptenia bought at the start of the trip and they were beginning to looking etiolated after a few days. Back in the greenhouse at home, they looked all beaten up. They have all recovered since then of course, but initially they do look pretty horrible.

Now for some slides of the American National Show. It is always held in the same place in California, and realistically only people from California or Arizona are likely to enter. They hold it at the Huntington, which is also a stately home with landscaped gardens and an art collection which contains many British paintings, including Turners and Gainsboroughs. It is located near Pasadena, 10 miles from Los Angeles. The sales plants are all outside, and no nurserymen are needed because all the plants are bar-coded and you just load up a box and go to one of the tills to pay. You can end up queuing for quite a while and it can be tiring if you have a large handful of plants. The American Society takes about 40% commission but everything is done on a bigger budget and scale.

He showed some tissue cultured Agave plants for sale which had been damaged by scorch - if grown in the greenhouse with protection, being put out in full sun can damage them. An Echeveria called "Raindrops" is a hybrid from Dick Wright - it has a single raised bump close to the tip of each leaf that looks like a large raindrop. The leaf can't be propagated from, but if you take a cutting, it will revert to smooth leaves and then form the bump after a year or so. He bought 3 of these.

Some of the pots being sold are horrible and misshapen - these are probably hand thrown and quite expensive. There's no shortage of money and most people go to see the art, with the cacti being an added attraction for the day. At the 2011 show, the caudiciform *Petopentia natalensis* had won best succulent and he wasn't sure why. The best cactus was *Echinocactus polycephalus* but the plant on display didn't really deserve it - it looked like it had just been dug up and there was no new growth or new spines to admire. An aloe had nice colour on the leaves and we also saw a glimpse of a gasteria. They are not very good with their plant labels - he saw the same plant on sale at 4 different stalls, named as Gasteria "Marble Mist", a Gasteraloe, Gasteria "Silver Mist" and Gasteria "Moonglow", and all 4 were priced differently. He would have called it *G. nigricans* variegated or strictly speaking *G. brachyphylla*. We also saw *Mammillaria crucigera*, and a crested Ariocarpus. Presentation is deemed important and many of the plants are in ceramic pots chosen specifically with the plant in mind. We saw a nice Agave with one of the Japanese names, and next to it was an Agave x Manfreda hybrid called Mangave "Bloodspot".

They take all their prize winning plants and put them on a special section of just the winners, so if you go round the show, you may find the best plants in each class are "missing". Bromeliads such as Arbromeitiella are allowed in the US show. There was a nice *Echeveria agavodies* cv. "Ebony" - the Koreans pay ridiculous prices for these but they are now being mass produced by tissue culture in China and the plants will be distributed via Holland. It is a nice variant, well worth looking out for.

There were some nice haworthias including *Haworthia truncata* and Haworthia "Chocolate" - you really can get the dark colours in their weather. It was rare to see a crested yucca. Another plant they are trying to tissue culture was a variegated *Agave victoria reginae*. We also saw a doubled headed *Gymnocalycium*, and a variegated Kalanchoe. A *Dorstenia gypsophila* was 3 feet tall and a real beauty. *Adromischus herrei* doesn't like to be cold and damp at the same time but you can start water a bit earlier than the other plants. This plant was a stunner and about a foot across, with the new leaves being red in colour. We normally see Buiningia as globular plants but they do become columnar with age.

Now for plants from this year's show - the best cactus was a big multi-headed clump of *Leuchtenbergia principis* - it's rare to see any offsets on this species. The best succulent was *Pseudolithos cubiformis* - which resembles an

*Astrophytum myriostigma*. The object behind it and which looked like a Viking's helmet was actually the trophy! Stuart mentioned that American judges don't have to go on anything like our Judges course. He has judged there many years ago, now they use 3 judges for the cacti and three more for the succulents. The best Ariocarpus was a good healthy *A. retusus* with 10+ heads and a lot of wool on it. We also saw some Kelly Griffin hybrid Aloes. The trophy for the best Baja cactus or succulent was an oval shape, which reminded him of a toilet seat! There was an award for best plant grown from seed (how do they check)! The best Haworthia was a retusa-type hybrid. The best Madagascan Euphorbia was *E. francoisii*.

The best staged plant was a good sized *Haworthia truncata* with over 50 heads. When they get to a certain size, the outer leaves start dieing off and also there were no gaps there. Dyckia "Burgundy Ice" had dark brown leaves with white teeth along the edges. A Pachypodium looked tired, it should really be covered in healthy new growth at this time of the year. We also saw a variegated Gasteria and a Hoodia. There was only one person looking around the show – which is quite a contrast to our National show. There also weren't many entrants per class.

Round the back of the Huntington - if you say the magic words "John Pilbeam" they let you in and you can see plenty of things, including the ISI plants. The shading was up but the plants were still getting a lot of sun and looking a little tired. We saw Echeveria cv. "Martian heads" and Crassula cv. "Pangolin". We saw Carol Zimmerman and some of Aloe hybrids she has created – these were gorgeous plants and would be a success if tissue cultured. They did recently allow three types to be propagated and these are available from Rob Wellens. The plants are classified as endangered, even though they are hybrids of hybrids. However tissue cultured plants would not be classified as such. The texture and colour is quite amazing and it's hard to find two that are similar. There is a tissue culture lab at the Huntington and perhaps they should be using it a bit more. There must also be a lot of reject crosses which would still make fine plants.

Most people just wander round the gardens and the conservatory. We saw some hybrid Echeverias and some Agaves. An assortment of Lithops was being grown in boring coloured pots and he felt their choice of species could have been improved upon. *Stenocereus eruca* is the "creeping devil" cactus. The old stems die off as the new ones develop. A lovely *Agave parryi truncata* had the artichoke shape – it had been tissue cultured. There is a tendency for some Americans to pick out slight

variations in the cultivars and give them new names such as "Little Penguins" – but he didn't really consider them to be different enough to warrant this.

The nursery that supplies nearly all the good nurseries in the US is C&J and this is located on a hill in Vista, California. The land could be used for building houses, but because it's been used as a nursery for so long, it would need to be excavated to a depth of 6 feet because of chemicals that might be in the soil. We saw *Pachypodium lameri*, which branches every time after it flowers, and one of the nurserymen Jim, with plants of *Mammillaria solisiodes* which were just 18 months old but ready for sale. They also grow Plumerias and Plumeria hybrids and Adeniums.

He spent a day at the Joshua Tree national park this year, taking photos for the signage on his new van, and took a few habitat pictures. *Opuntia basilaris* looked pretty wrinkled and tired. *Opuntia bigelovii* looks nice at a distance but if you happen to get one of the dead pads on your foot, it can be very hard to get it off. There were also some nice clumps of Echinocereus here. Visiting Death Valley provided a change of scenery and we saw how *Echinocactus polycephalus* should look. Heading back to Tucson, there were signs warning of Mountain lions but they didn't see any, except at the Desert Museum.

In most states in the US, you can choose to have personalised number plates saying just about anything as long as it is not obscene for a fee of \$25 per year, and Miles Anderson had picked out xerophyte. When mixing compost on a large scale, you need a cement mixer. We also saw picture of Mile's young son. Miles grows a mixture of plants and plants that can be grown outdoors in that area include the colour Echinopsis hybrids called the "Paramount" hybrids. He grows a lot of different things and we saw some of his stock plants, grafts and chimaeras. One of his greenhouses was full of Ariocarpus seedlings. We also saw a nice white-edged *Agave victoria reginae*. Miles donated one of these to the Tucson conventions where it fetched around \$900. One of the stapeliads he got from Miles was called "See a Doctor" and perhaps it wasn't surprising that one of the cuttings of this didn't survive! Other stapeliad hybrids included "Speckled Jim", "Pistachio Yoghurt", "Red Belly" and "Pink Eye".

If you give a talk in Tucson, the audience can be large, with around 400 people turning up! At a garden centre in Tucson, he found *Agave attenuata* "Ray of Light" and managed to trace the grower and got a trayful of plants from him. Agave "Blue Glow" had a thin yellow edge along the leaf. Plants

that have been obtained from habitat are specially tagged to show they are legal, and we also saw the nursery where he got his *Agave murpheyi*. At the end of the trip, all the soil from the plants he de-pots usually ends up being deposited on a nearby tree or shrub, and we saw an example of this.

Kelly Griffin is good at what he does and is also good at letting you know that too! He met him at the nursery where he works. Since the plants weren't his, he couldn't give Stuart any cuttings from there, although he did give him some others later. Most of the Aloe hybrids Stuart sells are from Kelly, and we saw some that have not been named yet. Cultivar "Sugar" is one of the newer ones. Another famous grower is Bob Kent – the Haworthia cultivar called "Bev's Wonder" is named after his wife Beverly. Bob has some stunning hybrids which look artificial or glazed. He is a retired diplomat and doesn't sell or give away plants, but he releases a few through Steve Hammer. Many of these plants are crying out for tissue culture. A visit to another cactus nursery showed an office and some staff – the company actually grows other starter plants on a gigantic scale, but had an open day and we saw Aloe "Pink Blush" and Aloe "Vito" and also *Euphorbia millii*.

Stuart visited Steve Hammer, well known as an expert on mesembs. You can't tell what's for sale and nothing is priced so you just have to tell Steve what you are looking for and he'll go and find it. The Glottiphyllums in the sun were much better than the plants back at home. The final nursery was a wholesale outfit and he got Agave "Cornelius" and a new Aeonium "Purple Blast" from here.

We ended with a view of the mesemb Malephora which is one of the "ice plants". It was growing near a beach, and it could easily be a scene from South Africa. He collected a few pieces to bring back. On the plane back home, he was again in a window seat and got some great views of London and Big Ben,

and also Kew Gardens.

Vinay Shah

### Table Show Results

There were again just 4 entries in this month's table show!

	<b>Cacti – Gymnocalycium</b>	<b>Succulents – Mesemb Group</b>
Open	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Gymnocalycium strigianum</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Conophytum tischeri</i>
	(2) -	(2) -
	(3) -	(3) -
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Gymnocalycium vatteri</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Lithops otzeniana</i>
	(2) -	(2) -
	(3) -	(3) -

Ivor Biddlecombe

### Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on 6<sup>th</sup> November and it will be our turn to host the Zone 11 Quiz. Teams from Portsmouth and Isle of Wight will be visiting us for this event.

There will be no Table Show at the November meeting.

### Forthcoming Events

Sat	13 <sup>th</sup>	Oct	Isle of Wight	"Bats" – Graham Street
Sat	20 <sup>th</sup>	Oct	Portsmouth	"Conos & Other Mini-Mesembs" - Derek Tribble
Tue	6 <sup>th</sup>	Nov	Southampton	Zone 11 Quiz – hosted by Southampton Branch
Sat	10 <sup>th</sup>	Nov	Isle of Wight	"Cultivation; Back to Nature" – Anthony Mitchell
Sat	17 <sup>th</sup>	Nov	Portsmouth	"Hybrids etc." – Stuart Riley
Mon	19 <sup>th</sup>	Nov	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Sat	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dec	Portsmouth	Annual General Meeting & Christmas Social
Tue	4 <sup>th</sup>	Dec	Southampton	AGM, followed by Christmas Social/American Supper
Sat	8 <sup>th</sup>	Dec	Isle of Wight	Annual General Meeting & American Supper

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