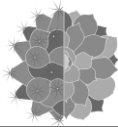


# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

May 2023



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## Editorial

It's been a bit chilly recently but I think we can start to feel that the weather is getting warmer. Hopefully today's cultivation meeting is just the right thing to get you into the right frame of mind to work on your plants!

## Last Month's Meeting

Adrian kicked off the April meeting. He mentioned that we've had some good weather recently. We were lucky to have Bob Potter here today to talk about Caudiciform Succulents. He also mentioned that we had held a branch committee meeting a week earlier - it was around 3 years ago since we held our last one, and we did get a lot done.

David mentioned we had received apologies for today from Ted Smith - he was on holiday and had just arrived in Lisbon! David also mentioned that if you haven't got the March journal and are a full member, do make sure that you have renewed your BCSS subscription. He said he had also brought along a copy of the new book on Aeoniums, which costs around £50 to buy. It is a soft cover book and the binding may be suspect - the branch is considering whether to get it for the library. David also mentioned the "Handbook of Shows" - you can get this booklet from the front table, if you don't already have one. The booklet costs £2 from the BCSS but the branch has bought a number of copies and is making them available free of charge to our members. Amelia Herbert had handed them out at some of the meetings last year.

The next meeting will be the cultivation meeting, and there are several activities planned. David will send out an email about this to members whose email address he has - make sure that he has your

correct email address if you want to be kept informed about the branch's activities each month.

Glenn will have ideas on cultivation, Adrian will hold a discussion about problems encountered due to the weather last winter. Ben will talk about losing plants grown outside, it seems like last year was a bad year, and some people also lost a large number of Rebutias from their collections. Cath will talk about seed raising.

Please bring in the plant of *Rebutia perplexa* which we handed out last year - just to compare how people have grown them. This year we will hand out a new plant, it's name is *Crassula 'Silver Spark'*

David also asked members to bring in any plants which are in bud or flower. Ben would hold a session on how to choose the right container. There would also be a table for plant swap material.

On the front table there's a sheet for people to put down their names if they are planning to drive to the Oxford Branch Show (due to be held on 7th July) and have spare seats - or if they need a lift to that event. We will try and match people up.

Lennie and other members from the branch are planning to holding a plant fair event Winchester on 8th July, and a number of people that you know will be selling plants at the event - more details are contained later in the newsletter.

Adrian introduced Bob and Beryl, who come from the Woking branch. The title of the talk was Caudiciforms - Adrian described it as a talk on "succulents with fat bottoms".

## Caudiciform Succulents

Bob said it was good to be back - it's been a while since he has talked at our branch. H mentioned that he had been asked some years ago to do a talk on Caudiciform plants for the BCSS Judges Course (held in September each year) and this talk was something he had put together for that.

One of the first questions to ask is "what is a caudiciform?" The advent of these plants goes back a few years and Fred Evans was one of the first

Commented [VWS1]:

people to introduce them to this country. Keith Grantham and Tom Jenkins were other people who sourced them as well. Fred also coined the phrase TCP “the caudiciform plants” or more unkindly, “turnips, carrots and parsnips”.

Bob said his talk was based on the plant groupings in the *BCSS Handbook of Shows*. He had consulted the Cambridge dictionary and also the Oxford dictionary and there was no description in either for “caudiciform”. He also looked up caudex and there he found “the axis of a woody plant specially palm tree or a fern, comprised of stems and root”. The next part mentioned “the woody base of a perennial plant” which perhaps is a bit closer to something we could understand.

There are around 20 succulent groups in the Handbook of Shows. He looked through these and thought it might be possible to find plants in 12 or so of these which satisfied the basic criteria for caudiciforms. These included groups such as Adenia, Anacampseros, Ceropegia, Crassula, Didierea, Dorstenia, Euphorbia, Kedrostris, Othonna, Pachypodium, Pelargonium, Peperomia. Bob then took us through each of these groupings, to illustrate some typical caudiciform plants.

We started with **Adenia** group. *Adenia spinosa* is not such a common plant. It has a fat rounded base and long perennial stems and perennial leaves. The leaves are lost over the winter. *Adenia fruticosa* is more common. It is more columnar, has palmate leaves and can grow to around 3 feet high - it is however not as fat as *A. spinosa*. *Adenia goetzei* is fairly uncommon – and it’s difficult to keep it growing – it remains as a solitary and nicely shaped caudex and is one of the more difficult ones to grow.

Cyphostemma is also in this group - *Cyphostemma betiforme* is one of the less common ones – it is not easy to keep - you have to watch the temperatures. *Cyphostemma juttae* is more common, and easier to obtain. He had found the next plant in Madagascar on one of his trips – it had lovely colour on the leaves but he didn’t know the specific name. It was 3-4 inches in diameter and 12 inches high. *Cyphostemma laza* is another plant from Madagascar. This was a huge stem but it had been severely damaged with the top loped off. It is quite common in various parts of Madagascar, and readily available and not that difficult to grow.

Pterodiscus is another genus within this group, and they are usually smart looking plants. *Pterodiscus speciosus* has a purple flower. The plant was about 9 inches high and had nice leaves on top. *Pterodiscus*

*aurantiacus* has a similar mode of growth and has a multicoloured flower and is a desirable plant.

Ficus is also within this group and *Ficus petiolaris* is fairly readily available – it can reach 3-4 feet in height. Next was a Ficus he found in Madagascar – he could put a name to it, but it was smaller than the previous one, the stems reaching 6-7 inches in height.

Adansonia is also in this group - a baby one is just a thin stick and we saw *Adansonia madagascariensis*, but the ones in habitat are amazing. Bob showed a picture of Baobab Alley at Morondava, on the Western coast of Madagascar which contains plants of *Adansonia grandidieri* some of which are over 2000 years old.

If you go further south in Madagascar you will encounter *Moringa drouhardii* which is similar structurally to the Adansonia – it has low cascading leaves over the whitish trunk and is quite beautiful. Baby moringas are just going to be sticks in a pot, and you would not get to appreciate the true beauty of the plants.

*Ipomoea bolusii* grow as underground tubers so you would never normally see them in habitat. We grow them with at least part of the swollen tuber out of the soil. *Uncarina roeoesliana* was in his greenhouse at home as 5-6 inch pot plants. We saw other examples with a remarkable rounded base and a huge central stem – this was 4-5 feet tall, and flowering readily from the crown.

We moved to the **Anacampseros** group. There are not that many caudiciform plants in this group - but one example is *Anacampseros alstonii* (also called *Avonia quinaria*) which was pictured growing in the top end of the Western Cape in South Africa. There is quite a swollen base to the plant. It grows in sandy quartz areas and the plants are sometimes completely buried in the soil.

**Ceropegia** group contains *Fockea edulis* which can get quite big - in habitat it can reach a size of 6-7 feet across. It has snake-like stems which spread for a distance. The illustrated plant was in a 50cm bowl. *Fockea cripisa* can become quite a large caudex.

*Raphionachme* forms a lovely smooth white caudex, and we saw one in habitat in Zimbabwe - the soil had been washed away by a flow of water, you wouldn’t normally see the tuber exposed like that. If you go to habitat and look for them at the wrong time of the year, there is nothing to see!

**Didierea** group contains *Idria columnaris* which grows in Mexico and Arizona – it is not a woody stem - but there is a lot of succulence there. *Ceraria* is also in this group and we saw *Ceraria pygmaea* – this was one of his older plants, which had grown quite large. Next, we saw a *Fouquieria purpusii* from Mexico – it has a little basal caudex and slender stems and leaves up the stem. It's quite a messy plant since all the leaves die and eventually fall off, and these need to be cleaned off the plant – he has a hoover dedicated for this job.

**Dorstenia** group contains several examples. We saw a picture of one growing in habitat in Ethiopia – it is actually quite hard to find amongst all the grass and shrubs. *Dorstenia foetida* goes back to his time in Yemen - he and Beryl lived in Yemen for 3 years. It was growing in basalt and the stem was about 10 inches high. His job in Yemen was to find suitable material for making concrete – and the hill they were going to excavate was covered in 1000s of *Dorstenias*, but they had no choice. *Dorstenia lancifolia* is a plant he likes because the plant looks like palm trees – it has no base or swollen caudex really. Another *Dorstenia* from Somalia is really popular right now, it's *Dorstenia lavrani* - everyone wants one. He put an example into the National BCSS Show and it won a medal. *Dorstenia ellenbeckiana* has a swollen stem at the base and strangely shaped flowers – it remains small, this plant was no more than 4 inches high. *Dorstenia gigas* is sought after - this was a seedling plant. We also saw *D. gigas* in habitat in Socotra – this was 4 - 5 feet high – and another one on the hillside was even more massive, some 2-3 metres across

**Euphorbia** group contains quite a few examples of caudiciforms. We saw *Euphorbia tortirama* - in habitat you would rarely see the caudex but the stems are visible above the soil. *Euphorbia groenewaldii* is another example of a plant with a hidden caudex. *Euphorbia decidua* is quite sought after – it comes from Zimbabwe – and you would normally just see the stems above the soil, with the caudex being hidden in the ground. It is quite beautiful when they start to grow, you get a red tinge to the foliage at the start of the season. We continued with *Euphorbias* after the mid-meeting break. *Euphorbia tuberosa* is only 2-3 inches high, and again the caudex is completely underground, with just the green glaucous leaves above the soil. Next we saw an *Euphorbia* found at Cape Sainte Marie, in the southernmost part of Madagascar. The wind on the plateau here is savage and the plants of *Euphorbia cap-saintemariensis* which grow here have to survive being sand blasted and the stems and leaves are often stripped – we also saw how the plants look like in cultivation. *Euphorbia enormis*

has quite a large caudex which is completely submerged.

Another Madagascan plant is *Euphorbia waringiae* - the stems grow to around 12-15 inches high. *Euphorbia suzannaemarnierae* is quite similar to the previous plant, perhaps thicker and with broader leaves. It rarely grows to above 12-15" high. *Euphorbia suppressa* comes from South Africa and it only grows to 4 inches high - it does have a taproot, with small tubercles rising from the plant body. *Euphorbia tulearensis* comes from Madagascar, from near the town of Tulear in South West Madagascar. It grows in one specific location (La Table). The remarkable thing about this plant - is that it grows right besides *Aloe descoingsii* - but this one is much harder to keep alive – it's strange how two plants from the same area are so different in their up keep.

*Euphorbia razafindratsirae* is a little weird, it consists of a very small tuber and small stoloniferous stems 1 to 1.5 inches in size creeping out from the top of the tuber. An old favourite of his is *Euphorbia stellata*, from South Africa – it is a beautiful thing with a white tuber. *Euphorbia quartziticola* is rare in cultivation - it has yellow flowers and looks similar to *E. primulifolia*. It has waxy leaves. This is *Euphorbia primulifolia* in Madagascar - it forms beautiful rosettes and there are several types, this was from near Isalo - the size of the tuber is substantial, around 12-15" in diameter. They dug one up to take a look at the size of the tuber and Bob assured us that they did replant it after examining it.

*Euphorbia labatii* grows in sandy soil and forms small tubers under the soil – these are quite elongated. *Euphorbia cremersii* is from Madagascar, it was growing in a 2 inch square pot. *Euphorbia itremensis* comes from quite close to the *E. quartziticola* location and forms quite a convoluted system of stems – it comes from a spot in the Itremo mountains. It was reported there was a red flowered form of *E. quartziticola* - their guide claimed it was 10km away but after a couple of attempts to find they gave up. Bob was with Leo van der Hoeven at the time, so he decided to photoshop a plant with red flowers and showed this to Leo, who was furious and said why didn't you tell me when we saw this? He later admitted it was a wind up. Down in the South/Southwest of Madagascar, you can find *Euphorbia cylindrifolia* var *tubifera* - there is also a non-tuberous version which is stoloniferous.

*Monadenium montanum* used to be quite prolific in collections. We also saw *Mondadenium* sp. from Tanzania/East Africa.

Next was **Kedrostris** group. *Dendrosicyos* comes from Socatra, this was a seedling and around 15 inches high. One in habitat was huge, they grow all over Socatra. Bob was asked how warm does he keep his plants in the winter? The answer was between 16°C and 18°C – just don't ask him about the heating bill! He did mention that there is also the option of bringing the plants into the house over the winter period. *Ibervillea* sp. comes from Mexico - you don't see many of these now – it's only a small plant. *Cephalopentandra ecirrhosa* is another plant you don't see this much now, but he has sold a few over the years. We saw *Gerrardanthus macrorrhizus* in cultivation – this was a baby plant about 5 inches tall. And then we saw the same species growing in habitat in Ethiopia - these were monstrous plants, the size of a Volkswagen Beetle. There were lots of plants in the field, although he didn't see any babies.

*Xerosicyos pubescens* is from Madagascar – he has seen these grow to around 3-4 feet across. You get a lot of vining leaves on top of these plants. This was photographed in a nursery in Madagascar around 3 feet across. *Stephania* comes from Asia – it is a caudex with heart shaped leaves – which you need to keep this trimmed. You don't see them much these days. *Dioscorea elephantipes* is a well known plant with a tortoise like aspect to the caudex. It's common name is Elephant's foot. It is a late autumn / winter grower.

*Othonna cacalioides* is called the poor man's *Pachypodium brevicaule* - but it is actually quite hard to find these days – it looks like a brown form of *brevicaule*. *Othonna triplinervia* was being grown like a small tree, it has quite a swollen base. *Othonna euphorbioides* was only a small plant, it can get quite wide and thick.

We saw the real *Pachypodium brevicaule* - there are seedling plants of this available, and seeds are available as well. We saw one in habitat, this is just above the cement works in Madagascar – it was about 2 feet across and there were bigger examples around. *Pachypodium densiflorum* is quite tiny compared to the plants in habitat. He saw a hillside covered in plants - with John Baptiste for scale, the plants were 4-5 feet in size. And some of these plants were 2 metres in diameter! In the Isalo mountains – they had gone there for *Euphorbia primulifolia* - you also find *Pachypodium rosulatum* var *gracilius* - some are quite remote – but they are spectacular plants which were football sized. We saw his plant of *Pachypodium rosulatum* – this was a more upright bushy/shrub form.

*Pachypodium rutenbergianum* was quite big - this is about 4-5 metres high in a remote location along the

North West coast of Madagascar. *Pachypodium bispinosum* is a South African plant. It was flowering with a pinkish white flower with a darker interior.

We saw *Adenium socatranum* – this was a baby plant, only 2 inches high. We then saw them on the island of Socatra – these are taller than a person he always feels like walking up to them and giving them a cuddle. They grow in some strange places. The plant body has a really smooth surface too. We saw the flowering head of the plant.

Next, we saw an old picture taken while in Yemen – this was *Adenium obesum* and the plant was some 10 to 12 feet across. We also saw *Adenium somaliense* – these had a pinkish flower on some of the sale plants he had.

Next we considered the **Pelargonium** group. *Pelargonium triste* has feathery leaves and a woody basal section. We also saw *Pelargonium obtusifolium*. *Pelargonium cotyledonis* is like a shrub and comes from the island of St Helena – that's the only place where it grows. These are small plants and we could see it forms a nice little tuber.

Next was Peperomia group and *Peperomia dolabriformis* was only a small plant but it was forming a tuber. And another Peperomia almost like a *Brachystelma* with brown tubers.

David Neville mentioned that Gordon Rowley invented the word pachycaul and this might be suitable for describing plants that are not full caudiciforms.

Bob mentioned that on one of their first excursions to Madagascar - they were accosted by someone who said "what are you doing on my land?". After they chatted with him for a while, he calmed down and they asked if he knew of succulent plants and he said "come with me" and dug up a huge tuber – "Do you want it?" Well Bob couldn't even lift it. Have you got any smaller ones? This was found and he brought it back. It was 4 inches in diameter and eventually started to grow - before long it had produced a huge amount of foliage. There was a UK convention where Werner Rauh - the expert on Madagascar was going to be, so Bob extracted the plant from his greenhouse and put it in his car. He showed Werner the plant in his car and Werner said "very interesting" followed by "I don't have a clue". It's now known to be called *Trochomeriopsis diversifolia*.

Bob ended the talk by showing us some pictures from various parts of his greenhouse. We saw a few

examples of Pachypodiums, Fouquierias, Xerosicyos, and tuberous Euphorbias. And we also saw some of the displays they used to do at the RHS Shows and at the Chelsea / Tatton Park events – it was a display of succulent plants and with a fair proportion of caudiciforms.

He mentioned his plant of *Sedum frutescens* was even better than Gillian Evison's plant which won "best of show" at the last BCSS show. We saw examples of *Euphorbia decida* and *Euphorbia suzannae-marnierae*. He hoped that seeing the talk would whet people's appetite to try growing these plants. With the temperature, he recommended a minimum temperature of 10°C - or alternatively bring the plants indoors.

Adrian ended by thanking Bob for his talk and that it had been quite an experience – some of the plants were indeed beautiful, but a few of them, he wasn't so sure of!

*Vinay Shah*

Here are some details of the Plant Fair that some members will be holding on July 8<sup>th</sup>:

## Hampshire Succulents and Cacti Plant Fair

St Barnabas Church Hall,  
Fromond Road,  
Winchester,  
SO22 6EF

8th July Saturday, 10.30am to 3.30pm.  
Free entry

Sellers:

- Benjamin Turner - a large range of mostly small succulents.
- Lennie - Small succulents and aeoniums
- Paul - Agave and Cacti
- Misfits Plants - Succulents
- The Mammillaria Society display and sale plants
- Totally Potty About Succulents - a small scale succulent and cement plant pot
- business based in Bournemouth
- Sarah Morrish - Botanical illustrations

Join our facebook group for updates  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/243392311247612>

Branch members are most welcome to sell. £12 pitch with table, £10 if you bring your own table. Please get in touch with Lennie Kwan (kwanjc@gmail.com)

*Lennie Kwan*

## Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday June 6<sup>th</sup>

The speaker will be Trevor Jackman from Woking Branch. Trevor has been behind the successful running of the Woking Branch for a long time, and this will be his first visit to our branch. He will be giving us a talk titled "Past and Mostly Present" and this will be a talk on plants he has grown over the years, and it should cover a wide range of plants.

## Forthcoming Events

Sat	13 <sup>th</sup>	May	Isle of Wight	to be notified - Cliff Thompson
Sat	20 <sup>th</sup>	May	Portsmouth	Echeveria (Trevor Jackman)
Sat	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Summer Show at Christ Church Hall, Widley, PO6 3NB
Tue	6 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Southampton	Past and Mostly Present (Trevor Jackman)
Sat	10 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Isle of Wight	to be notified
Sat	17 <sup>th</sup>	Jun	Portsmouth	Sulcorebutia (Kathy Flanagan)
Sat	1 <sup>st</sup>	Jul	Oxford	Oxford Branch Show + Haworthia Show, Wantage, OX12 7LB
Tue	4 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	Southampton	to be notified
Sat	8 <sup>th</sup>	Jul	Winchester	Hampshire Succulents and Cacti Plant Fair @ St Barnabas Church Hall

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

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