

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

The weather in October was on the whole quite mild, although we did have our first series of frosts in the middle of last week. Even then, the day time weather has generally been quite pleasant. I thought my last watering was back in mid-October, but I felt it was warm enough to give the plants a partial (and final!) drink this Saturday, when we had almost a full day of sunshine.

Indeed the weather has prompted one of my Mammillarias to restart flowering. I do not know the exact species but it has straight reddish spines and 1cm magenta flowers around the top of the plant. A couple of Aloes are also in flower. The remaining colour is down to the mesembs; other than lithops and conophytums, a fenestraria and glottiphyllum are also in flower. The yellow flowers on the latter appear to be very long lasting – I am sure they have been open for over four weeks now.

Announcements

Next month is our **Annual General Meeting**, which will be followed by an American supper. Nomination forms for the Committee are available on the front table. The branch committee has not seen any changes a long time and we really would welcome some new faces!

As is usual, there will be no table show, library or plant sales at the AGM. However, please do remember to bring along some food or nibbles for

the American supper. There will also be a “bran tub” where members can exchange gifts. Further details of this are given on the back page.

Last Month's Meeting

Plants of Interest

The first group of *Plants of Interest* had been brought in by David Neville. He mentioned that the only thing with any colour in his greenhouses were the mesembs, so he had picked out a few.

Several of the plants were in 3½" black BEF pots and he mentioned these were all the same age, and around 19-20 years old. What he wanted to illustrate was how they had grown at different rates and the number of heads varied tremendously. *Lithops bromfieldii* had 30 heads but others such as *L. lesliei* v. *albinica* only had a few. The normal form of *L. pseudotruncatella* had grown 8 heads, but the variety *dendritica* had only grown 2 heads. David said that the latter rarely make more than 2 heads, even after decades it might only manage 3 or 4 heads. Judges need considerable experience when judging these plants.

Other Lithops which David had brought along included *L. otzeniana*, *L. turbiniformis*, the pink bodied *L. optica rubra*, and *L. aucampiae*. David mentioned that he doesn't normally feed these plants, but since he hadn't repotted them for a while, he sprinkled some slow release fertiliser around the surface at Spring, and they had responded by growing really well this year. Also, Margaret Corina had helped by removing some of the dried skin which builds up between the heads and which can eventually restrict the growth of the plants.

He mentioned that these plants are grown along the greenhouse eaves and get full light, but one of the plants was flowering on only one side of the pot. This is due to insufficient light levels and perhaps one side of the plant was shaded or obstructed. Ivor mentioned that this year his Lithops were flowering much later than usual. *L. pseudotruncatella* is the first to flower and usually does so in July but David said his had flowered in August. Most of the others

have flowered later. Of his Lithops, 80-90% were yellow-flowered, but the white flowered plants look stunning when a mass of flowers is open.

Moving on to some other genera, *Ophthalmophyllum* is closely related to *Conophytums*, and *O. praesectum* had white flowers. This plant had scorched terribly during the hot weather in the summer, causing one side of heads to die off. In addition, another plant was shading one of the sides causing some of the remaining heads to elongate. The nice thing about most mesembs is that each year's growth is new, so a problem with cultivation in one year can be rectified by moving the plant to another place and then just wait a while as the older bodies/leaves die off and are replaced by new ones.

Pleiospilos (now *Tanquana*) *hilmari* is the nicest of the smaller growing *Pleiospilos*, but out of all his succulents and cacti, it is the easiest plant to split when watered. Each dark green leaf was marked with a darker line where the leaf had burst. Most growers of this species suffer in the same way. His *Lapidaria* had chunky leaves and had finished flowering now, but it is eligible in the Lithops group - he had entered and won the class in the Zone show, beating all the Lithops. He wasn't sure why the judges rate it highly, but perhaps one factor is that the leaves on this persist and do not regenerate, hence the plant has to be grown well year after year. *Dinteranthus* is another genera which is eligible in the Lithops class.

The second group of *Plants of Interest* had been brought along by Tom Radford. These were all members of the asclepiad group, and in flower. The first plant was a *Pectinaria*, with a number of dark brown flowers which contrasted against the pale green body. Tom mentioned that the flower smells in the daytime. The cutting had been grown for 3 or 4 years and every now and again he breaks pieces off and re-roots it. David Neville mentioned that in the wild, the old stems would dry out and dry decay away but in cultivation it can rot and spread into the rest of the plant. Tom made a general comment that all his stapeliads seem to be harder to grow these days - maybe it's due to the warmer winters?

Next was a small flowered *Orbea semota* - this was the brown-flowering form, and there is also a yellow form. If the plant loses its roots, it can be rooted very quickly in vermiculite in a propagator. Once the roots form, the cuttings tend to survive. *Huernia pillansi* had a typical star shaped flower, but this example was hairier than the normal form. *Ceropegia rendallii* has a bulbous root system and it has small flowers which are unusual in that the base

has little bulge which is very pale and designed to attract insects.

One of the fleshy rooted *Ceropegias* is *C. sandersonnii*. He grew it on the top shelf. It has very fleshy roots which are prone to rot off. However it grows fast from cuttings and had put on 3 feet in just a year. These plants prefer to hang, although some of the other species like to climb. Another "hanger" is *C. ampliata* - this was a large flowered form with white flowers which were 4-5cm long but not quite ready to open yet. It had been grown from a small cutting planted in March.

The final plant was *Fockea angustifolia*. This was an old ISI-distributed plant and was probably 20 years old. It is slow growing and flowering was a rare occurrence, but this year it had formed bunches of flowers all over it. It is very prone to mealy bug, which likes to get into the crevices and leaf joints.

My favourite places – Angie Money

This was record of a trip which Angie made to Chile in June 2003. A number of other familiar names (Paul Klaassen, Cliff Thompson) also went on the same trip. They stopped over at Buenos Aires airport and we saw a nice shot of snow-covered mountain tops, taken from the plane. From Santiago, they travelled northwest to Pichidanguí, which is on the coast. Right at the start of the trip, they suffered a puncture but this was fixed on a Sunday morning for just £1.50! They then headed towards Parque Nacional Bosque de Fray Jorge and saw some *Trichocerei*, a fence of *Eulychnia* plants and big plants of *Eriosyce aurata* bearing many seed pods. As they drove along, pictures of the surrounding hills showed green vegetation. The road north is called Route 5 (it is part of the Panamericana highway) and in Chile, much of it runs close to the coast. We saw a nice red sunset and a picture of *Copiapoa calderana* ssp. *spiniosior* with the sea in the background. Angie mentioned one had to take care while climbing on the crumbly rocks.

Driving on through the Atacama desert, there was very little to note apart from various sands and rock scenes. There was not a sound to be heard in the wilderness, and they just saw the occasional truck. At Cifuncho, they found *Copiapoa columna-alba* and a dead *C. desertorum*. There was a picture of a small lizard, minus most of its tail, perhaps lost in a fight. In the bay were plants of *C. columna-alba* and *C. longistaminea* - some were 2-3 feet tall and must have been very old. Again they were very close to the water's edge and some of the party enjoyed a paddle in the Pacific. They also found a 6-7 headed

specimen of *C. longistaminea*, with red spines which was christened as “Benjy’s plant” (one of the party was Benjy Oliver).

They carried on to Quebrada San Ramon, a valley containing many fine plants. They found *C. cinerea* and *C. albispina* plants of all ages and also the white-spined *Eriosyce taltalensis*. The ground was quite difficult, boggy in some places and loose gravel in others. Some of plants were hanging out of the rocks along the sides of the valley. Examining each of these took time, and one really had to walk straight through and ignore all the plants on the side if you wanted to get to the far point. Angie mentioned that during the course of the trip she took 3500 digital pictures in 14 days, and for tonight’s talk she would be showing almost 700 of them. There were huge clumps of white spined plants of *C. albispina*. Some had tatty bodies but there were lots of pups. There were football sized plants of *C. cinerea* and a red skinned *Euphorbia lactiflua*. We saw more examples of *C. cinerea* with black spines.

At Taltal the accommodation cost \$40 per night. (The cost of the whole trip was estimated as £1500-£2000.) One of the photos showed a bench made from cactus “wood”. They found a Coca-Cola stand and a small shop which was closed. After standing around for a while, the owner decided to open and they were able to stock up with supplies. They carried on north, towards Paposo. The fog was very thick and you couldn’t see where you were going. Even getting back to the car was a challenge. *Eulychnia iquiquensis* plants had lichen growing on them and a *Copiapoa humilis* did not look too happy. On to El Cobre, they found *C. solaris*. There were some clouds at 800m, above them. The first *C. solaris* they found was covered in grey dirt, and lots of other clumps were also in the same state.

At Quebrada Botija, the ground was sturdier than it had been at San Ramon. They came across a skeleton of a seal, and a clump of *C. ahremephiana* followed by *C. decorticans* and *C. atacamensis*. At a T-junction in the road, there were plants of *C. solaris* on both the left and right sides. There were also huge clumps visible on the hillsides. We saw another *C. atacamensis*, a huge clump of *C. solaris* and remains of disintegrated plants. There were elongated plants of *Eriosyce paucicostata* (a subspecies of *E. taltalensis*) and *C. ahremephiana* with different spine colours. We also saw pictures of their campsites, including some of the shots of their rubbish - Angie assured us that they did clear up after every stop!

They went back to down to the sea and in the distance they could see plants of *C. hasseltoniana*. On their last day in this area, they went to Cerro Perales. They saw *C. tenebrosa* on the cliff sides and also more specimens of *Euphorbia lactiflua*. They also had an excellent view of Taltal and the bay from a high vantage point overlooking the town. Before heading down, they went along a patch nicknamed “Ridge Road”, and found *C. rupestris* and few more examples of *C. tenebrosa*. The sand and stones here were reddish in colour. They found *C. cinerea* with white skin and black spines.

At Taltal there was a chance for some sightseeing. There was a quaint railway station, plants of bougainvillea in flower, a promenade which was deserted, lots of cannons and a nice church. We also saw the Las Brisas restaurant where they had a good meal. They headed on to Esmerelda, where they found *C. longistaminea* and *C. grandiflora* in flower. An *Eriosyce* had pink flowers, and *C. laui* had matchstick-sized heads. There were also big heads of *C. longistaminea*, and they found larger examples of *C. laui*, followed by *Eulychnia saintpieana*, and *C. esmeraldana*.

They also came across Alan Craig's grave which is sited at the mouth of Guanillos Valley near the sea. They camped in the aptly named “Secret Valley” which is easy to miss since the entrance is hidden. Food consisted of a jacket potato with tuna/cheese and some soup! We also saw an amusing picture of a large *Copiapoa columna-alba* “wearing” Paul’s cowboy hat. A twin headed plant seemed to be suffering from a bad infestation of mealy bug. Here, they found *C. longistaminea* and *C. columna-alba* growing together.

At Caleta Tigrillo, the rocks looked solid but were very slippery. *Copiapoa tigrillensis* had newly-formed red spines and was growing in the rocks. Indeed, there was no soil here - just gravel., but the plants had still managed to grow knee-high. At Caleta La Madera, the groups of *C. columna-alba* plants were lovely. Along the coastline, there were more plants of *C. longistaminea* and *C. tigrillensis*. They came across a field of hundreds of *C. columna-alba* of all sizes. We saw pictures of one plant splitting into two heads and another with yellow flowers. Paul mentioned that he thought some of these might be thousands of years old. There was a huge clump of *C. longistaminea* with hundreds of heads, and another nice example of *C. columna-alba*.

They then headed for Chanaral, going through the Pan de Azucar (Sugar loaf mountain). They found

C. cinerascens growing amongst dark rocks, along with *Eulychnia saint-pieana*. *C. serpentisulcata* seems to be an intermediate form of *C. cinerascens* which grows near the sea. They also found a really big clump of *C. columna-alba*, *C. melanohystris* and more examples of *C. columna-alba* with different spines.

At Las Lomitas, they saw some guanacos, which are animals related to llamas. Eulychnias covered in wool seemed to be young plants. While stopping at a ranger station, they spotted a fox who was partial to a piece of banana. They saw him head behind a bush and then return; it turned out he was taking the food to a mate who was shy. *Opuntia tunicata* with gleaming white spines was fantastic, *C. esmeraldana* matches the rocks and was hard to spot. Heading towards Chanaral, Cliff slammed on the brakes, having spotted a ball of *Eriosyce rodentiophila* with red spines. They also saw more *C. columna-alba* here.

In Chanaral, there was a cactarium which contained a few plants and skeletons of some creatures(!). The next day they found a specimen of *C. hypogea* situated inland and growing in rocks, and Rudolf Schulz decided it needed some of their drinking water. Then they found the largest group (thousands of plants!) of *C. columna-alba*, growing on hill after hill, all leaning at an angle to counteract the midday sun. They also found *Eulychnia saint-pieana*. They also found a *C. serpentisulcata* where ants had built a nest in the crown, using gravel. The flowers on the plants also looked like they had been eaten. Plants of *E. saint-pieana* looked almost like trees. They found more *C. serpentisulcata* and also the shrubby *Oxalis gigantea*. Plants of *Copiapoa marginata* didn't look too well - a fungus/lichen was growing on them. They found more plants with lovely long spines and also forms with golden spines.

It was time to head back towards Santiago. *C. calderana* was silver grey and had long dark spines. At Punta Zentena, *C. calderana* was the only thing here. The hotel Roca de Bahias was a nice place to stay at. At Copiapo, they found *Copiapoa echinoides*. In the valley there was fog and moisture in the air, and they came across *Copiapoa dealbata* and *Eulychnia brevifolia*. The *C. dealbata* plants were black with a white coating. They found a 50 headed plant with stems a metre high and also found a clump ½ metre across containing over a 100 heads. There were some plants with open yellow flowers and also a cristate. They took a group photo of the team standing around one of the dealbatas. Some of the plants were all white (with no black markings). They also found small examples of

Eriosyce odieri and *Copiapoa echinata* along with *Eriosyce pichidangui* and *Eriosyce curvispina*.

Heading south, they were now passing through areas which they had first visited 4 weeks previously, and in the intervening period, rain had turned the plants from little more than flat discs to fresh looking plump plants. There was also evidence of new vegetation springing up. At Quilimari, the land was covered in grasses and they found *Trichocereus chilensis* and *Eriosyce curvispina*, and there were also pictures of pink flowers on *Eriosyce subgibbosa*. Their trip was almost over and they spent their last night at Pichidangui before heading back to Santiago. Angie finished with some nice pictures of golden/pink sunsets.

Overall, this proved to be an interesting talk, with some excellent pictures of plants in habitat - some of the Copiapoas were stunning and one just to hope that they will survive the rapid development which is happening in Chile. As a bonus we also got to see various other scenes.

[Ed. If you are interested in details of this trip to Chile, visit Paul Klaassen's account of the same journey at: <http://www.copiapoa.info/copiapoathon/2003calendar.htm>]

Vinay Shah

Table Show – October 2006

There were 13 entries in the October table show. (Thanks are due to Jim Roskilly for providing a record of all the plant names!)

	Cacti – 3 Cacti	Succulents – 3 Succulents
Open	(1) B Beckerleg Ariocarpus retusus Astrophytum myriostigma Copiapoa longistaminea	(1) B Beckerleg Adenium obesum Pachypodium brevicaule Sarcocaulon peniculinum
	(2) T Grech Mammillaria sp. Astrophytum ornatum Ferocactus alamosanus	(2) T Grech Hoodia sp. Euphorbia sp. Pachypodium geayi
	(3) J Roskilly Melocactus sp. Selenicereus sp. Rhipsalis cereuscula	(3) J Roskilly Echeveria agavoides Stapelia desmetiana Aloe erinacea
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg Neoporteria villosa Astrophytum asterias Ariocarpus retusus	(1) B Beckerleg Euphorbia mosaica Crassula susannae Anacampseros alstonii
	(2) J Roskilly Lophophora lauii (cristate) Parodia nivosa Gymn. friedrichii	(2) J Roskilly Crassula ausensis Ceraria pygmaea Haworthia sordida
	(3) P Clemow Gymn. mihanovichii Echinocereus rusanthus Neoporteria multicolor	(3) P Clemow Huernia zebrine Crassula "Pagoda Villa" Faucaria tuberculosa

Ivor Biddlecombe

New Library Books

Philip has reviewed the recent additions to the branch library:

The New Cactus Lexicon

It is over 30 years since the publication of Backeberg's Lexicon. This successor is a team effort. It has been compiled and edited by David Hunt with the assistance of Nigel Taylor, Graham Charles and many members of the International Cactaceae Systematics Group. It is in two volumes, "Text" with descriptions of all accepted species and "Atlas" with over 2500 colour photographs. It was reviewed in the September issue of the Society's Journal "Cactus World".

The choice of accepted names follows the recent trend towards lumping. The 9th Edition of the Handbook of Shows has already gone down that path, but this Lexicon goes further, for example Neoporteria becomes Eriosyce. From a personal point of view I regret this. To me Sulcorebutia, Weingartia and Rebutia are quite distinct, similarly Notocactus and Parodia. There are also many re-attributions of species names. Undoubtedly, there has been an undue expansion of the range of names, but if I accept the Lexicon names, I shall have to write new labels for about half of my plants! Whether plants labels will conform in future to these recommendations, time will show.

The Illustrations in the "Atlas" book are likely to be the most useful part for ordinary cactophiles. The quality of the photographs is very high, often with several photographs of the same species, both in habitat and in cultivation. However, they are arranged "systematically" i.e. not in alphabetical order. So to find the illustration of a particular species, one needs first to find whether they have accepted the name or if not what they have decided to call it, then find the illustration number in the Index, then turn to the picture. This probably sounds more inconvenient than it is.

This is a book you will all want to have a look at.

Dumpling and His Wife

Steven Hammer's "Conograph" (already in the Library) was published in 1993 and based largely on data collected in 1985 and 1986. This new book by the same author, published in 2002, updates the information. By that time he had moved from New Mexico to California, where he found his plants grew better and were more photogenic. The photographs in the book reflect this.

Apart from the author's updated ideas on the genus Conophytum, he has included a number of Appendices on technical aspects by invited contributors.

Anyone with conophytums (conophyta?) in their collection will find this a most interesting read.

Philip Clemow

Snippets

The following article was spotted in one of the daily newspapers by Jim Roskilly:

The End of Sugar?

A revolutionary new sweetener which is being tipped to replace sugar goes on sale in shops today.

Agave Nectar is a honey-like liquid that is sweeter and healthier than sugar, has no aftertaste - and could even help people lose weight. The nectar, made from the same cactus plant used to produce tequila, is said to reduce sugar cravings and burn off fat rather than store it. And because it does not produce a rapid rise in blood sugar levels, it can be used by diabetics. Experts say users will not experience the extreme energy high and lows commonly associated with "sugar rushes".

This is because Agave Nectar is 76 per cent fructose, which is absorbed more slowly into the body and does not need insulin to break it down. Bosses at Tesco, which will be selling Agave Nectar from next week, believe it could revolutionise the way people eat.

Spokesman David Cooke said: "What makes it so special is that, unlike other sweeteners, it helps keep the body's blood sugar levels balanced which can help our moods remain constant. Unfortunately, with sugar and other sweeteners we get an initial energy rush which is quickly followed by a crashing low when the effect wears off. Agave Nectar is a sugar substitute which can be used to sweeten food and drinks. Unlike honey, it dissolves almost instantly so is perfect in tea and coffee, on cereals and for baking."

The nectar, 25 per cent sweeter than sugar, is made from the milky juice of a Mexican cactus called the Blue Weber Agave. Nutrition expert Dr Barbara Wilson said: "Agave Nectar is a natural product and

very versatile."

Daily Mirror, 21 September 2006

Next Month's Meeting

Our final meeting of 2006 will be held on December 5th. This will be our **Annual General Meeting** followed by the **Christmas Social**. After receiving some reports from this year's Committee and choosing the Committee for next year, we'll get on with the real business of enjoying some food and drink and chatting with fellow branch members.

Drinks will be provided by the branch, but please do bring along some items of food for the buffet table.

There will also be a "bran tub" lucky-dip. Simply bring along a wrapped present (suggested value is £2 or therabouts) and place it in the tub at the start of the meeting. Later in the evening you'll get a chance to take a present out of the tub.

In order to give the Committee members a chance to participate in the festivities, there will be no plant sales, sundries sales, table show or library at the December meeting. (Although Philip will be willing to accept back any library books which you wish to return).

Finally, for Committee members, a reminder that a Committee meeting will be held on the 20th of November. **Please bring along your annual reports** so that these can be included in the December newsletter. Any format (handwritten, typewritten, or as a file on a floppy disk) is acceptable. Alternatively, reports can be emailed to my email address, as shown on the front of the newsletter.

Forthcoming Events

Fri	17 th	Nov	Isle of Wight	"Small and Sweet" – Stuart Riley
Sat	18 th	Nov	Portsmouth	Annual General Meeting
Mon	20 th	Nov	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting (@79 Shirley Avenue)
Sat	2 nd	Dec	Portsmouth	Christmas Social / American Supper
Tue	5 th	Dec	Southampton	AGM and Christmas Social
Fri	15 th	Dec	Isle of Wight	AGM and Christmas Social

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