

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

December 2012



Branch Secretary

David Neville
6 Parkville Road
Swaythling
Southampton
Hampshire
SO16 2JA
davnev@btopenworld.com
(023) 80551173 or
07974 191354

Newsletter Editor

Vinay Shah
29 Heathlands Road
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO53 1GU
vvshah@clara.co.uk
(023) 80261989

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Editorial

Well, here we are at the end of another year. Time again seems to have flown by, although if I look at all the things I was supposed to get done during the year but didn't (repot the plants, tidy up the house) then I need to figure out where that time went!

I have stopped watering all my plants, but in view of what Terry Smale said at his recent talk to the branch, it seems like I should continue to give *Conophytums* a drink once a month.

Announcements

Our **next meeting** will be held on **8th January** (not the 1st!) and will consist of short talks presented by branch members. We will have access to both conventional and digital projectors and would like members to bring along photos or plants and talk about them for a few minutes. Pictures can be brought along on a CD or memory card or memory stick, and should be numbered/prefixed 001, 002, 003 etc. so that they are shown in the correct order.

The **Branch Programme** for 2013 has been prepared and copies should be available from the front table.

Your BCSS **December Journal** and **seed list** should be arriving shortly – don't forget to renew your membership!

A few days ago I received an email from John Cox (BCSS Leeds), who has a friend in Poland who is looking for an old **New Forest BCSS badge** – green in colour, shaped like a square shield; it features an *Opuntia* and says "New Forest BCSS". If you happen to have this, please contact me and I will put you in touch with John.

Committee Reports – 2012

President's Report

Most of our visiting speakers comment on how well supported our monthly meetings are. In November we hosted the Zone Quiz. I think only 11 of our members attended plus 8 from the Isle of Wight and 3 from Portsmouth. The worst attended meeting this century!! David and Vinay, and I think Mark, had put in a lot of time to gather an interesting range of questions. Does that give the committee the message that we only like speakers or practical evenings? Anyway it is another three years until we host it again. We were delighted that the Isle of Wight team went home with the Mealy Bug Trophy.

The displays put on by the branch at various shows have been successful; I expect that our Queen was disappointed to miss our stand at the New Forest Show!

We are in for a few changes in the committee this year, so on behalf of all our members I would like to thank all our current committee for all their hard work for us over the past year. Help us to keep Southampton & District, one of the leading branches in the society. 2013 is my 60th year of membership of the society (I started as a junior member of course).

Happy Christmas and best wishes for a successful growing year in 2013

Peter Down

Chairman's Report

I would like to thank all the committee members & officers for what I consider to be another successful year which has to be due to all the work & effort that they put in to making the Society as good as it is. Needless to say that without the continued support of our members none of this would be relevant!! For this reason - the hard working officers & the supportive members - my resignation is tinged with a little regret!!

I wish everyone involved in our club the very best for 2013

Geoff Card

Secretary's Report

As 2012 draws to a close it is time once again to reflect on the past 12 months and consider how the branch has fared in these difficult economic times.

While many branches of the BCSS are suffering from low attendance figures and subsequently from a lack of funds, somehow we have managed to continue bucking that trend, with an average of around 30 people at our meetings. I have been asked by various people around the country what we do at Southampton Branch to maintain a healthy attendance, but there is no secret formula, and I attribute it to the friendly, casual atmosphere at our meetings. It is worthy of note that we have attracted less new members in the past year than in the previous three years, and maybe that is due to the fact that we have mounted less public displays this year, but that is because some of our former venues no longer exist. Every person that buys a plant from us at any show we attend is given a leaflet which gives them cultural information, along with details of our monthly meetings.

Alice, our Treasurer, will present details of the years finances, but generally we try to raise funds from the public from plant sales etc, rather than from our members. The majority of BCSS branches now charge an attendance fee at their meetings in order to finance the hire of the hall and the travelling expenses of the speaker, but this is something that we prefer not to do, and although most of our meetings run at a loss, this deficit is made up by the money we raise from our displays.

Thanks in great part to the work of Ivor, our Shows/Displays Manager, we are able to mount impressive, professional-looking displays at shows. Somehow Ivor manages to find room to store the large amount of display material that we need to do this, and to transport it to the events. This is a lot of

work, and we need to make sure that he gets as much help as possible to make this onerous task less of a burden on him.

After 2 months in South Africa and Namibia, compiling the branch programme for 2013 has been a rush-job, and it has only recently been completed. I am pleased that it is ready in time for the December meeting and printed copies are available now. Electronic copies are also available in PDF format, and if you have not already received one please contact me by email (davnev@btopenworld.com) and I will send one to you. I hope that the varied selection of talks planned for the coming year includes a range of topics that will interest you all. Along with some popular speakers who have entertained us in the past, I am delighted to be bringing four new speakers to the branch in the coming months. Hazel Taylor is a member of Bromley Branch, and she will be talking to us in March about a trip she made to Madagascar. Chris Davies from Buckinghamshire is a keen grower of Mammillaria, and he will be talking to us on that popular genus in June. John Hughes also comes from Bromley Branch, and I have known him for the past 25 years or so, but he has never spoken to our branch. He is widely travelled, and will be speaking to us in September, recounting a trip to Merida province in Venezuela and showing us the alpine and cacti that he encountered there. And in October we will welcome Martin Doorbar from Oxford Branch, who will entertain us with a talk on various cactus habitats that he visited while working in the USA in recent years.

Please note that the January meeting will be held on January 8th (the SECOND Tuesday of the month), in order to avoid holding a meeting on New Years Day.

David Neville

Treasurer's Report

Despite difficult economic conditions branch finances have remained relatively stable and we have managed to break even whilst members are able to attend meetings for free. This is thanks to all of us through continued support of raffles, plant sales, refreshments and taking part in shows.

Our Branch has taken part in four shows throughout the summer which has raised £120. Profit was down considerably compared to last year. Takings were down in every show and the cost of participating in the New Forest Show has increased yet again. The above profit is inclusive of £70 prize money from the Romsey Show. The committee has decided to

invest in a new Gazebo which will give us greater flexibility to participate in future shows. Thank you to everyone who has taken part in these events.

Cost of visiting speakers has increased due to the distance some speakers have to travel, however we all agree that quality speakers are what makes our meetings so exciting. On the other hand the Branch received additional income from sales of donated plants and books, which was greatly appreciated.

I wish you all the best throughout festive season and see you all next year.

Alice Jankovec

Display Manager's Report

Sparsholt Countryside Day – 19th May

On Saturday 19th May we were invited to put on a display of Cacti and Succulents at the Sparsholt Countryside Day. We hoped we would have a dry day and we were lucky as it did not rain, but it was cloudy and not very warm. This year we had a new waterproof gazebo although we did not get to test it until later in the year. We had a steady stream of visitors to the display, and although sales were slow, at least we made a small profit. All those who helped on the stand were able to see the different displays put on by the Collage, which made it an enjoyable day. Please accept my thanks to all the members that gave their help at this Show.

The Alpine Gardeners Show – 26th May

The next Show we were invited to was staged at the Queen Elizabeth School in Wimborne This was a joint effort by the Dorset and Hampshire groups of the Alpine Garden Society. This show is one of the best in the country, with members coming from as far away as Yorkshire, I was worried about getting to the show as the area around Wimborne had a lot of road works due to the Olympic Games but in the end, I was not held up at all. The show was very good with some magnificent alpines, the School had a bright hall that allowed the plants to be seen at their best. We had a small display in the main hall that turned out well - the judges were quite pleased with it although a few were not happy with Cacti being there, which was a bit strange as there were classes for alpine cacti in their schedule. Our sales table was at the main entrance, but sales were slow.

The New Forest Show - 24th-26th July

Two weeks before this show was due to open we had heavy downpours of rain and I thought the show may have to be cancelled. But it turned out well, due to the organisers preventing heavy vehicles from unloading on the grass, saving it from turning into mud like several years ago when nearly all of us had

to be towed out. This year we again had an island site in the Flower marquee, in the same position as last year. We had good plant sales, but we did not make a profit due to having to buy extra tickets. The show was the best the organisers have had for years - this may be due to having the Queen coming to the Show, as well as Alan Titchmarsh being Show President. We again won a Gold medal for our display, but unfortunately there was no prize money with the award.

The Romsey Show – 8th September

On the Friday, Geoff, Bruce, Jim and Ciprian helped me prepare the display. It was almost the same as the previous year, and we had no trouble in putting up the back cloth and with everyone helping we soon had the plants arranged. On Saturday we all arrived early and were able to park behind the Flower marquee and this allowed us to walk round the rest of the show while our display was being judged. Despite slow plant sales, I am pleased to say we won a Gold Medal and with the £70 prize money, this proved to be the best show of the year in terms of contribution to Branch funds.

Branch Table Show

I am sorry to say in the 46 years I have been a member of Southampton Branch this year saw the lowest number of entries. We only had 4 people enter during the whole of 2012 and I wonder if you would like another member to run the Table Show as you do not seem to want to support the show the way I run it. Or perhaps you want to suggest a different format. Personally, I like to see live plants at our meetings, but this needs your help and support. I am sorry to finish on this disappointing note.

I would like to thank all that gave their help at all the Shows, and wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,

Ivor Biddlecombe

Newsletter/Website

It has been a quiet year as far as the newsletter is concerned. I printed off extra issues of previous newsletters in anticipation of high attendance at the Zone Quiz, but this didn't materialise so if you are missing a copy from earlier in the year, do help yourself. Of course the previous issues can also be downloaded from our website.

I will shortly be updating the website to list the 2013 Branch and Zone 11 programmes. As always – if the weather is questionable or you are travelling a long distance – do check the website on the morning of a meeting in case there are any last minute changes.

During the latter part of the year, I put together the material for the 2012 Zone Quiz - thanks are due to Mark Jakins and David Neville for their assistance in providing and reviewing the questions.

Best wishes to everyone for 2013.

Vinay Shah

Librarian's report

The level of borrowing this year was down to less than half the level of last year.

We continued to sell the books donated to the branch by Philip Clemow, and from the estate of a deceased member. Some were sold in Eastern Europe, others at branch meetings and we managed a substantial increase in takings from book sales, as shown below. The library purchased one new book during the year: *Echinocereus* by *John Pilbeam*.

Revenues for the year ending September 2012 were as follows:

Lending	£ 4.20
Sale of books	£ 131.50

Total	£ 135.70

After a recent operation, I cannot lift items and regret to inform that I will stand down as Librarian. I will continue to attend meetings when I can.

Ciprian Suta

Publicity Officer's Report

First of all my thanks to all who have helped towards publicity by helping to man displays, talking to others about our activities, etc.

The *Daily Echo* has done us proud this year, printing our meeting details monthly, and on two occasions adding a short description accompanied by a cactus picture from their records.

I am in the process of again talking nicely to the library staff, to get our posters displayed again when spaces are available.

Jim Roskilly

Plant Sales Officer's Report

The Season started off with a small display at Sparsholt where we took £321 which is similar to last year. We were not able to go to Hilliers this year and it looks as if that may be the case in the future which is a pity.

The New Forest Show was down on last year with takings of £885 - this is below average for this event

but takings generally have been declining at this show.

We did the Romsey Show for the third time where we took £304, down on last year but similar to the first year we were there. We also got £70 in cash for a gold medal.

Sales at branch meetings continue to be buoyant, partly because we continue to have higher attendances than we used to but also because we have more sellers which has added extra interest to the sales table. I would, once again, like to thank all of you who brought sales plants to branch meetings and other 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.

Bruce Beckerleg

Last Month's Meeting

Zone 11 Quiz

Geoff kicked off the evening by commenting on the surprisingly low turnout for the meeting. The Isle of Wight had done their bit - with 8 people having come over from the island. Portsmouth had sent only their team, and our branch was represented by only a handful of people other than the regular committee.

Geoff mentioned that I (Vinay) would ask the questions and that Alice would do the scoring. The winners would be awarded the Mealy Bug Trophy. The teams participating were as follows:

Portsmouth:

Graham Daniels, Del McColl-McWha, Lesley Akhurst

Southampton:

Bruce Beckerleg, Ivor Biddlecombe, Peter Down

Isle of Wight:

Stephen Woods, Peter Collard, Ron Mitchell

I mentioned that each round would consist of a question for each team, and we would also have a question for the audience. The questions would cover cacti and succulents, general horticulture, and general knowledge. Questions would be asked in clockwise and anti-clockwise directions before and after the break, so as to even up the chances of teams passing on questions to the next team when they couldn't answer.

The first round concerned personalities in the BCSS. Portsmouth struggled with naming the President of the BCSS, thus handing bonus points to Southampton, but the other questions were answered successfully, including Anthony Mitchell from the audience telling us that the link between Gordon Rowley and Desperate Dan was “Cactusville”.

The next round, asked teams to identify the genus given the name of 3 species and was answered correctly by all the teams. The next round asked for the scientific name of cacti and succulents, given the common names. This resulted in more bonus points for the audience, with Anthony stepping up to say that the Teddy-bear cholla was *Opuntia bigelovii*. I hope you are beginning to spot a pattern here.

The next round was supposed to drive the teams to drink – but they all successfully identified the main ingredient of liqueurs and drinks. This success was carried into the next round, where amazingly, all the teams answered questions on sport (Olympics and Football) correctly! The next round asked for the origins of fruits and we learnt that Kiwi fruit originate from China (not New Zealand!) and cucumbers come from India. The Isle of Wight team did particularly well in this round, picking up bonuses from Portsmouth and Southampton.

Next was a round asking whether music bands called Cactus, Lithops, Euphorbia and Echeveria existed? The first three do exist, and the question caught out a couple of the teams. There followed a round on time zones, and a round of picking the largest island from a list of four – the latter was answered correctly by all teams. After 9 rounds, the scores were: Portsmouth 11, Southampton 14, Isle of Wight 18 and the audience 14.

Round 10 asked the teams to identify the smallest from a group of species and all teams got this right. The next round featured species listed in the *New Cactus Lexicon*, and required the teams to identify which genus had the most species. The teams struggled, but the audience got their answer right.

The next round required the teams to provide scientific names given a common name, and three of the teams scored points, although no-one was able to identify that the organ pipe cactus was *Stenocereus thurberi*. Next, we required teams to specify the common names for nut trees given the scientific name, and all 4 teams got the answers right.

The next round required the teams to identify which popstar (from a pair of possibilities) had more No. 1 hits and also which decade they had their first hit. Youngsters in the audience (OK, there weren't any)

would have been impressed that the teams scored full points. Keeping on this theme, the next round required the teams to provide the real names of the popstars Bono, Tom Jones, Cliff Richard and Elton John. After some silly answers (“Patrick” for Bono and “Evans” for Tom), the last two were answered correctly.

The next round was taken from the guide to shows and required the teams to specify which class a particular species could be shown in. Southampton and Isle of Wight got their answers wrong and provide more points for the audience, specifically Anthony. The next two rounds were simpler questions (1 point per answer) and required the teams to indicate the flower colour of specific cacti. All 8 questions were answered successfully. It was time for the half time break and the scores stood as follows: Portsmouth 22, Southampton 27, Isle of Wight 31 and the audience had 35.

Resuming after the break, a round on facts about the solar system was answered correctly by all the teams except Southampton, and Anthony again amazed us by correctly answering that 5 moons in the solar system are larger than our moon. A round on metric versus imperial conversions was answered correctly by all four teams.

A question on technology acronyms was negotiated with mixed success, but the teams had better luck with identifying the authors and sponsors of various books published by the BCSS. A round requiring the teams to specify the Latin name for various common names led to mixed success, with no-one able to identify the Boojum as *Idria (Fouquieria) columnaris*, and the audience again picking up extra points. Southampton also lost out on a round requiring the teams to identify the genus given the names of three species.

Another round on facts about the BCSS allowed the Isle of Wight and the audience to benefit over the other teams. A round asking the common names of fruit given the Latin name was on the whole handled well, as was a round requiring the teams to identify the largest from a group of three succulent species. A round requiring identification of movie titles from a description of the film allowed Portsmouth to gain some points from Southampton.

The next round required the teams to identify which country a genus came from. This was followed by a question on BCSS personalities which caused difficulties. The next round required the teams to identify the authors of famous books or quotes and all the teams scored full points. It was just past quarter to ten and a check on the scores showed that

Southampton had 40 points, Portsmouth had 42 points, Isle of Wight had 57 points and the Audience had 64 points. We decided to end matters there and hence the Isle of Wight team were handed the trophy. Geoff thanked the visiting teams who reciprocated their thanks to Southampton for hosting the event.

Vinay Shah

Branch Committee Meeting

A committee meeting was held on November 19th.

The branch's finances and year-end bank balances were discussed. Overall, funds were marginally higher than at this time last year. Alice had gathered together most of the material to hand over to the auditors in order for them to draw up the accounts.

Recent meetings were discussed. It was good to see that eight people from the Isle of Wight came over for the Zone Quiz, but the overall attendance that evening was very disappointing.

Geoff (Chairman) and Ciprian (Librarian) had indicated they would be standing down from the committee, so a discussion was held about switching roles and engaging in some arm-twisting to get some replacements to join the committee.

David was not present, but an email from him suggested that he had put together most of the 2013 branch programme. Arrangements for the AGM were also discussed. The first Tuesday of January 2013 would fall on New Years Day and it was agreed that we should move this meeting to the following week, if possible.

Vinay Shah

Next Month's Meeting

Our first meeting of 2013 will be held on January 8th which is the *second* Tuesday of January – we decided that people might have other plans for the 1st! The meeting 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

Table Show 2012 – Overall Results

Open Section – Cacti (50th Anniversary Trophy)
B Beckerleg 36

Open Section – Succulents (50th Anniversary Trophy)
B Beckerleg 35
 J Roskilly 5
 T Radford 3

Intermediate Section – Cacti (Peter Down 50th Golden Jubilee Trophy)
B Beckerleg 34
 J Roskilly 13
 A Jankovec 4

Intermediate Section – Succulents (25th Anniversary Paperweight)
B Beckerleg 28
 J Roskilly 15
 T Radford 15
 A Jankovec 3

Ladies Cup (highest points total/Female entrant)
A Jankovec 7

Ivor Biddlecombe

Forthcoming Events

Sat	8 th	Dec	Isle of Wight	Annual General Meeting & American Supper
Tue	8 th	Jan	Southampton	Members' Mini Talks
Sat	12 th	Jan	Isle of Wight	No meeting
Sat	19 th	Jan	Portsmouth	Short Talks and Discussions by branch members
Tue	5 th	Feb	Southampton	"Baja California" – Cliff Thompson
Sat	9 th	Feb	Isle of Wight	Plant Auction and Members' Slides
Sat	16 th	Feb	Portsmouth	"Highlights of Arizona and Utah" – David Neville

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