

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

The weather has continued to be relatively mild and I am not sure we've experienced a real frost yet, although I did see some hail (in London) on Sunday. Of course daring to mention mild weather probably means we'll now experience some bitterly cold days soon. Anyway it did feel strange to see roses flowering in November, and many trees still hanging in to their leaves in the middle of November.

Overall, the onset of winter seems to have been delayed by 4 to 5 weeks. This makes it difficult to decide when to stop watering one's cacti and succulent plants. I stopped watering in the middle of October but if I had known that the mild weather would continue into November, I would probably have watered on a couple more occasions. We'll just have to see whether we do get a shorter winter, and if it will be as severe as it was last year.

Recent blooms on my plants have mainly been limited to the mesembs – plants in flower have included Conophytums, a Glottiphyllum and an Fenestraria.

Announcements

The Branch is very sad to announce that our former Secretary and Treasurer, **Margaret Corina** passed away on Thursday 19th November. As most of you will know, she was diagnosed with cancer in March. In September, just a few days after the open day where she let members buy plants from her collection, her condition deteriorated and she was admitted into Southampton General. Over the years, Margaret had made an enormous contribution to the branch and she will be greatly missed. The funeral will be held at Bassett Crematorium at 11:40am on Thursday December 3rd, and this will be followed with a reception at the Chilworth Hilton.

The **2010 Branch programme** has been prepared and copies will be available at the December meeting. We have again endeavoured to assemble a varied and interesting selection of speakers.

The **meeting in January** will consist of short talks presented by branch members, and we will have access to both conventional and digital projectors. We'd really like two or three members to show some photos or talk for a few minutes about any of your plants. Digital pictures can be brought along on a CD or memory card or memory stick, and should be numbered/prefixed 001, 002, 003 etc. to ensure they are shown in the correct order.

Committee Reports - 2009

Chairman's Report

At this time last year the committee were slightly worried about the drop in attendance at monthly meetings. This has now changed and we regularly get over 30 people attending and sometimes over 40. We have had some good speakers which encourages the casual members and attracts members from neighbouring branches, we have some Portsmouth members at most of our meetings.

We have several new members and some of these are young compared to the average age, which can only be a good thing for the branch.

A great sadness this year is the death of Margaret Corina in November, she was both secretary and treasurer and will be sorely missed. The branch owes a great debt to Margaret (with David, her husband before her) for all the time and hard work she has put into our branch over many years. Our 50th. anniversary convention in 2004 was such a success because of Margaret's planning and organising everything to run so smoothly. Her house in Shirley hosted many committee meetings, usually finishing with doughnuts and muffins. She was especially brave and generous to sell off her plant collection in September at very reduced prices to collectors who will appreciate and look after them. Thank you, Margaret. Fortunately David Neville and Mark Jakins have taken on her tasks.

The success of the branch is due to the hard work of the committee members, especially those who put on displays at various events and then 'man' them; these displays are our best advertising. I gave notice last year that I would come off the committee this year, after 50 years, so that will be another change, but change is inevitable, nothing remains the same forever. No one has rushed forward yet to take on the job!

Thank you, to all of you who support the branch in so many ways, even by just coming and taking part in the raffle, the refreshments and buying plants. It has been a real privilege to be involved with so many lovely people since the start in 1954.

I wish the branch every success in the future, I shall still come to the meetings as long as I can.

Best wishes,

Peter Down

Secretary's Report

2009 has been a successful year for Southampton & District Branch, with a range of good speakers and increased attendance at meetings. The number of people attending our monthly meetings, including welcome visitors from other branches, is higher than most branches in the country, and virtually every month we have been congratulated by visiting speakers who are impressed with the number of people present, and the friendly atmosphere at our meetings. We have been fortunate in gaining a number of new members over the past 12 months, several of whom have become regular visitors to our monthly meetings.

We mounted a number of displays again this year, at the Garden Fair at Whiteley Village Outlet Shopping Centre, The Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, Solent Fuchsia Society Show and The New Forest Show – all of which were worthwhile, and which hopefully help to attract new people to join us. Plant sales at these events have been good, with a commission of 15% of takings going into branch funds to help finance our activities. The Easter Garden Show at Broadlands did not take place this year, which is a major loss to our promotional activities, and I have recently been informed that there will be no more of these shows in the future.

We need to find other events at which to publicise the society and to promote our hobby, so if anyone knows of any events that might be worthwhile please let me know. We are currently investigating some other shows, including events at Sparsholt Agricultural College, the Romsey Show and the Ellingham Show at Somerley near Ringwood, but have not been able to confirm details in time to include them in our printed programme of activities for 2010. The large Garden Fayre held in June each year near Southampton Parkway Station looked like a good event, but the organisers want us to pay over £50 to attend, so it would not be financially viable for us to be there.

A shadow has hung over the branch this year as our former Secretary and Treasurer, Margaret Corina, was diagnosed with cancer in March and sadly passed away in November. Margaret had been a stalwart and very hard working member of the branch for around 25 years, and we shall all miss her in many ways. Margaret continued with her work for the branch while she was able, but by mid summer she decided that she would like to hand over her jobs to someone else. I offered to take on the role of Secretary, and Mark Jakins stepped into the breach to take over as Treasurer. With Margaret's help the transition went smoothly, although there were a few hiccups on the financial side as we had to transfer the bank and savings accounts but I think these have now been resolved.

Plant sales at meetings provide added interest, and we are grateful to Bruce Beckerleg, our Plant Sales Manager for organising this aspect of our activities. Vinay Shah continues to produce our popular newsletter at meetings, despite the fact that few people contribute anything to help him..... so please make it your New Years Resolution to write a few paragraphs about your plants so that Vinay's job is made easier. Providing a write-up of the talks is a time consuming job, so if anyone feels that they would like to have a go at this during the year please

speak to Vinay, who will be only too pleased to hear from you. Vinay also maintains the branch website, which contains details of all our activities and some photographs and other bits and pieces. We would like to increase the amount of material on the website, and are actively seeking articles and pictures to upload; if you can think of anything that is appropriate for this, or you can provide some material, please speak to Vinay.

Refreshments at meetings are organised by Glen Finn, who has had difficulties attending some meetings this year because of working a long distance from home, but we are grateful for his efforts. June Purseglove sells raffle tickets at the meetings, and this helps finance our meetings, so we are very pleased that she continues in this role, and I am sure none of us envy her task of folding all the tickets during the first half of the talks so that the draw can be made in the interval. Donations of raffle prizes are welcomed, as it means we have to spend less on prizes each month. Ivor Biddlecombe organises the monthly Table Show at meetings, and we are all agreed that the Table Show provides some interesting plants for people to look at and talk about. But the number of entries in the classes has been falling, so please try to support the Table Show during the coming year. Ivor also erects the display stands at our publicity events, and without his sterling efforts we would struggle to present such good looking displays.

Dot England offers members a chance to borrow books from our library each month, unpacking many and displaying them in the hall at the start of every meeting, and packing them all away again at the end. Library use is steady but we would love to see it increase, so please take a look at the titles available – I am sure that you will all find some useful and interesting books there to borrow at very low cost. Jim Roskilly continues to publicise the branch by sending details of our events to local newspapers and radio stations; without his efforts the general public would find it more difficult to find out what we are up to. Geoff Card has been Vice Chairman for some years, and he regularly calls the raffle at meetings; he is also a stalwart at some of our shows, attending for long hours to help sell plants and to encourage new members.

Finally, Peter Down, our chairman for many years, has decided that he would like to stand down from the Committee at the 2009 AGM. Peter was the driving force behind the creation and inauguration of Southampton Branch in 1954, and he has served continuously on the Committee since the early days of the branch! I think that after 50 years or more he

deserves a break, and on behalf of everyone I would like to thank Peter for his enormous contribution to the branch and the society over such an extended period. We hope you enjoy your 'retirement' Peter, but look forward to seeing you as a backbencher at branch meetings for many years to come.

David Neville

Treasurer's Report

Due to Margaret's illness, I was asked in June whether I might take on the post of acting treasurer for the society until the election of the Committee at this AGM. Although having no previous experience of being a treasurer, I was very pleased to be able to support the society. I visited Margaret and she showed me the accounts she made up and gave me the documentation. Since that time I have kept a spreadsheet record of all the transactions of the society which I have shared with the committee and I have paid all the bills. Not all of the details have been available to me, and so for example, I have recorded the times when a cheque was made out, but I have no idea when some of them were cashed. I have recently started to receive the bank statements and can now match the transactions with the exact status of the bank account. This however did not start to happen until the end of the financial year in October, when I gave both Margaret's material and the spreadsheet details to Colin and Lorraine. I am learning the ropes all the time and should I be formally elected will be able to keep good records for future financial years. It will probably take a full year to see all that goes on.

I submit a copy of all the recorded transactions since June to the AGM. This shows that the value of all moneys held by the branch rose by £500.63 to £7,357.30, subject of course to not having full details of when some cheques were cashed. This figure does not include intangible assets, which are subject to depreciation projections. This is simple the cash that we can spend. From the transactions it can be seen that the money raised during meetings approximately pays for the expenses of running the meetings, but the branch is blessed by a vigour to make contact with the general public which has the effect of adding to the capital by the money raised at shows, i.e. New Forest £309.50, Hilliers £68.76, Whiteley £43.40, Fuchsia Show £32.00.

When speaking to Margaret, she said that she valued the money the branch has, as being potentially able to support the branch, in less favourable times. It is also true that a small number of people put a great deal of effort in raising money, and this should be

reflected in the branch gaining value from its money, by new assets and activities, and not just seeing a rising figure at subsequent AGM's.

Next year, should I be elected, I would like spend more time integrating with Colin and Lorraine in setting the accounts, and grouping income and expenditure by plant sales, refreshments etc, but this has been a hectic year full of change, and I ran out of time. Hopefully I will be more experienced next year, and will have more time to devote to the society, which I am very pleased to be part of.

Happy Christmas,

Mark Jakins

Display Manager's Report

This year the branch was invited to put on four displays. The first was at Sir Harold Hillier Arboretum Ampfield on May 10th and 11th. Our display was again held in the Education Centre. It is the best and most comfortable of all the displays we do, and this year it was better supported than in previous years, with Saturday being the best for plant sales. Many of the visitors mentioned they enjoyed seeing so many Cacti and Succulents in flower, so I think we must try to get a similar time again as many of our plants are in flower at that time of year, and it is what the visitors like to see, Please accept my thanks to all who helped me put on this event and I hope a few more branch members will bring along plants in flower to the displays.

The second was at Whiteley Village on 30th and 31st May. This year we were worried that conditions were going to be as bad as last time, when our gazebo was blown over, but we were very pleased that this time the weather was dry and sunny on both days although still quite windy. It was a shame plant sales were poor after the effort we made to stage this event, this was down to a reduced number of visitors to the shops. However, it was nice to talk to the visitors to the display and also some old friends from Portsmouth branch.

The third display was at the Solent Fuchsia Show at Titchfield on 19th-20th July. This year I was unable to help out on the Saturday but David Neville and I were able to rig the display on Friday night. I was grateful to Jim Roskilly and Ted Smith for the help they gave David on Saturday, the sale of plants was better on that day but still not very good. Ted also came to give a hand on Sunday. The members of the Fuchsia Group made us welcome, and the event gave us a chance to show our plants to the public, which made it well worth doing.

Our fourth display was at the New Forest Show from 28th to 30th July. This year our display was again at the entrance to the Horticultural Marquee and this meant everyone visiting the marquee had to pass our display. The weather was a lot better than last year with only a few showers, and the improved roads made for a more comfortable show. Our plant sales were the best for a long time and this was greatly helped by the plants and seed donated by Ian Acton. Our display won a Gold medal, although the Judges commented that they were very impressed with the plants, but it would have been better if the plants were in similar pots. I had to explain that the plants were provided by different members of the branch and we all had different ways of growing the plants. As a gold medal is the highest we can get, I don't think we did too badly. Finally I would like to thank all of you who gave me your support at the displays this year, and hope a few more of you will help me next year.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,

Ivor Biddlecombe

Plant Sales Officer's Report

We put on a display at Hilliers as we have in previous years; this year it was in May which is earlier than it has been in the past. This paid off because, as it was in the height of the flowering season, we took £440 which is twice as much as we have taken in previous years. We will have to bear this in mind in the future!

The New Forest Show was very successful with takings of £1255 which is 30% up on recent years where the takings have been remarkably consistent despite the sometimes dramatic variation in the weather. I am not sure what caused the increase but let's hope it continues.

I do not keep a record of sales at branch meetings but these have been increasing in recent years because we have had increased attendances. However sales are still small compared with the public shows.

I do not have figures for Whiteley or the Solent Fuchsia Society show since I did not attend, but takings are usually modest at these two events.

I would, once again like to thank all of you who brought sales plants to the various events. For those of you who do not know, anyone can bring plants for the sales table, just make sure each plant has a

price label with your initials on. We charge a 10% commission at branch meetings and 15% at shows. There have been one or two more offerings at the monthly meetings which are very welcome as they help supplement the same old selection I tend to bring. More would be welcome.

Bruce Beckerleg

Newsletter Editor / Website Report

Newsletter production has been relatively uneventful, although as with last year there have been occasions when we have run out of copies. I take this to be a good sign since it is due to higher meeting attendances. In the middle of the year I ran off a few extra copies of the spring and summer editions. If anyone does need specific back issues, please let me know.

For those of you who are not able to come to our monthly meetings, copies of the newsletter can be downloaded from our branch website. We do also have the facility to mail out paper copies if you keep me supplied with stamped addressed envelopes.

The website continues to receive hundreds of visits each month, mainly due to the large number of plant pictures I put up from the 2004 National Show. At some point I should really update these and put up the images from 2008! Our website also features details of the enamel badge we commissioned last year, and I am glad to say that this "advertising" helped us to sell several badges during the course of the year.

I would like to thank members such as Ian Acton and Jim Roskilly and Ivor (amongst others) who have provided articles and cuttings from newspapers for inclusion in the newsletter. The newsletter could do with more variety, so please do make an effort to write a snippet or highlight something that you feel will be of interest to branch members.

Vinay Shah

Publicity Officer's Report

First my thanks to all who have in any way provided publicity. Especial thanks to Ivor who is the moving force behind the many displays at events throughout the year. We have not had a lot of luck with the press this year as there have been a lot of major news items this year which have used up the available print space.

We have had the usual strong, much appreciated, support from the "What's On" department at Radio

Solent. We are hoping to get some posters in public libraries soon. Vinay is going to run me off some posters. The way the system works is when space is available, our posters are placed out and after an indeterminate time, they may be removed to make spaces for those waiting. I estimate we are about ready for another crack of the whip.

Seasonal greetings to all and good growing in 2010,

Jim Roskilly

Librarian's Report

In January with the assistance of David Neville, the library was reviewed and sorted. For reasons of expediency we agreed to put out two boxes only of the most recent books at monthly meetings. The older books to be accessed on a request basis either by asking the librarian at the meeting or filling in a request form. Vinay Shah agreed to include a list of books and request form in the newsletter.

A committee decision was made to abandon the sliding scale of charges and set the cost of borrowing books at a standard charge of 20 pence per month.

All surplus library books have now been sold with a remainder going to the raffle.

As listed in the borrowing report more books have been borrowed over the summer with the newly purchased book by John Pilbeam on Echeverias proving most popular after his visit to our branch meeting in June. We have also purchased Graham Charles' recent book on Gymnocalyciums.

Total revenue for the year was £40.20, as follows:

<u>Source</u>	<u>2008/9</u>
Lending	£ 8.00
Sale of surplus books	£ 25.00
Sale of pens	£ 7.20
TOTAL	£ 40.20

Dorothy England

Last Month's Meeting

A Taste of France

In November, we were visited by Tony and Suzanne Mace. They talked about a visit to the Jardin Exotique (a cactus garden in Monaco), and also visits to some other nurseries in Europe. Unfortunately I missed the start of the meeting, and so my notes start part-way through their talk.

We saw a lean-to with shading – in this region, the sun can be fierce in the summer. This contained bromeliads, Rhipsalis and ferns. There was a sprinkler system to maintain humidity and a steel frame with some netting which was ideal for mounting the bromeliads. Next we saw the base of a large *Cissus* from Madagascar. This consisted of almost 12 feet of roots and the plant itself might have been some 40 feet tall.

In a succulent house, we saw some Euphorbias, a couple of tree aloes (maybe *Aloe pillansii*). Suzanne mentioned they had just had to decapitate their *Aloe dichotoma* because of mealy bug and she hoped it would grow new leaves. We also saw *Pachypodium lameri* in flower. At home they have managed to flower this species in a 5 inch pot. The white flowers are perfumed but it is hard to get your nose that high. Their *P. geayi* is 10 foot tall and also flowers regularly. These make good conservatory plants.

The section of South American plants included *Matucana* and *Lobivia*. It was a time of the year when several plants of *Matucana madisoniorum* were in flower. Smaller plants they found included a *Mammillaria boolii* (or maybe *M. microcarpa*) with a full ring of large pink flowers. Back into the main area, we saw a *Gymnocereus* which has a odd habit, growing as a sprawling, spreading plant. It is named for the naked buds. The older growth had hardly any spination. One of the greenhouses was dedicated to taller plants, and we saw an *Alluaudia* from Madagascar. Outside, they found an *Adenium obesum* with vivid red flowers. There weren't many leaves on the plant. In Florida these can be made to flower in just 18 months – all they need is lots of heat, feed and space. We also saw a cutting of *Pachycereus pecten-aboriginum* - apparently the fruit of this is used by natives as hair combs.

There was an area where large cuttings appeared to be suspended in the air. Suzanne explained that *Cerei* cuttings have a terrible habit of curving when laid out to dry, and so these were being suspended in order to keep them straight. David Neville asked

whether this meant that if you hang a banana up it would grow straight?

The Garden sometimes puts on displays for visiting dignitaries and we saw an example of this, featuring plants from the Canary Islands – these included *Aeoniums*, *Ceropegias* and *Euphorbias*. Tony and Suzanne explained that access to some of the private areas is best arranged by contacting the Garden ahead of your visit. David Neville mentioned that he had visited the Gardens in 1990 when Marcel Kroenlein (who was in charge at the time) was away on a trip and it was a job to get access to the areas not normally open to the public.

We saw some tall plants with supports. Tony explained that the stems of plants grown indoors are not as strong as plants in habitat. We also saw *Vatricania guentheri* – this is not difficult to grow and they have one in an 8" pot which flowers. We also saw how they packaged something for transport – the plant was placed in a wooden box with an inner framework and supports at the top, middle and bottom. There was no chance of the plant moving.

We also saw *Neobuxbaumia polylopha* with many heads, and a nice form of *Agave stricta* (echinata form) which was in flower. There were masses of seeds forming on it, and Suzanne asked for some seed. She was told she'd be sent some, but she is still waiting. Next was *Aloe tomentosa*, which has hairy spikes and flowers. We also saw a *Dasyliirion*, which is an *Agave* relative with narrow leaves with sawtooth edges or tufted tips. These plants grow in male and female forms. A yucca in flower had pendulous flower spikes and this was very decorative and graceful. Finally, one of the pictures showed a view of some plants with roof tops of houses in Monaco in the background.

During parts of their trip, they were quite high up in the Alps, and at 3000m they did find some alpine plants. We were shown a yellow gentian which is grown commercially since a liqueur is made from its roots. We also saw "Les demoiselles de coiffeur" – a rocky landmark where the side rocks have been eroded away, leaving original vegetation and making the cliff-side look like heads with fancy green wigs.

Next they headed for Henri Kuentz, who runs one of the biggest and oldest cactus nurseries in France, called Le Monde du Cacti - the nursery had been set up by Henri's grandfather. The setting of 3-4 acres included a Chateau and some lovely gardens. The nursery grows many common plants like *Opuntias* and *Agaves* – in the south of France, these are

popular as garden plants. We also saw some palms, yuccas and agaves.

Agave victoria reginae was in flower and Suzanne commented that the flowers had almost pure yellow filaments whereas theirs at home had contained red filaments. We also saw a plant called *Leucostele rivierei*, although Tony said this was probably a hybrid between *Trichocereus pasacana* and something else, and not really a valid species.

They came across *Opuntia pailana* and a hybrid of *Pachypodium lameri* x *namaquanum* in flower. Next was an example of what not to do. The nursery had received an order for *Haworthia fasciata*, and had planted thousands of these, only for the order to be cancelled. The bed where these were being grown looked a bit of a mess with all the dried flower spikes.

We saw 5 plants from the same seed capsule of *Trichocereus pasacana* – and all were very different, with one having particularly nice spination. The extra growing time and sunshine afforded in this area leads to beautiful spines and we saw a collection of ferocacti – the yellow flowered *Ferocactus chrysacanthus*, a yellow spined *F. latispinus* with strong spines, and three white spined examples of *E. grusonii*.

The greenhouses were constructed from polycarbonate panels, and outside there were frames, which were to protect the plants from rain and falling leaves more than anything else. The seed raising area was heavily occluded to prevent scorching, and there were tubular hot water pipes underneath the benching. In the general growing area, there were thousands of examples of *Astrophytum ornatum* and yet more haworthias. Outside were more *E. grusonii* and *Astrophytums*.

After visiting a couple of other smaller nurseries (and enjoying some nice steak in a village famous for it's beef cattle), they visited Alain Geffroy Lemoine who is over 70 years old and recognizable by his bushy white beard. His wife Claudine does catering and apparently could prepare food for 120 people on her own! They found a few unusual plants here, and had a nice meal and stayed the night.

Moving on to a nursery in Holland, they found *Stetsonia coryne*, a blue stemmed *Pilosocereus*, *Yucca rostrata* and a cristate *Stenocereus marginatus*. *Matucana madisoniorum* also had red flowers. There was a specimen of *Aloe plicatilis* which grows in a fan shape with flat leaves opposite each other. We also saw *Aloe erinacea* and a large

specimen of *Arrojadoa penicillata* which was in flower. The succulent *Reichsteineria leucotricha* was growing with a stray streptocarpus.

At Cok & Ine Grootcholten's nursery, they found various variegated Agaves and also a cluster of *Aloe erinacea*, which may have formed due to the parent being decapitated. There was also a hybrid of *Cleistocactus straussi* x *Espositoa*, a *Tephrocactus* with red fruits, and a nice red-spined *Ferocactus* being sold for around 20 euros.

We ended with a few pictures from Belgicactus succulents. They specialise in growing succulents and we saw some nice plantings of *Sempervivums*, mixed succulents in a basket and *Aloe haworthioides*.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 7 entries in the table show at the November meeting. Overall results for the year are listed later in this newsletter.

	Cacti – Echinocereus Group	Succulents – Lithops
Open	(1) T. Grech <i>Echinocereus nivosus</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Lithops bromfieldii</i>
	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Echinocereus nivosus</i>	(2) T Grech <i>Lithops</i> sp.
	(3) -	(3) -
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Echinocereus dasyacanthus</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Lithops optica rubra</i>
	(2) T Grech <i>Echinocereus subinermis</i>	(2) -
	(3) -	(3) -

Ivor Biddlecombe

[Now follows a write-up of the second talk given by Juan Acosta at our October meeting. An account of the first talk, on *Eriogyne*, was published in last month's newsletter.]

Copiapoa

Juan started by commenting on a question he was asked during the break, about what camera he used while out exploring. He said it was a fairly standard digital camera – the Nikon S4 – which is now discontinued. It was nothing like the fancy equipment used by others but he said there was no need for anything more – just make sure that the camera has a good macro facility and can focus down to 10cm. During this trip in Europe, Paul Klaassen had lent him a Nikon S10.

Juan stated that *Copiapoa* only grow in Chile. They do not occur everywhere – but they are found in the central and northern parts of the country, in a thin strip near the coast. The principal areas lie in the region between Coquimbo and Antofagasta. Juan mentioned Paul's Klaassen's website on *Copiapoa* (www.copiapoa.info) and mentioned that he and Florencia maintain www.eriosyce.info which covers *Eriogyne* and other plants including *Copiapoas*. Paul's website covers details of the trips undertaken by Paul to find *Copiapoas* in habitat – *Copiapoathons*. Juan said he first took part in one of these trips in 2006.

We saw a group picture of him which included Florencia, Paul, Angie Money and also Bart and Marijke Hensel from Holland taken on one of these trips. In the following year, the group had expanded and there were explorers from further afield, including Australia and the USA to add to the people from the UK, Holland and Chile. He also met Rudolf Schulz who has written 2 books on *Copiapoa*. This was a very special time and they visited more areas. In the 2nd edition of Rudolf's book was a picture of a large *Copiapoa* plant and he showed us pictures of the locality of this plant. In 2008 he also joined the *Copiapoathon* for part of the trip. For him, these trips were fun whilst also providing a chance to do some research.

They went looking for *Copiapoa tocopillana* – but the weather was very dry and they did not find any plants. During this trip, he, Paul and Cliff Thompson also went south to look for the southernmost cacti in Chile. He showed a photo of a group of plants featured in Friedrich Ritter's book which was probably taken in 1968, and proceeded to show us the same scene as it is now. The plants were *Copiapoa columna-alba* and *Eulychnia*

iquiquensis or *Eulychnia. saint-pieana* In those years the weather was probably dry but now the area is even drier and lots of the plants are dead. These plants live for many years but the natural cycles are very strong and not all the plants are capable of surviving.

Copiapoas try and adapt to these harsh conditions in different ways. Some form big clumps and end up looking like a group of several plants, but in reality it is one large plant. Some are procumbent and others are globular and single headed. Some are fibrous-rooted, but others have a taproot. These differences have evolved over time.

We saw a view of Santiago in front of the Andes, and some native cacti growing on one of the hills in the middle of Santiago. However there are no *Copiapoas* this far south. Sadly, landscapers prefer to grow *Agaves* and *Aloes* instead of using Chilean native plants in the parks. Moving on to La Serena, we also saw some pictures of people having fun on the beach, but the reason they were here was to find their first *Copiapoa* species in the valley. This was *Copiapoa coquimbana* and we saw it growing between some rocks. Thanks to the moisture in these central areas, conditions are not so dry as the extreme desert in the north.. They can also grow in groups on islands near the coast. They can go on to form clumps, and they grow with *Trichocereus* and *Eulychnia*, but they grow very slowly.

The plants normally form yellow flowers which grow from the apex of the plant, which is covered by wool. Juan mentioned that the colour of the wool tells you if the plant is healthy or not. We saw Florencia collecting seeds. In other areas you can find this species with reddish flowers. There is variability in habitat and we also saw plants with gray and white bodies. In the interior valleys there is not too much flat ground where these plants can grow so often you find them up amongst the rocks. In another valley, they found some beautiful examples. Unfortunately as these areas are developed and new roads are built, the plant habitats suffer. *C. coquimbana* also grow with *Eriogyne eriosyzoides* ssp. *atroviridis*, or with *Eriogyne huascensis* near Huasco.

We saw a clump of *Copiapoa fiedleriana* which is a named variety of *C. coquimbana*. These plants were spineless and he wondered whether rocks rolling down the hills cut off the spines. Usually they are very spiny. These plants had grey centrals. The flowers of the plants attract insects. In Huasco, there are also *Theloccephalas* and *Eriogyne napina* growing here. The area is surrounded by the mining

industry and factories. On the coast and in the interior, they saw the columnar *Eulychnia variflora*, with beautiful fruits. The white flowers were attracting lots of insects. They climbed some mountains and had a good view of the bay of Huasco. Here they found the tiny *Copiapoa humilis* ssp. *australis*, growing mainly on the rocks and sometimes in cracks. The plants had nice yellow flowers, and some had up to 3 heads. These plants had soft radial spines & strong centrals, and soft stems, connected to a tap root. *Neoporteria villosa* also grows here.

North of Huasco we saw the coastal fog which comes in from the oceans and into the valleys. *C. dealbata* is the first species going from south to north which has wax which forms a whitish coating on the plant. There were some enormous/big clumps here with lots of heads. It flowers from the apex, and these attract bees and insects and also animals which sometimes live inside the heads. There are no shrubs and trees in this area. Also at Huasco is a little village in front of the ocean, with lagoons and a little lake which attracted birds from the Andes. They rested here enjoying the view and some seafood and wine. Next we saw another form of *C. dealbata* without so much wax and this had a grey appearance. They found some giant clumps of *C. carrizalensis* and another one in valley which was greener. Even without flowers it could still be recognised. Florencia likes to draw cross sections of the flowers showing the internal structure and we saw some drawings of the flowers of *C. echinoides* from plants at the top of the mountain and also from the slopes. With *C. dealbata*, at higher altitude they have more contact with the fog. In drier areas they are copper coloured and look more stressed. *Copiapoa echinoides* has green stems and they found some with crested growths. On the hill top, the plants have stronger spines.

Near Carrizal Bajo is the Llanos de Challe National Park - if you visit during the day, it seems like the driest place on earth, but as they found at night while camping there, the fog covers the valleys and brings lots of moisture throughout the night. We saw some close ups of insects, some of which looked like they might be dangerous. In Totoral valley, the Copiapoas have adapted differently. *C. megarhiza* ssp. *echinata* has huge taproots – they grow in clay between the rocks. There were lichens on the plants where they faced the ocean. Some animals kick the plants over to get at water in the plant tissue. Heading north, at Caldera there was more of the mining industry. In an interior valley they found Copiapoas, Eriocyce and Eulychnias. It can be very windy in some of these valleys. There were lots of

lichens growing on the spines, and also Tillandsias were growing on the ground or hanging on to the plants. There was a beautiful flower on a Eulychnia. In that valley is found *Copiapoa leonensis* which consists of tiny plants with tap roots and soft bodies. Some people think these belong to the humilis group. We also saw *Euphorbia lactiflua*, 2 metres tall. The size of these euphorbias allows them to catch more moisture, which eventually drips to the ground, allowing Copiapoa seedlings to germinate at the base of the plant. *Copiapoa marginata* had beautiful and remarkable ribs.

We saw a view of the pacific. Some of the plants were very stressed – there aren't many mountains here and the fog tends to gather only at a higher altitude. At Caldera they found another beautiful plant with wax. When the plants are healthy, you can see new spines and there is orange wax on apex. They camped there and enjoyed the view in the day and at night. The rocks here are made of granite and it is very sandy and rocky – there is very little organic matter in the soil. We saw *C. calderana* growing in very sandy soil in the valleys or sometimes in the mountains. They spent a long while trekking to found *C. hypogea* on the top of a hill and then found more specimens close to where they had parked! They dug to see the roots and found a big taproot system. These plants would prefer to be grown in deeper pots. Sometimes when you move the rocks to search for plants you can unearth something unexpected, like spiders.

We saw Florencia on the top of a mountain near the little port of El Barquito. Here, they found *Copiapoa hypogaea* var. *barquitensis* – the plants sometimes have central spines. They grow slowly - and do not find wool on them. At the Pan de Azúcar national park they found lots of plants. *C. cinerascens* has normally grey stems and form clumps with flat apex. Some had whitish or grey bodies. When healthy they can grow to a larger size, especially if growing near a rock where they can receive more moisture. There was lots of wool on the apex. They grow with another Copiapoa, *C. serpenticula*. This again has wool on the apex but it had no ribs and different spination. This plant is not as common in cultivation because it's not so easy to reach healthy populations in habitat. At higher altitude, there is more fog and the plants are happier. At sea level, the plants are drier, and *C. cinerascens* and *C. serpenticula* grow together. The Eulychnias also look dry and dead, but on the top of hills at Las Lomitas, the plants were bigger and in better condition. Some were covered in so much lichen that only the growing tips of the plants were able to photosynthesize. We also saw the columnar

Trichocereus deserticola, which also goes under the name *T. fulvilanus*, and a shot of a fox. We saw another view of Las Lomitas and more examples of Copiapoa seedlings germinating under shrubs.

Plants of *C. esmeraldana*, which had grown with some sort of protection were in better condition and bore flowers and fruits. Without protection they were very dry and started to grow like *C. hypogea* – under the ground, which made it hard to find them. He came across a small head and assumed it was a seedling - but found that it was a new growth from the taproot of a much older plant. He did not find any seedlings and thought that seeds probably germinate under the sand and can't be seen until they are bigger. Near Pan de Azucar in another valley there are forests of *C. cinerea* and *C. columna-alba*. These can be enjoyed even at night in the moonlight. In the morning you can notice that the ground and surface is wet from the mists – but this water does not penetrate very deep. These plants therefore have a long and fibrous root system and they prefer to grow in flat areas. Juan said he felt like a kid as he posed and played with these new friends. Sometimes the plants reach a height of more than 1 metre. The plants grow facing the sun and at a certain inclination, so that only the apex is exposed to the sun, and the rest is in the shade of the plant. They grow with *C. cinerascens* - but thanks to the wax they can survive the dry environment as they are better adapted. We saw close up of the flowers, with insects in the pollen. Juan mentioned that on his website, he has more pictures of these insects and has also identified their names.

There were some bigger plants and also some seedlings. Juan said you had to be patient and you (or perhaps your grandson!) can eventually have a decent plant. We again saw some plants which had offsets and some which were solitary. Not all plants are healthy – some are very sick and there are lots of worms or bacteria inside. There were so many plants here. Some also had huge crests. *C. columna-alba* was growing with other Copiapoas - again with wax - and also growing in clumps. There were beautiful clumps of *C. longistaminea* growing between plants of *Trichocereus deserticola* and Eulychnias. These plants had beautiful new red spines and wool in the apex. In another valley, the plants grow all along the mountain edge and you can find *C. grandiflora* which has flowers which are 5cm across. They also found *Copiapoa laui* which can form big groups of plants. In a 10 cm square area, he estimated more than 100 heads. In this area there were also plants which are hybrids, leading to lots of discussion.

At, Cifuncho, they found other Copiapoas with big clumps. This land belongs to the Chilean navy and they do lots of exercises here with big tanks and the plants get damaged. *Copiapoa taltalensis* ssp. *desertorum* forms big clumps - but there were very few seedlings. On the coast one can find *C. taltalensis*. From Cifuncho heading north to Taltal is a beautiful road and you can find several species here. *Copiapoa tenebrosa* is thought to be a form of *C. haseltoniana*. *Copiapoa cinerea* ssp. *haseltoniana* has lots of orange wool on the apex when healthy. Some of the plants were growing hanging onto the rocks. In the interior valley of Taltal, there were different forms of *C. cinerea*, with wax and grey wool which contrasted with the flowers. Some plants were crested. There were groups of *C. cinerea*, some of which had collapsed due to their size.

In the San Ramon valley, they walked 7km to the end to enjoy the beautiful soft white spines of *Copiapoa krainziana*. Outside of that valley in front of the ocean, there were different forms of *haseltoniana*. *C. eremophila* with white spines and *C. gigantea* which forms big heads. These were amazing plants, sometimes surviving between the rocks. North of Taltal, they found *Copiapoa ahremephiana*, again forming clumps in only 2 valleys in a small area. These plants had smaller heads and the bodies were protected with wax. The conditions in this area (Botija Valley) are very dry and many plants look dead. Very few Copiapoas and Eriosyce survive this. They also found *Copiapoa decorticans* performing stem sacrifice – the plant only remains alive on the apex and sacrifices the rest of the stem. The growing point does however remain connected to the roots.

Another plant they found in Botija Valley is *C. solaris*. They found good clumps, and visited this with Rudolf Schulz during the Copiapoathon. Many of the plants were dying, and only a few appeared to growing well, with yellow spines. They camped there at Christmas and during the night visited the plants to see what insects come to the flowers.

The last point of research was Cerro Moreno and we saw Florencia climbing. At the top is *Copiapoa atacamensis* which is protected with wax. North of this area many other populations of Copiapoa had been described but many of them are dead because the north is becoming drier and drier. They went north to Tocopilla to find *C. tocopillana* but found only one head and it was dead. Other Eriosyce described in this region were also dead. Juan explained that the mining industry was causing lots

of dust and this often covered the plants – along with other effects upon the environment.

Juan ended by inviting us to visit Chile until one day the desert arrives to his house in Santiago. In the meantime he asked people to visit their website www.eriosyce.info to find more information on these beautiful plants.

Peter thanked Juan for having delivered a couple of brilliant talks. It was an eye-opener to see how these plants grow in habitat and he effects man is having on their environment.

Vinay Shah

Branch Committee Meeting

A branch committee meeting was held on 16th November at 35 Richlans Road.

Mark Jakins presented details of the branch's income and expenditure for the year. Accounts had not yet been prepared but it had been another successful year for the branch, with the New Forest Show being the major contributor to our profits.

Recent branch meetings were discussed, as were preparations for the December meeting. Various people agreed to bring along the items needed for the December meeting/AGM.

The Zone 11 Quiz was held in October, and our Branch finished ahead of the other teams and hence won the Mealy Bug trophy. Next year, the Quiz will be handled by the Isle of Wight and it will be our turn in 2011. Mark Jakins suggested we could think about using multi-media and featuring pictures of plants as part of the quiz.

David Neville presented a list of the speakers who had been arranged for the monthly meetings for 2010. The Broadlands events we used to take part in will not happen next year, so it was time for us to think of new events where we can participate and put on displays. David had compiled a list of suitable events and shows, and this was narrowed down to a shortlist which would now be pursued. Once we have confirmed which events we will take part in, details will be published in the newsletter and on our website.

Peter Down confirmed his intention to stand down as chairman this year – after all, he has been doing this for a very long time! Geoff Card, currently vice chairman, had his arm twisted to accept this role,

and the matter will be put to the branch at the AGM. Although the committee has managed to find people to take over Margaret's roles of treasurer and secretary, the committee is now in danger of being overstretched and it was agreed that we should approach some of the branch members to see if they could play a more active role in branch affairs.

Arrangements for the January meeting were discussed. We would again hold a members evening and would like members to bring along pictures to show and plants to discuss. This would be mentioned at the December meeting.

Vinay Shah

Here's a preview of the Branch Programme for next year.

Branch Programme 2010

5 January	Members' Medley Short talks by branch members
2 February	Chile, now and then Angie Money
2 March	Succulents from the Winter Rains Terry Smale
6 April	Growable gasterias Derek Tribble
5 May	Cultivation & Propagation Workshop and Demonstrations
1 June	What I saw last winter Paul Klaassen
6 July	Arizona Adventure Alan Phipps
3 August	Southern Peru Cliff Thompson
7 September	South-West USA 2009 Ian Woolnough
5 October	Agaves, Aeoniums & Haworthias Stuart Riley
2 November	Fortnight in Oaxaca, southern Mexico David Neville
7 December	AGM, followed by Christmas Social

Table Show 2009 – Overall Results

Open Section – Cacti (The Challenge Cup)

B Beckerleg	22
T Grech	18
A Sheader	10
J Roskilly	6
J Burnay	4

Open Section – Succulents (The Gateway Vase)

B Beckerleg	24
J Roskilly	14
T Grech	10
J Burnay	6
A Sheader	3

Intermediate Section – Cacti (The Bangor Cup)

B Beckerleg	28
T Grech	15
J Roskilly	14
A Sheader	5

Intermediate Section – Succulents (25th Anniversary Paperweight)

B Beckerleg	28
J Roskilly	24
T Grech	14
J Burnay	6

Ladies Cup (highest points total/Female entrant)

A Sheader

Ivor Biddlecombe

Next Month's Meeting

Our first meeting of 2010 will be held on January 5th and will feature short talks by branch members. If you have a subject that you would like to talk about (even if only for a few minutes), please let a Committee member know as soon as possible.

We will have access to conventional and digital projectors, so members are welcome to bring along slides, or a CD or memory card or memory stick containing digital pictures. You can also bring along live plants if you want to talk about those!

There will be no table show at the January meeting.

*Best Wishes for a
happy Christmas and
a merry New Year!*



Forthcoming Events

Sat	5 th	Dec	Portsmouth	Christmas Social/American Supper
Fri	18 th	Dec	Isle of Wight	Annual General Meeting and Christmas Social/American Supper
Tue	5 th	Jan	Southampton	Members' Medley
Sat	9 th	Jan	Isle of Wight	Plant Auction & Members' slides
Sat	16 st	Jan	Portsmouth	"South American Cacti for Flowers" – Peter Down
Mon	18 th	Jan	Southampton	Committee Meeting
Tue	2 nd	Feb	Southampton	"Chile – Now and Then" – Angie Money
Sat	13 th	Feb	Isle of Wight	no meeting
Sat	20 th	Feb	Portsmouth	talk title to be confirmed – Angie Money

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