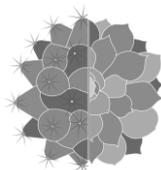


British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

April was our second meeting after two years and we had a similar number of people attend again. As before, a few members were absent but we do hope to see them at future events.

Announcements

Don't forget to **renew** your BCSS membership – this can be done using the renewal form included with the December Journals or also using Paypal or a credit card at the BCSS website, at:

<http://society.bcsc.org.uk/index.php/subscriptions.html>
(if renewing online you'll need to know your BCSS membership number, this is written on the address label of your Journal – David and I also have a list of membership numbers for current members).

On several occasions in the past, the branch has handed out a **free plant** to members, to grow on and hopefully bring back at future cultivation meetings. We are glad to be able to resume this tradition and the plant to be handed out today is *Rebutia perplexa*.

Last Month's Meeting

Richard introduced Stuart Riley - who has spoken at the branch on many occasions previously. Stuart runs the Plantlife Nursery at Eastbourne in East Sussex. For this talk it was mentioned that he would be talking about Continental collections and the title of his slide show in the second half was "Cactus travels around Holland (and a lot of Belgium)".

Stuart said it was good to see a large turnout of people at the meeting – it was a good attendance considering this was only our 2nd meeting in 2 years. He mentioned he was bad with recognising people so didn't know how many in the audience were new members or people he might have seen before. He

even recounted a story where he was taking a picture of their children swimming during a trip - and his wife had to remind him that the girl he was aiming at wasn't their daughter - she was in a different spot!

He mentioned he had brought along live plants to discuss in the first half of the meeting – and he would show some slides in the second half. He mentioned that for a long time, he did not visit the nurseries in Holland because he didn't want to sell the same items as other sellers in the UK – so he used to grow some items from seed and also used to go on trips to the USA and bring back some trunks of plants from there - if you take care, you can pack something like 500 small plants in a single trunk. When their children were young he also ended up using their baggage allowance and indeed his daughters suspected they were being taken on holiday only to use up their baggage allowance! Of course it's not easy carting around so much luggage at the airports.

After a while he decided give Holland a try. There are things that people talk about in the hobby and "ELK" is one of them. It stands for "Europäische Länderkonferenz, (European Countries Conference)" and it's now an annual event held in Belgium where around 120 nurseries show up at a hall and marquee and sell plants from throughout Europe and further afield (there are sellers from Japan and Korea sometimes.) He went to ELK once and it's the sort of event which makes you want to visit every year. And once you get to Belgium, it's easy enough to do another 150 miles and visit some of the nurseries in Holland. A lot of the English cactus nurseries do visit Holland for their plant supplies - there isn't a wholesale cactus nursery in England. Things are certainly complicated by Brexit – but it's not impossible to still visit the event and bring back material.

The plants he would show were interesting things he had picked up at ELK or in Holland in the last year or two. There weren't any cacti of interest amongst the plants he brought back last year. The first plant he held up was something produced by someone who attended ELK – it was a cross between *Crassula* "Buddha's Temple" and *Crassula*

perforata – he had decided to let it go to seed and nearly all the stems were flowering. This plant has a nice scent which is perhaps unusual since many *Crassulas* have an unpleasant scent. *Crassulas* have terminal flowering stems so each stem which flowers will die – you have to hope the plant will also produce some non-flowering stems and offsets which can be used for propagation. Another *Crassula* had been produced by the same nursery and he wasn't sure they knew the parentage. He normally waits for the weather to be slight warmer before he takes cuttings.

A few years ago, he found an *Aeonium* cultivar in the USA called "Mardi gras" which has three different colours to the leaves - green, cream and a pink edge and the colours also vary through the year. But it is a variable plant and the offsets sometime come up in slightly different colours - so if you grow this, you may end up getting several different looking plants. It was originally grown by a nursery called Altman Plants in Vista, California. Typically, plant breeders rights are used to protect the plants from being commercially propagated without permissions and growers in the US do this with many of their new hybrids but they don't seem to extend the rules worldwide, so he has found Dutch sellers who purchases a few plants from him and eventually produced large batches. He's found "Mardi gras" in Holland, as has David. It is still on the pricey side but it sells due to its attractiveness and rarity. In the US they are grown in bulk for the garden centre trade at places such as Home Depot and large plants can be bought there. You can force it to produce more offsets but a single plant might end up going to flower and this is also a terminal flowering genus. There is a new *Aeonium* called "Medusa" which has larger leaves but which doesn't really look that different.

The last time he came back from Holland (last October) he realised after he landed that quite a lot of the paperwork was incorrect – he had paid the extra VAT but the phytosanitary and health paperwork was incorrect. This could have led to the plants being confiscated. At customs he was asked what he had with him and he said "indoor succulents" and luckily he was waved through without a problem. He has now sorted this out and believes he knows what to do to ensure he has the correct paperwork for future trips.

A new plant he obtained was *Pachyeveria* "Rosy Crow". These plants were grown in peat. It did have some black aphids on it early in the year but he had sprayed it to deal with that and the flowers seemed to still be developing. He had brought back around 10 plants and the nursery wouldn't sell these unless

they had grown to a certain size. It has a nice mix of pink and grey tones to the leaves. He said he will probably take off the bottom leaves and use those for propagation - the ones in the middle grow the best – but if you take those off then the plants will look a bit rough for a while.

Nearly everything grown in Holland is sold commercially and if they have a tray of plants - e.g *Haworthia* x *Gasteria* hybrid called "Royal highness" - if the plant was unusual in any way and not confirming with the general aspect of the plant it would be picked out and put aside. This is like heaven for someone like him who is on the lookout for unusual plants. Even variegated examples might be sold for the same price as the regular plant. Within the hobby, there is high demand for variegated plants and those can command high prices.

Responding to a question from the audience, Stuart mentioned that the plants in Holland are still grown mainly in peat. Of course, these days they are encouraging us to use alternatives, and when he pots on the plants, he grows them in John Innes and grit. The problem with peat is that if it dries out, it can be hard to re-wet. He also mentioned that he wouldn't go to any significant trouble to remove the peat from the old roots since that would cause to damage the plant.

Echeveria "Scorpio" is a setosa type plant, but with dark, almost black leaves and it has red and yellow flowers. It's one worth watching out for. To show the difference caused by cultivation, he had brought along a couple of plants of *Crassula argentea* - a few years ago one with unusual leaves called "Gollum" or "Hobbit" was discovered – it had unusual curled up leaves - then a coloured variant *Crassula* "Red Edge" turned up. A cutting from this was a boring shade of green - but if grown on a windowsill with enough light, it will colour up with red and yellow shades. It is quicker to grow it from a cutting rather than a single leaf.

Next was another plant he had found was a new version of *Echeveria agavoides* with very red leaves, called *Echeveria agavoides* "Bordeaux". The Dutch do sometimes spray plants with artificial colours for decoration - as we'll see in the second half – but these are genuine colours. It grows next to a *Dudleya* in habitat. The grower who grew these used to have a gerbera nursery – he found he could grow *Echeveria* from seed and used to grow these and he came across the colour variant. He found he could make more money from growing seed rather than plants and he now produces seed for *Aloe humilis* and has stopped growing this plant.

One other comment Stuart made about *Echeveria* is that some species can overexert themselves when flowering and in this case, it is best to remove some of the flower spikes prior to them opening. He planned to do this with the plant he had here (*E. lutea*) and also with his 10-inch sized *E. tolimanensis* back at home. If the plants are stressed, they can end up going backwards.

Next were two retusa-type *Haworthias* – one was a variegated offset from a regular plant and they didn't look at all similar. Even with the green offset – if it came from a parent that had produced a variegated offset, there is a chance the green plant may do this as well – it's just down to luck as to what it will produce.

There are plants that are produced by tissue culture - previously these plants were very hard to find, but the company Succulent Tissue Culture made a lot of plants available using this technique. This particular plant was *Haworthia maughanii* "Jade Dragon", bought at ELK for €20 - the fancier the markings, the more expensive they can be.

Another pretty plant which might potentially be hardy comes from Mexico. He had thought it was *Sedum hintonii* with furry leaves he had been told by the sedum expert Ray Stephenson that it is actually a different species - *Sedum mocinianum*. Recently, his local Hilliers had trays of 12 alpine plants for around £20 - and in the tray there was a lovely cristate Sedum or Sempervivum. – however, he didn't fancy spending the money on 11 plants that were of no interest - but thinking back, that group of plants is no longer available and he should have bought it at the time.

He mentioned that in one of his pots was a green metaldehyde slug pellet – and now (from the start of the week) these are illegal to use. Sales of them were stopped a few years ago and sales of some of the replacements are still blue in colour but their chemical composition is different. He has used some of the new pellets and hasn't found them to be very good. David said the new ones also seemed to be twice the price of the old ones.

One more plant he had brought back from Holland was called *Echeveria* "Lilac Spoons" - the leaves were shaped with a little scoop at the end of each leaf tip.

Another nice variegated *Echeveria* was called "Mira" - every leaf had some variegation in it. It is thought to be an *Echeveria agavoides* x *Echeveria mexicana* hybrid.

There was a lovely variegated *Euphorbia meloformis*. Offsets will form on this and will root, but it's a slow process. A plant he had brought back from the USA was *Crassula* "Candy Cane", which is a coloured variety of *Crassula rubricaulis*. A European buyer had bought 10 off him one year, and they now produce large quantities at a price that is cheaper than Stuart's - so now he buys his stock from the European producer!

Occasionally you find some nice examples of plants by chance, and we saw a particular variety of *Haworthia marginata*, with a white edge to the leaves - it almost looks like an Agave.

After the mid-meeting break, we resumed with a slide presentation. We started with a view of a P&O Ferry at Dover. Going to Europe does mean also planning to buy some wine on the way back! We saw the ELK venue, which in recent years has been the Corsendonk Duinse Polders Hotel in Blankenberge, in Belgium.

We saw some pictures Stuart had taken of the insides - in the early days it was a smaller site and it was very crowded and even very hard for the sellers to fit it. As the event grew in size, it expanded to use a marquee, and we saw some shots of how large the venue is with the empty tables waiting for the sellers to arrive. The photograph was curved due to the panoramic shot but Stuart assured us that the tables were straight. We saw an image of British sellers Lyn Appleton (and later on) Dave Appleton as well.

Stuart showed some shots of specimen plants at attractive prices and it's true that at the event you'll almost certainly find something to fit your budget.

We saw *Blossfeldia liliputana* and a large plant of *Adromischus* "Bryan Makin" form for €25. There were grafted plants of the recently discovered *Astrophytum caput-medusae* with its slender stems and we also saw a nice specimen of *Dorstenia gigas*

In more pictures we saw some of the dutch flower fields and an aerial view of the many greenhouses around Maastricht. Nearby was the site of one of the large Dutch flower auctions.

Next we saw Cok Grootscholten's nursery - Stuart used to stay with him sometimes. and on one occasion he even put up a 7 foot tent in one of the greenhouses. This ended up being photographed by a visitor and the image was published on a Japanese website!

Some more images showed a variegated *Agave titonata* producing offsets and *Agave bracteosa*

(spider agave) – the variegated form of this was being sold at ELK for €100 in a 6 cm pot. We also saw an *Agave parviflora* with very little chlorophyll

We saw some shots of Cok's collection – there were many genera he was keen in, including haworthias and he has a large online collection of plant photographs. Cok has retired from running a nursery but one assumes and hopes he still has a worthwhile collection of plants to look after.

We saw a video of a computerised planting machine and we saw it moving plants from one plug into another. It seemed to be running some antiquated software (Windows 98?) Another video showed a robot lifting large tables of plants on a motorised runner using the heating pipes as guide rails

More slides showed visits to other wholesale nurseries including some huge expanses of plants just illustrating the scale of growing that goes on in in Holland. We saw collections of *Astrophytum nudum*, *Pilosocereus bradyi* and *Sansevierias* with messages etched onto the leaves. We saw a *Mangave* "Redwing" (*Manfreda* x *Agave*) on sale for several euros. We also saw *Aloe aculeata*, *Echinopsis subdenudatum* and large assortments of coloured gymnos – as well as spray-painted (coloured) plants of *Echeveria agavoides*. One of the shots showed a waste bin filled with all the plants that had been rejected.

We also saw examples of *Ferocactus pillosus* and *Echinocereus grusonii* and grafted plants on offer. There was a pleated plant of *Sansevieria cylindrica*. *Euphorbia lactea* is impressive in its own right and there are cristate (crested) forms around.

Stuart was able to visit Robert Wellens and his Colombian wife Teresa at Succulent Tissue Culture. They used to allow visitors a long time ago, but that stopped several years ago, and now they operate a different model, where they only sell plants by mail order – they hold a few auctions of variegated plants and open their website for a few weeks of each year.

Vinay Shah

Below are some events that Amelia Herbert wanted to publicise. Those marked with an asterisk will be known to have multiple succulent plant sellers.

External Events

15 May 2022	Plant & Garden Fair: Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens*	10AM to 3PM	Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens, Buller's Way, Abbotsbury, Nr Weymouth, Dorset, DT3 4LA Tickets give access to full subtropical gdns
18th & 19th June 2022	Unusual Plants Fair	10:30 to 4:30pm	Gilbert White's House The Wakes, High Street, Selborne Hampshire GU34 3JH
26 June 2022	Plant & Garden Fair: Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens*	10AM to 3PM	Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens, Buller's Way, Abbotsbury, Nr Weymouth, Dorset, DT3 4LA Tickets give access to full subtropical gdns
9 th July 2022	West Moors "Westival"	12noon - 4pm	Bond Ave, West Moors, Ferndown, BH22 0LJ, United Kingdom
5th & 6th August 2022	Taunton Flower Show*	Friday 10:30am - 6pm, Saturday 9:30am - 6pm	Vivary Park, TA1 3SX No parking at show, use park and ride: the west side of town P&R is called Silk Mills and the east side of town, (by J25 M5) is called Gateway. Park entrances via: Town Gate entrance (Mary Street), Wilton Gate (via Fons George), and Mount Gate (Mount Street)

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on June 7th and it will feature our own member Ben Turner talking about a trip he made to South Africa.

I'll also mention that at the start of next month, on Saturday June 4th, **Portsmouth branch** will be holding their **Summer Show**. If you've never been to a cactus show before, then attending this will give you an idea of how the show is organised into different classes and groups of plants. Of course the plants that will be brought along to the National Show in September will be a notch up in size and quality, but this should still be a worthwhile event to attend.

Forthcoming Events

Tue 3 rd May	Southampton	Cultivation & Propagation Workshop, with demos and discussions to be announced
Sat 14 th May	Isle of Wight	
Sat 21 st May	Portsmouth	Gasteria in habitat and culture (Tony Roberts)
Sat 4 th Jun	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Summer Show at Christ Church Hall, Widley, PO6 3NB
Tue 7 th Jun	Southampton	A trip to South Africa (Ben Turner)
Sat 11 th Jun	Isle of Wight	Trees (Gill Salter)
Sat 18 th Jun	Portsmouth	Mammillarias of north-west Mexico (Chris Davies)

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

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