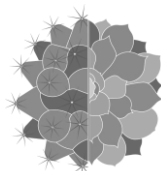


British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

September 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
sotonbess@gmail.com
(023) 80261989

Editorial	1
Last Month's Meeting.....	1
Plant Focus Evening	1
Echeveria	1
Rebutia.....	3
Next Month's Meeting	5
Forthcoming Events.....	5

Editorial

August was a strange month weather-wise but some of the high temperatures we saw in July did abate. We also had some thunderstorms and have had a fair amount of rain, which has helped outdoor plants and lawns recover.

Last Month's Meeting

Richard White mentioned there were some books and pamphlets available for free on the side table, and Ben Turner had brought in some BEF pots to give away - donations towards branch funds would be appreciated if you do take these items.

Southampton BCSS branch badges are available at a cost of £2 each – please contact Vinay if you would like one.

Geoff Penrose had brought in some *Plants of Interest*. These consisted of some haworthias - fancy cultivars which he had bought at a Haworthia convention - *Haworthia maughanii* “Yukiguni” and *Haworthia* “Incas Splendens”. Others grown from seed included *Haworthia truncata* v *maughanii*. He had also brought in *Conophytums burgeri* – this resembles a green pebble and is normally single headed, but his plant had offset and now had 4-5 heads - it grows near the mining town of Aggeneys in South Africa. He had also brought in the miniature *Conophytum achabense* - a tiny plant described by Steve Hammer in 1988. Another small plant was labelled MSG 981 (mesemb study group?) and the label indicated it had been sowed in 1996 and the plant had some small heads and was still in a 2 inch pot.

Lennie said the plant fair held in Winchester in July went well, and it's something that we will want to do again in the future.

The **Portsmouth Autumn Show** will happen on 23rd September. Carrie Hands has sent out a show schedule for the event and it will be well worth attending. If you would like a copy of the schedule, let David or me know.

The previous weekend, there will be an event at Lullingstone Castle called “Cacti at the Castle” where numerous sellers including David will be in attendance. Tom Hart Dyke often gives a guided tour of the gardens, which contain many interesting plants.

Plant Focus Evening

Adrian said that David would lead the discussions about the plants that had been brought in for the plant focus evening. David said that he had hoped Amelia would be here to talk about the Echeverias but unfortunately, she was not present today.

He mentioned that for the Echeverias, the plants brought in were a reasonable selection of the plants that are available to grow, but it only represented a tiny fraction of the available species and there are also so many hybrids and cultivars available these days, so this was just a small selection of what's available. For the Rebutias, the assembled plants were a little disappointing and only represented a tiny selection of the available plants – there were hardly any Sulcorebutias here and only 4 Weingartias.

Echeveria

David started with the Echeverias and he asked the audience how many people grow them and quite a few hands went up (but not all).

He said Echeverias cover a wide range of plants and some are beginners plants which are easy to grow but others are more difficult and some are also miniatures and slow growing. One of the biggest is *Echeveria agavoides* and there were a few examples of this on the table.

Many of the species are found in Mexico. He didn't think there were any native to the USA. North of the Rio Grande you do find some *Dudleyas* growing in the USA. Richard White wondered if that meant that *Dudleyas* would be more tolerant of low temperatures and David said it all depends on the altitude they grow at - some *Dudleyas* come from Baja where they grow in quite mild conditions.

Over recent years, new *Echeveria* plants have been found in Central America, in Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador and also further south in Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru. These new discoveries are not common in cultivation yet and they are going to be cold-sensitive compared to some of the Mexican ones we are used to. Also, many of the central and South American ones are shrubs whereas many of the Mexican ones are short stemmed or even stemless - the shrubby plants will need to be pruned to be kept tidy.

Echeveria agavoides is one of the easiest ones to grow - it is more or less frost hardy and it forms large rosettes. It is grown outside in gardens in South Devon and Cornwall, and it forms big robust plants with multiple rosettes. *Echeveria* "gilva" is a hybrid of *agavoides* and Richard said this plant originally had gold-tipped leaves when he bought it (it was a Dutch spray-painted plant, bought from a garden centre for 35p). There had been some leaf die back and David said repotting it would probably resolve that. Other plants of *E. agavoides* had a nice red edge to the leaf (there is a cultivar called *E. agavoides* "Red Edge") - and Geoff Card used to have a plant called *E. agavoides* "Ebony" with burgundy colouring down the leaf and which was always spectacular. A plant on the table was a poor example of this - it was Ben's plant, and Ben said it had been rescued from Bruce's collection and was still recovering. Of course this might not be the same material as Geoff's original plant. They will cluster as you can see from other cultivars. Ted Smith had brought in the same plant and said he had propagated it from leaves and David said he didn't think it was possible to do this with *E. agavoides* - there are a few *Echeverias* that you can't propagate from leaves but it turns out that if you get the leaf and retain a piece of the original stem on it, your chances improve a lot. *E. cante* was originally called *E. subrigida* and it was renamed by Charlie Glass who was an American who settled in Mexico, and he renamed it based on his exploration of the habitat. This was a plant that Jane had bought today. To expand on what he said about taking cuttings, David said that John Pilbeam had indicated that in order to propagate from leaves, you need to ensure that you use a scalpel to cut the leaf and leave a piece of the stem at the base of the leaf stem - that

will have a growing bud in there and this is what will eventually grow into a plant.

If you do take the leaves off and propagate them, David illustrated what can happen by showing us a tray of *Echeveria tolimanensis* which he had put down to root last year, and at the base of almost every leaf, there was a cluster of small rosettes. This was unusual because *E. tolimanensis* does not usually cluster. He had taken the leaves from a couple of plants which he had sacrificed in order to create a new generation of plants. Next was a propagation of *Echeveria chihuahuensis* - this was also propagated a year ago, and it's formed a recognisable young plant within a year. It does come from the Mexican state of Chihuahua and it turns bright red in the sun. You can't always rely on the name to identify where a plant comes from - for example *Graptopetalum paraguayense* comes from Central Mexico. David said he finds *E. chihuahuensis* to be quite difficult and he rates it highly on the show bench. He showed *Echeveria laui* next - this is a choice plant and it is a stunning plant when grown well, with white farina on the leaves. If you take leaf cuttings, only one in 10 might root. However it does have leaves on the flower stem and these little leaves will root more easily than the leaves from the main rosette. It grows on bedrock and needs top shelf treatment, and you also have to be careful with the watering. David said a member from Harrow can grow them like weeds. Last month Trevor Jackman mentioned that he waters this at half the rate of the other *Echeverias* in his collection.

As an aside, David mentioned that Southfields nursery is closing down at the end of the month and he hasn't heard if anyone will be buying it from the present owners, Bryan and Linda Goodey. Last winter their heating bill went up massively (it is a really big nursery). Southfields always win the gold medals at the Chelsea Shows. One of their reasons for success is that they found that if they produced a series of cultivars, for example Lincoln XYZ - some people just buy everything on the list regardless of whether the plant was worthwhile or what it looked like - and in many cases the different cultivars all grew from the same seed pod!

There was only one *Echeveria* in flower here and that was *E. secunda*. The flowers do vary a bit across the different species. Some like *E. shaviana* produce leaves up the flower stem. *E. shaviana* was in bud and it produces a nice pink flower, and the shape of the flower spike is quite attractive as well.

Depending on how you grow them - either slow or fast - it can change the appearance of the plant quite

a bit. The *E. secunda* was a giant plant and it is quite hardy. This plant was quite lush because it had been grown under cover, David said this and *E. lilacina* were appearing in garden centres at around a foot across and *Aeonium* "Velour" was another plant that seemed to have been imported from a Dutch nursery in large numbers. They are sold for a quite a price, based on how large the plants are. *Sempervivum* x *Aeonium* (*Semponium*) hybrids are also making an appearing in some garden centres.

E. "Taurus" is also sold under the name *E. "Romeo"* - it seems to be an agavoides hybrid with red colouring to the leaves. There are also frilly leaved hybrids created from *E. gibbiflora* and David said it was worth searching for "Dick Wright Echeveria" on Youtube - he started to create hybrids in the 1950s and although now in his 90s, he has created many spectacular plants. *E. shaviana* is also one of the naturally frilly ones but his plants have been bred for many generations and will have a complex parentage. David had hoped somebody would have brought one in but there were none on the table.

As for books on Echeveria - Eric Walther's book "Echeveria" is from 1972 and rather dated. "Echeverias: A Guide to Cultivation and Identification" by Carruthers and Ginns dates from 1973 and it doesn't cover any of the recent hybrids or species. "The Genus Echeveria" by John Pilbeam was produced in 2008 and it only covers species but it is the most up to date description of the genus that's available. There's a book on "Echeveria Cultivars" produced by Attila Kapitany and Lorraine Schulz (Rudolf Schulz's wife) and this talks about the cultivars and that is also quite a nice book. On the back of one of the books is Echeveria rosea which is one of the epiphytic species. David had been searching for this to see if he could buy it from anywhere - it is frost hardy and has pink flowers and the leaves go bright red - and all that comes up in a search is a cultivar of *E. shaviana* which someone had named cv "Rosea" - this is quite silly but it happens sometimes. Fortunately, he was given a cutting of the species by a friend in Cornwall and he hopes to produce lots of cuttings and swap Ebay with them eventually - it is a fantastic plant to grow.

Echeveria rundelli is actually *Echeveria setosa* var. *deminuta*. Another plant that was here was *E. setosa* var. *ciliata*. He didn't see the true *E. setosa* var. *setosa* here. Another plant was *E. setosa* var. *minor* - which has blue leaves. The true *E. setosa* var. *setosa* is the nicest one and his aunty used to grow them when he was a youngster. With var. *ciliata* the surface of the leaves are shiny but with *setosa* var. *setosa* there are hairs all over the leaf. If anyone sees

one for sale anywhere - please get him one! When he was young, his aunty and his grandmother and another old lady up the road used to give him plants and this is what built up his interest in the hobby.

Lennie had brought along a tray of plants produced by a seller called Eastoft and these seemed to be imported hybrids, which had been given a multitude of names, including Eastoft "Elizabeth Regina", Eastoft "Patience", Eastoft "Harlecina", Eastoft "Jubilee", and Eastoft "Cream Tea". They were being sold on their Facebook pages - the "Cream Tea" plant was quite small but Lennie did say it grows bigger in due course. It seems that Eastoft specialise in Korean hybrids and the owner is Tracy Coogan. Their Facebook page says "I have an extensive collection of over 1200 Echeveria species, hybrids and relatives."

Echeveria "Cubic Frost" was a plant brought back from the USA by Stuart Riley. It propagates quite easily. The next plant was something brought in by Kath - it was *E. pulvinata* and the leaves were covered in tiny hairs and it had lovely colouration. She had been growing it outside in the garden - she has had it nearly three years and it has not flowered as yet. Another interesting plant was *E. leucotricha* "Frosty" which was a cristate form. It produces flat stems like straps. David said he has propagated it in the past and has seen it grown to over a foot tall. It was covered in little felty hairs.

Echeverias are for sale everywhere - and naming is a bit of an issue - some are distinctive - but others are often misnamed. The Dutch growers are particularly bad at inventing new names for the same plant - and *Echeveria lilacina* is now being sold under *E. cv "Lola"* and also *E. cv "Pollux"* names - but they are really all the same thing. A seedling from a mix that Kath had grown might be a form of *E. cuspidata*.

Rebutia

At the start of the second half of the meeting, David asked "Who grows Rebutias or Sulcorebutias or Weingartias?" Several hands went up, but he said the response was not much better than the show of hands compared to the Echeverias, and perhaps that explained the limited range of plants that had been brought in. When you think of Rebutias, you think of plants which are round, globular and clumping. Sulcorebutia are also considered to be members of the Rebutia family although the flowers are somewhat different, there are many similarities. Weingartia are also considered part of the family now. David said he hadn't seen a Rebutia x Sulco hybrid which suggests that the genetic differences between these groups might be considerable. The

old fashioned Rebutias all grow in Argentina, Sulcorebutias come from Argentina and Bolivia, as do Weingartias.

All Rebutias and Sulcos have similar flower forms (they flower from the base of the plant) and they also flower at similar times of the year. Many species produce a second flush of flowers around this time of the year. *Rebutia muscula* does this and the plant had new flower buds on it.

They don't have to be very large to flower. Kath's young plant was just a year or two old and it had just finished flowering. David thought it might be *R. fulviseta* although Kath said the label had said *Rebutia sanguinea*.

in terms of books – John Pilbeam had produced a book showing all the species – this was produced by the Cactus File. but was out of print now. John had included all the names that aren't valid in a list at the back of the book and this was useful to find synonyms. John had also produced a book on "Sulcorebutia and Weingartia: A Collectors Guide" as well, this was published in 1985. He also brought out an updated book called "Sulco gallery" – which covered some of the newer plants which had been discovered - John still has stocks of that publication.

We would start in order of least popularity. Weingartia have a dark green body and get to grapefruit size before offsetting. They mostly have yellow flowers which emerge not from the base but from the shoulder of the plant. They are shorter tubed flowers. They can also produce more than one flower from the same areole, which is very rare in cacti. *Weingartia trollii* produces a red flower – it was labelled *Weingartia neocumingii* ssp. *trollii* and you can get forms either orange or red flowers. Ben said his plant (obtained from Bruce) had flowered for 2-3 months in a row.

Most Weingartias are boring-looking plants. but there are two or three which stand out and have tuberous roots and are slower growing, and hence and do well in shows. *Weingartia neumanniana* is one of them – and David said the plant on the table was the biggest plant of this he had seen and it was stunning. Geoff Penrose said he had bought it over 30 years ago. David mentioned that John Donald from Worthing branch was a specialist grower and used to go to Bolivia regularly, and he called these the Copiapoa-like Weingartias - they also flower from the crown of the plant rather than the shoulder. Another plant here was *W. kargliana* which is very slow growing. Geoff said he had taken about 20 seed pods off the *W. neumanniana* this year and he had sown these a couple of weeks ago. David said

20 years ago, he had a plant of this and he took it to Cliff Thompson's greenhouse, to try and cross pollinate with one of Cliff's plants so they could both get some seed but his plant got scorched due to Cliff's greenhouse being sunnier than his, and his plant sadly died.

Moving on to Sulcorebutia, *S. rauschii* is probably one of the best known ones. It has bright purple flowers in spring. He said the slugs are always able to find this plant and they always attack it in his greenhouse. It has tiny spines which don't deter them, and he must have 20 plants that have had chunks bitten out of them. It occurs in many different forms with different body and spine colours. Next was *S. krugeri* – this will form a couple of dozen heads. Kath had brought in *S. pulchra* - she doesn't like to have labels in her pots – it has a dark flower.

The next plant was more unusual – it was *Sulcorebutia hertusii*, you might see it labelled as *Sulcorebutia patriciae* as well, and it has whiskery spines and lovely purple magenta flowers. This was flowering late and it was producing a 2nd flush of flowers. It had a HS number (Heinz Swoboda) and these grown from seeds David had obtained from a Czech nursery. One more plant that was here was *S. glomerispina* – it had nice sized heads and he thought the flowers were orange. This was a plant that he had rescued from Bruce's collection and it had some red spider damage.

Now for Rebutias and digito-rebutias - the latter were also called Mediobolivia and they make nice dense clumps. If you only want to grow one Rebutia, then the one to try is *Rebutia heliosa* (not the varieties *condorensis* or *cajacensis*, which are fast and easy). *R. heliosa* is a challenge to grow well and anything in more than a 3.5" pot is quite an achievement. When they pass that size they can rot off and you might think it needs some water but that will just kill it. If it's growing really well, it's also possible that it might be a grafted plant. Ben had brought in *R. heliosa* x *albiflora* - this was given out by the branch as a free plant a few years ago. It is very vigorous and will form a nice clump and have flowers with peach and salmon shades. In habitat, most Rebutias are single headed plants. In North Argentina he had found single stemmed plants that were just 4mm across and a few mm tall - these were growing at high altitude and they just don't grow very large.

R. perplexa is a pretty plant with pink flowers and Mark and Rebecca had brought in their plants - this was another plant handed out by the branch. David said there were signs of a slug having climbed onto

the plant. Rebecca said the plants had flowered a couple of weeks ago. *Rebutia narvaecensis* has pale pink flowers and is also called *R. espinosae* - Southfields produce these in huge quantities along with *Rebutia muscula* which has soft white spines and produces orange flowers. *R. fulviseta* has a dark coloured body.

Botanists will tend to lump plants together but collectors will give different names to the different forms or varieties and many collectors will try and grow all the variants. Taxonomists tend to be lumpers and most collectors are splitters. *Rebutia fabrisii* grows in two forms - with orange flowers or yellow flowers and there is also a red flowered variant. It flowers well and it's a plant which David propagates because it will sell when it is in flower. A single headed cutting can fill a 3 inch pot by the end of the season.

One of the problems with *Rebutia* and *Sulcorebutia* is that they are soft bodied and they do suffer from red spider attack. SB Plant Invigorator used to be used a few years ago, but it's quite hard to find in garden centres these days. When attacked by red spider, a green body will turn brown. A plant bought by Theo at Portsmouth Show was not normal looking - it had probably been grown in insufficient light - David suggested taking some of the new growths and potting these on to restart the plant and binning the rest.

David asked if there were any comments or questions about *Rebutias*? They are high altitude plant and they are hardy if kept dry in the winter. For some reason last winter had seen exceptional losses for many growers but this was not normal.

We briefly discussed which genera might be suitable to consider for next year, and *Haworthia* and *Thelocactus* were potential candidates.

Vinay Shah

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday October 3rd and will feature Alice Vanden Bon. Alice has been a member of Reading & Basingstoke Branch for many decades. She has given talks at our branch in the past and this time she will be presenting "Mesembs in Habitat and Cultivation".

Alice maintains a large and varied collection of both cacti and succulents, but she is well known as a keen enthusiast for Mesembs, particularly *Conophytum* and *Lithops*. She has travelled to South Africa on a number of occasions to seek out these plants growing in their natural habitats. Different Mesembs have different requirements in cultivation, so this will be a very useful and informative presentation to help us grow our plants better, and to see their preferred niches in the wild.

Forthcoming Events

Sat 9 th Sep	Isle of Wight	Members Pictures. Highlights from the growing year.
Sat 16 th Sep	Portsmouth	Smaller South American <i>Opuntias</i> (Tony Roberts)
16 th -17 th Sep	Lullingstone	Cacti at the Castle - Lullingstone Castle, Kent, DA4 0JA
Sat 23 rd Sep	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Autumn Show at Christ Church Hall, Widley, PO6 3NB
Tue 3 rd Oct	Southampton	Mesembs in Habitat & Cultivation (Alice Vanden Bon)
Sat 14 th Oct	Isle of Wight	Preparing Plants for Over Wintering
Sat 21 st Oct	Portsmouth	A Bit of This and That (Ralph Martin)

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

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