

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

April 2023



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
sotonbcss@gmail.com
(023) 80261989

Editorial	1
Last Month's Meeting.....	1
The Asclepiadaceae - The Stapeliad Family .1	
Next Month's Meeting	6
Forthcoming Events.....	6

Editorial

Our clocks changed recently and the evenings are now noticeably brighter. The temperatures are beginning to increase as well, although the risk of frost is not yet over.

Last Month's Meeting

Adrian kicked off the March meeting – it was one of the coldest nights of the year, but luckily the hall central heating had turned on and it was working. He mentioned that the branch had gone a long time without branch committee meetings but the first such meeting was due to be held at the end of March and the new committee members were reminded to attend.

The May meeting will be a “Cultivation and Propagation” meeting and we will want to try and encourage audience participation and general discussion – so if anyone has ideas on what they want to be discussed – please send an email with your thoughts to David Neville and we will try and incorporate this into the meeting. It was mentioned that people continue to join the branch and we have now got 2 additional members who have joined this year.

Glenn Finn mentioned that a member from the church had mentioned a couple of rules we need to observe at the meetings - the 2 tables in the main hall were permanent fixtures and need to be put back to their original positions at the end of the meeting. Also, when chairs are stacked at the end of the meeting, please ensure they are **no more than 4 high**, to avoid the possibility of them toppling over and hurting anyone.

Mark Jakins mentioned that the first time Rebecca came to a cactus meeting was in 2000, and it was also a talk on Asclepiads. At the end of the meeting,

Peter Down was concerned that the subject might not be the best, so he came up to Rebecca and hoped she hadn't found it uninteresting!

Our raffle table may look a little bit sparse at present – we would appreciate it if people could try and provide some donations suitable for raffle prizes.

Tom had brought in some Conophytums for *Plants of Interest* - three of them were ones he has had for some time. He considers them winter growers and waters them from end of July-August through to February. They flower quite well in the autumn. This one died down in the centre and he pulled out the dead part and it seems to have recovered and the centre has grown back. A Japanese hybrid with swirly flowers was bought as one head and is now over a dozen heads. The other plant had grown from 3 heads to 20 heads in 6 years. Ted asked about temperatures and Tom said he keeps his greenhouse at 6°C.

And the other plants Tom had brought were Conophytums he had got from Bruce's clear out at the start of this year. They looked dead and in poor shape at the time, but all have recovered and grown quite a few new heads. Mark Jakins mentioned that he had thought many of his Conophytums had died and he decided to put them out in the garden, and they grew like balloons! They didn't mind temperatures down to freezing either.

The Asclepiadaceae - The Stapeliad Family

When he started giving this talk, Tom mentioned that the Asclepiadaceae was a family of around 300 plants in its own right, but it has recently been subsumed as a subfamily “Asclepiadoideae” under the Apocynaceae. Tom mentioned that a long time ago, he was working in Copenhagen, and he decided to pay a visit to the collection at Kiel – which was looked after by Hermann Jacobsen, who for many years was the curator of the Botanic Gardens of Kiel University.

We started with some pictures of the famous statue of the little mermaid in the harbour at Copenhagen –

and it is quite small, being only 4 feet high. Copenhagen is a university town with a shipyard, and in order to visit Kiel, he had to take a boat and a train to Lubeck. Here he learnt that he was on the wrong half of the train - the train was due to split in half, and one part would go to Hamburg and the other half would go to Kiel – luckily he was able to move to the correct part of the train, otherwise we might not be having this talk! Kiel is the same latitude as Newcastle, so it is quite far north. When he started collecting succulents, there were really only 2 books – “Das Sukkulenten Lexicon” by Hermann Jacobsen and also Jacobsen’s 3 volume handbook “The Handbook Of Succulent Plants” which had no colour pictures but did have quite good descriptions. Because of the lack of information, there wasn’t as much interest in growing succulents as there is these days.

We saw a picture of Hermann Jacobsen who was a professor at Kiel University and also Lois Glass who used to assist him. A *Cyphostemma cramerana* which was 2.5 metres high and featured in his book had been brought in from Africa and was planted out. There were quite a few other succulent plants planted out in the gardens at Kiel, and these plants seemed to be growing OK, although we have to remember that this was before the recent global warming and winter temperatures could be quite a bit lower.

We saw a picture of the main greenhouse and some internal shots showed some of the plants growing in different parts of the greenhouse. Tom thought the general collection was a bit of shambles and he only had 2 hours there, so he went round taking lots of pictures as quickly as he could, and decided to study these later. Despite the place being open to the public, and it being a Sunday, he was the only one there apart from an elderly lady who would be mentioned again later.

There were plants of all types and we saw some large specimens of *Echinocactus grusonii* – at that time, they were quite unusual but they are much more common now. There were also nice cephaliums on some of the Cerei. We saw *Nolina recurvata* in the collection followed by his own specimen, grown from seed and in a 12 inch pot. These can grow quite large, and we saw a massive specimen at the Jardin Exotique in Monaco. Tom said it might be capable of surviving a certain amount of frost although a comment from the audience suggested this might not be true. There were various other seedlings vying for space as well. There were various agaves there and we saw *Agave fernandis-regis*. In the next picture we saw *Cotyledon paniculata* – a plant which you don’t see

these days. At that time, Tom Jenkins used to get them in from Africa. In the same picture, the plants to the right were *Welwitschias* – these only form 2 pairs of leaves and the leaves can grow very large and eventually get frayed. They are tricky to grow, and were being grown in sections of drain pipes. We saw a picture taken of the same plants (*Welwitschia bainesii*) growing in habitat in Namibia near the capital of Windhoek – Tom said some of these might be 500 years old. He mentioned that some small circles of stones were used to mark out younger seedlings. They need very good light.

The next picture showed some large plants and Tom mentioned if you bed stuff out and don’t look after it, things can get completely overgrown. A picture of water lily leaves was taken in Kiel - but Tom said the newspaper in Copenhagen was very interested in the water lilies growing there, and there were daily reports as to how the flowers were doing. We saw a picture Tom had found of some young children standing out on the leaves, and he mentioned that they used to put hardboard on the leaves and used to encourage children to walk out on to the leaves – this probably wouldn’t be allowed now due to safety concerns. If you want to see them in the wild, it’s best to go to South America – they grow quite big there and we saw some of the flowers that can form. Tom mentioned this was the end of the travelogue part of the talk.

He showed a picture of one of the ends of the greenhouse in Kiel and there were cuttings of all sorts of odds and ends – this is what we had come to see! Many of these plants were members of the asclepiad family. We started with a large plant of *Stapelia leedertziae* which was about a metre across, and it is one of the few Stapeliads with bell shaped flowers which were red in colour. This is a plant he had grown himself in his greenhouse and it had produced flowers – they did smell a bit and flies had laid their eggs in there – attracted by the rotten meat smell. Another plant in Kiel was *Stapelia schinzii* which was a tiny little plant by comparison. Next was *Stapelia gigantea* and this has one of the bigger flowers, and it is part of the Flavivrostris group. He had managed to get these to flower within a couple of years from seed but they seem to be more difficult to grow these days, due to growing temperatures and blight. *Stapelia desmetiana* had flowers which were 3 inches across – they start as small buds and take weeks to open, and then suddenly you get a giant flower. *Stapelia gettleffi* is also part of the Flavivrostris group. *Stapelia ambigua* had been grown from seed and it was 2 years old and flowering quite well. Next was *Stapelia flavivrostris* itself – this was about 3 years old, although it did flower at 2 years. The flowers did get

a few maggots, which is good if you're into fishing, but there's not much food on the plant to sustain them.

Stapelia hirsuta was in a 3 inch pot and it had quite a significant flower. Next was *Orbea variegata* – although when he was growing these plants, it used to be called *Stapelia variegata* and it was the type species – it was called variegata because there were various different forms. It has now been renamed - a lot of these plants from Africa were given various names and if no one knew they had been already been discovered, they were given a new name. As a result, some plants were given multiple names - but due to the rules of botanical naming precedence, the first time a plant is named, that name has precedence over any others. In the next picture the central orb was more noticeable – this plant was in a 3½ pot and it had quite big flowers – it goes under the name *Stapelia bicolor* - but it might be a hybrid. The other thing about Stapeliads which is different from cacti - normally with a cactus if you get any rot in the base, that's going to be the end of the plant. but with Stapeliads they tend to rot and then the rest of the plant can survive – small nodules form on the base of the cutting and will root. So you can save small sections of the plant - lay them on gravel or vermiculite and they can root and form new plants.

Tom showed some *Ceropegia* cuttings in vermiculite, with some bottom heat being applied in a propagator and we could see a little shoot emerging at the bottom, and what the plant looked like after 6-8 weeks. Next we saw *Orbea semotia*, which has a red flower, and *Orbea wissmannii* with a cream flower. This plant was tricky and very sensitive to temperature. He mentioned some of these needed 15-20°C temperatures - he had an out-house with no windows and a central heating boiler and he grew them using artificial lighting.

Stapelianthus dacarii has a cup shaped flower. *Stultitia hardii* had a red flower and *Caralluma socotrana* was tricky – he grew it from a cutting but never managed to get it to flower. It comes from Socotra – and he showed a picture of a magnificent plant in habitat, with red flowers on almost every stem. *Caralluma marlothii* was now called *Quaqua arida* – it was a small plant. At one time *Caralluma* was the “rubbish bin” and plants that could not be classified elsewhere were placed here. *Desmidorchis penicilata* also used to be a *Caralluma* - it was 1.5 metres high. He had one of these but he didn't get it to more than a foot high. *Desmidorchis acutangula* was shown flowering in habitat, it was also about a metre high, and had an impressive dark flower head. *Desmidorchis foetida* was about 10 inches tall.

Borealluma plicatiloba used to be a *Caralluma* but now goes under a new name. *Duvaliandra dioscorides* was another renamed plant. Tom said that *Caralluma* was split into 5 groups and group 5 were all the ones that didn't fit anywhere else. *Apteranthus europea* used to also be in *Caralluma* – it was only one growing in Europe. It wasn't particularly exciting. The seed pods were 2 inches long and grow for ages and ages – the seeds have parachutes - but very often they are not fertile.

Orbea lutea used to be *Caralluma lutea* - he had it for a while and it did nothing much while growing in a 7 inch pan – it started to rot in the middle so he split it into 5 pots – it was a particularly hot year and all produced flower buds and produced some nice 2.5 inch flowers – however, it was the worst smell on any Stapeliad that he had encountered – it made him ill and the smell lasted for 3-4 weeks even after the flowers died – he was quite pleased that it never flowered again. *Boucerosia pauciflora* was a cutting - which he put flat on the grit/compost - some roots came out of the middle and it formed multiple stems and flowered eventually.

Caralluma sinacae comes from the Sinai, and *Caralluma adscendens* ssp. *atueata* also comes from the middle east. *Caralluma Sarkariae* is a plant from India, named after Dr Sarkaria – it has a pale green body colour regardless of whether it is grown in bright or moderate conditions. *Boucerosia frerei* was a plant he tried to get hold of for a long time – it comes from India – he grew it for a few years and it formed some nice flowers but then it died, and he hasn't been able to get a replacement yet.

The talk continued in the second half, after the mid-meeting break. *Piarranthus geminatus* was easy to grow – it was in a 7"-8" saucer. You just need a cm of soil and you just put cuttings on the surface and they grow quite nicely – it forms 1 to 1.5 inch flowers. One of the flowers in the group happened to have a flower with 6 petals but all the others flowers had 5 petals – normally Fibonacci numbers play a big part in natural growth patterns. We saw *Piarranthus framesii* next, and this also happened to have a flower with 6 petals. These plants don't like freezing conditions, they need a bit of warmth, and he used to grow this in the out-house.

Tavaresia elegans used to originally be classified as *Decabelone*. *Tavaresia barklii* was a small cutting and in a couple of months it produced a shoot and started to flower in a 3.5" pot – a couple of months later and it was even bigger. *Tavaresia meintjesii* has flowers which are different from the other *Tavaresias* and it might possibly be a hybrid

between *Tavaresia barklii* and *Stapelia grandiflora* since it has really big flowers.

Next we saw *Huernia similis* - the genus name honours the Dutch missionary Justin Heurnius, a collector of South African plants - unfortunately his name was spelled incorrectly when the genus was registered and it's had to be mis-spelt ever since! *Huernia plowesii* has "lifebuoy" type flowers which are quite spectacular. Tom showed the set up he used when photographing these plants. He used to use dark boards for the background but now uses stiff paper with a curved surface behind the plant. You really need to look at all angles to decide what the best view of a plant is - the camera does see different things from what your eye might see.

Huernia pillansii comes in different forms - the flowers were quite small on this one, the next variant was more star shaped. And on another example, the stems were more spiky. Another *H. pillansii* had different coloured flowers. The picture of *Huernia hystrix* was taken when he was trying out different backgrounds. *Huernia arabica* is very small, it was only in a 2 inch pot, and the flowers emerge right at the bottom of the plant. Tom mentioned that Huernias have these interstitial lobes between the main flower lobes. *Huernia barbata* was in a 5 inch pan and it had nice big flowers, again with the interstitial lobes. It has a lot of hairs on the surface and these hairs all point in one direction - it's a mechanism to get the insects to go into the centre of the flower. The flowers last a couple of weeks and later on the flower goes in to a circular shape. A plant now called *Orbea cilliata* has white flowers and used to be called *Diplicatha cilliata*. He had grown it in a 6 inch pan - the flowers have this ciliate edge to them, and any slight breeze causes them to flutter. It produced enormous seed pods which took 2 months to grow but again the seeds were not viable.

The photograph of *Duvalia procumbens* was taken at Kiel - the flowers have raised centres. *Duvalia caespitosa* was called *D radiata* but it has been renamed. Again the flower has a raised central hub. We saw *Duvalia polita* and *Duvalia angustiloba* - the latter has small dark flowers which are ½ inch across, and there are tiny little hairs on the central hub of the flower. *Duvalia sulcata* is much more trickier to grow - he had grown it from seed but had never managed to get it to flower - it lasts for 2-3 years then dies. *Duvalia caespitosa* was in a 2¾ inch pot - he had got this from Roy Mottram who used to grow his plants in crushed brick - it was very quick draining. He also tried growing it in a cm of soil, in a 8 inch pot saucer, with quite good results. *Duvalia elegans* is another small plant.

Edithcolia grandis is one of the trickier plants to grow and it has superb flowers - this wasn't his plant, and you can see the heating cable - the plants like warmth. He has managed to get cuttings and root them but has never flowered it. The next picture featured a cat behind the spectacular flower - and Adrian descried it as a fabulous photograph. The plants really need 20°C so it has to be grown in a propagator. *Echidnopsis scutellata* forms viper like growths - it's like a pit of snakes. It forms tiny little flowers. *Echidnopsis nubica* is now *Echidnopsis ceriformis*. The next plant was also an *Echidnopsis* and something he found in Woolworths, where it was somehow in amongst the Crocus and Hyacinth bulbs imported from Holland - they let him have the plant.

Echidnopsis chrysantha has nice cream flowers which are a couple of cm across. *Echidnopsis speckii* was received labelled as *Echidnopsis nova* - it grew quite quickly and had urn type flowers. If you looked on the left of the flower near the top - there were minute black specks and and Tom said it appears that these flowers seem to attract minute mealy bugs - you don't notice them until you take close up pictures. They seem to live in the flowers. Of course people have a lot of trouble with Stapeliads and mealy bug.

Stapeliopsis saxatilis used to be a *Pectinaria*. The stems grow under the soil and then suddenly the flowers pop out. *Luckhoffia beukmanii* was a monotypic genus - but the plant could also be a natural hybrid - the flowers are like hoodia. We saw two pictures of a cristate *Luckhoffia* - when it was first mounted on a *Stapelia* stem and then the same plant three years later.

Hoodia currorii was photographed growing in the desert in Namibia - it has really flat flowers rather like radar dishes. Tom commented that he's found *Hoodia* very difficult to root - the plants don't die - but they don't grow either. *Larryleachia cactiformis* used to go under *Trichocaulon* but they wanted to commemorate Larry Leach so it was called *Leachia* initially, but this name has already been registered for an algae, so the name was extended to *Larryleachia*. It is quite difficult to grow. We saw *Larryleachia picta*. The next picture was taken at Kiel on a high shelf 10 feet off the ground and Tom mentioned that the the old lady at Kiel held the step ladder for him. He wasn't sure how they looked after these plants. Some of the pictured plants were *Pseudolithos* - these are quite hard to grow and even difficult to obtain. He had no idea how they managed to grow them, but they looked healthy and were flowering. He knows a chap in Cambridge who grows them in wooden propagators and grows them

like weeds and sells them in vast numbers – he has managed to replicate the conditions in Sudan and Somalia!

Pseudolithos cubformis was photographed at Specks nursery and had a €68 price tag – these were plants in 4 inch pots. They grow them in pumice and they also have access to chemicals to control mould and botrytis. *Pseudolithos migiurtinus* was one of his plants, in a 3 inch pot. He can keep them for around 5 years. He buys them on the continent for a few pounds – the prices are more reasonable there. *Pseudolithos dodsonianus* produces slim stems.

With *Brachystelma nanum* the leaves die off and the plant is dormant in winter - it flowered every year. Apparently, you can eat them, and they do so in South Africa – they taste like potatoes, but it would be quite an expensive meal. *Brachystelma barberiae* has fantastic flowers – but the roots are susceptible to rotting off – he keeps them in propagators and keeps them warmer at the end of winter so that the roots are alive at the start of spring when watering recommences. *Brachystelma meyerianum* has white flowers.

Ceropegia petignatii grew a 2 foot tall stem. *Ceropegia armandii* was grown as a circle around the inside of the pot rim. We saw the flower of *Ceropegia stentiae* and this forms a vine. *Ceropegia bulbosa* forms a vine as well, it has a complex flower which traps the insects to enforce pollination. *Ceropegia dichotoma fusca* was pictured as a large bush growing in Tenerife. He never got it to grow well in his greenhouse. *Ceropegia leroyi* is a plant which Desmond Cole says in his book doesn't flower - but this looked like a flower to him. *Ceropegia radicans* has quite large flowers. *Ceropegia stapeliaformis* has quite an unusual star shaped flower. *Ceropegia multiflora* had lots of flowers but they were not very significant. With *Ceropegia ampliata* this was a plant he saw in Kiel - and he wanted the large flowered strain. It took him around 20 years to find it. We saw pictures of it in his greenhouse, and he showed how to use Photoshop to improve the image quality and remove distracting things from the image.

A strange stick like plant was identified as *Euphorbia platyclada* after it started to flower and then it was obvious what it was. *Rhytidocaulon macrolobum* was a strange looking plant with dark star shaped flowers. *Cynanchum viminalis* grows into a thicket and he pictured it in habitat in South Africa where it had grown to a size of around 50 metres wide and 3-4 metres tall - it had also formed loads of flowers.

Hoya australis likes shady conditions – the flowers produce a lot of nectar. *Hoya longifolia* has nice flowers. *Hoya linearis* is a bit more tricky and it didn't like his growing conditions. *Hoya carnosa* is the common species and the best place to grow it was in his bathroom which is west facing – so it got some light and the moisture also helped it. And on to the final photograph – this was *Tweedia oxypetalum* which is the only blue flowered Asclepiad. It's an annual plant and he used to grow it from seed.

Vinay Shah

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday May 2nd .

This will be our regular Cultivation and Propagation meeting. We need some suggestions for topics to discuss and also volunteers from the branch to handle some of these discussions. Please send your suggestions to David Neville by email. The meeting is usually one of the more popular ones in our programme.

Forthcoming Events

Sat 8 th Apr	Isle of Wight	Monthly meeting - to be notified
Sat 15 th Apr	Portsmouth	Plant Auction
Tue 2 nd May	Southampton	Cultivation and Propagation Workshop
Sat 13 th May	Isle of Wight	to be notified - Cliff Thompson
Sat 20 th May	Portsmouth	Echeveria (Trevor Jackman)

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

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/southamptonbcsc>