

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

November 2022



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## Editorial

The clocks changed at the weekend so it's quite dark in the evenings now!

## Announcements

The 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the "Handbook of Shows" has been purchased by the branch and is being made available to all members - Amelia Herbert has copies so please ask her if you need a copy. The booklet defines which species of cacti and succulents are eligible for the different classes and groupings that are accepted by the BCSS for its shows - and hence it's a very useful guide, especially if you have any interest in plant nomenclature and showing.

You may notice that Glenn Finn sometimes takes pictures of members at the branch meetings. He sends me these pictures for use on the branch website and although I've not used any recently, the intent is to give new members an idea of the atmosphere of what a branch meeting is like. I will not name any individual members on any pictures I happen to use without asking them first, but if you do have an objection to any pictures featuring you to be used on our web pages, please do let me know.

## Last Month's Meeting

Richard started proceedings since both David and Adrian were away. Richard welcomed new some members - Leo and Sue. At the December meeting, we don't have a normal meeting with a speaker - it's the annual AGM and we discuss a few details of the how the year went followed, accept the annual financial report and this is followed by a Christmas

social. At the AGM we also re-elect the committee for next year. We are down a couple of members so do need to appoint some new people.

Last month's talk covered 40 years of growing Mammillarias and Richard mentioned Tom would out-do that since he has been growing plants for 50 years - he started quite young and has experience Last month's talk covered 40 years of growing Mammillarias and Richard mentioned Tom would out-do that since he has been growing plants for 50 years - he started quite young and has experience of growing a large variety of plants over that time.

## A Personal Choice

Tom mentioned he has been collecting for succulents for over 50 years. When he first started growing plants, male growers tended to collect cacti and it was a few women growers who grew succulents, especially mesembs. He himself did like succulents but he was forced into having a few a cacti as well. The first half of his talk would cover cacti and the second half would cover succulents and other things.

The first picture was in black and white and was a picture of a Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera*) in flower. Next was an *Aporocactus flagelliformis* with red pink/flowers - Tom said that this presents some cultivation challenges since if you grow it under the bench it grows well but wouldn't flower well - and if you grow it on the bench, the flowers were better but the stems did not grow as well.

Ariocarpus was very popular and in the early days most of the plants were collected from habitat. And people had a lot of interest in the habitat data and having this added to the value of the plant. We saw a shot of assorted plants for sale at a german nursery. Some of the plants were quite tatty. This was *Ariocarpus retusus* - originally it was a collected plant but he managed to get it growing again. It was probably 50 years old. These days the plants tend to be grown from seed. Next was *A. fissuratus* in a 3.5" pot and it does produce spectacular flowers. Tom mentioned that the flowers on plants these days tend to be much better than the

flowers back in the past - this was due to a number of reasons - first the plants themselves have been selected and are better, more vigorous clones - and people fertilize plants now and people also understand culture more. He mentioned that back then in the Hull branch they had a cup for a plant grown in a 2" pot size and that isn't a class you would see these days.

One of the nice things about *Astrophytum ornatum* is the patterns formed on the body by the flecking. Considering the size of the plants, the flowers are comparatively dismal and quite small. *Astrophytum myriostigma* has a much better flower. Astrophytums are popular with growers in the far east, and you can get them in a wide variety of different shapes and rib counts and even body colours.

*Backebergia militaris* was introduced into cultivation around 30 years ago, and the string appearance of the plants that were available made them quite a novelty, with the orange cephalium atop the stem making them stand out. However these were top cuts from a much bigger plant and growing the plants was quite a challenge. They didn't usually have any roots and if they did ever grow, then the cephalium would be ruined. To add to all this, the cuttings weren't cheap. Anyway the fad ended eventually when people learned of the difficulties of cultivating the plant. We saw a plant in flower, at the Jardin Exotique in Monaco.

*Cleistocactus strausii* tends to grow as single columns and they will quickly grow to a few feet. When he was secretary of Hull Branch, he used to get many calls from people saying "I've got this cactus which was grown too high - what can I do with it?" *C. strausii* has flowers which are perpendicular to the stem and around 2 inches long. We also saw a large plant of *Cleistocactus brookeae* at a continental nursery with a couple of dozen stems.

For a time, the Echinocereus group was very popular - they flowered well at a relatively small size and didn't need much heat. We saw *Echinocereus viridiflorus* which has green or yellow or brown flowers. *E. pectinatus* has a nice magenta flower. *Echinocactus grusonii* was quite difficult and slow to grow from seed and then suddenly plants sized 9 to 12 inches across started to be imported into the country, these had been grown in fields in the USA. In Europe they have been available for a while, and these days they are grown in Spain and the Canaries. We saw a large plant at the Jardin Exotique with 10 large heads and it was around 4 feet across.

Hybrid echinopsis are popular and some of them have large flowers, and some are scented but the flowers only last a short time, sometimes 1-2 days. The plants can grow a lot of pups, and if you try and grow all of these, you will be swamped with the plants. We saw *Echinopsis tubiflora* which is more manageable, growing in a 3.5" pot. The white flowers sometimes have pink streaks on the petals, and the flower lasts 3-4 days. Nowadays you can get a selection of hybrids in many different colours - Tom showed a composite slide of 15 plants. A lot of the clones are produced in America and the choice ones can sell for high prices.

*Encephalocarpus strobiliformis* has now been renamed to *Pelecypora strobiliformis*. This was an imported plant which he managed to grow for around 15 years. Echinofossulocactus has been renamed to Stenocactus - and the featured plant was a variegate which was very unusual. They are quite interesting with their wavy ribs, but they all look the same. He had a friend who had a big collection of this genus - around half a greenhouse full of these, but the genus has been consolidated into just a handful of species. *Frailea asteroides* was thought to be an astrophytum at one point. It is relatively slow growing. The flowers don't open unless it is really hot and sunny but the plant can still set seed however.

1969 saw the publication of the Pocket Encyclopaedia of Cacti in Colour, which was one of the first books on Cacti to be printed in colour. Until then, most of the books were printed in black and white. The book was written by Edgar and Brian Lamb, and their choice to include a picture of *Gymnocalycium bruchii* with bluish flowers caused a sensation, and people everywhere started asking for the plant and attempting to grow it. However, the actual flowers are not blue at all - they are white or pink - and the printing error caused a lot of frustration and it was very misleading. At this time there was also a lot of interest in Lau numbered plants, and we saw an example of *Gymnocalycium mihanovichii* in a 2 3/4" pot. *Gymnocalycium multiflorum* was a plant he had grown for 6 years and it grew to 6" but it never showed signs of wanting to flower for him in the early days. When it eventually did flower for the first time, he was stunned to see that it had multi-petalled flowers. Interestingly, the plant you get these days under that name these days don't have as many petals. *Gymnocalycium schroedrianum* has white flowers, *Gymnocalycium denudatum* also has white flowers and so does *Gymnocalycium asterias* v *paucispinum*. This plant has strong spination. *Gymnocalycium quehlianum* did well that year and produced multiple flowers. The last picture of this

genus featured 100s of examples of the red bodied *Gymnocalcium mihanovichii*. These were first cultivated in Japan, other coloured forms have since been prepared and they are now sold in large quantities. They have no chlorophyll so they have to grown on a graft.

*Lobivia hertrichiana* flowered well for him, and he had taken a picture with 5 flowers but these were growing on 3 different stems from 2 plants and he had used "slight of hand" to make it look like one large plant with multiple flowers. *Chamaecereus silvestrii* is a plant which his mother used to grow very well, and she had about 40 of these plants arranged around the conservatory and she could get them all to be covered in flowers. These plants have been crossed with various species to produce various hybrids which usually go under the name Aporophyllum - although the exact parentage of the plants is a complex matter.

*Leuchtenbergia principis* was a plant he grew from seed. It needs bright sunlight to flower and it can produce flowers 3-4 times in the summer months. *Marniera macroptera* is considered an Epiphyllum and he grew it when he was living in Scotland, in a north facing window and it used to love the conditions. When it flowered, it produced enormous flowers and it used to fill the house with a very strong scent. These plants don't like a lot of sun.

Moving on to the genus Mammillaria, *Mammillaria bocasana* was a plant that everyone used to grow in the 1980s, often ending up with enormous plants in washing up bowls - he got his to around 6 inches in size. *Mammillaria plumosa* was another old favourite, this was actually the plant that David Neville had given out to branch members a few years ago. It was now in a 5 1/2 inch pan. *Mammillaria matudae* was a strong flowering plant. Where it grows in the wild, it grows on cliff sides and tends to hang down, so he used to grow it out of the bottom of a pot and it used to prefer this. *Mammillaria spinosissima* has nice pink flowers. *Mammillaria prolifera* v *haitiensis* produces seed pods which are edible and which taste like strawberries. *Mammillaria zeilmanniana* grows like mad and you can flower it in a just a year when grown from seed. We also saw *Mammillaria microthele* and *Mammillaria dioica*.

*Mammillaria theresae* was discovered around 1977 - it became very popular due to the large size of the flowers compared to the size of the stems. Although considered a miniature, tom showed a picture of a fairly large clump in full flower that he had found on the Internet, *Mammillaria goldii* was difficult to grow on its own roots, so was usually grown on a

graft. *Mammillaria saboe* was another attractive miniature. *Mammillaria carmenae* first appeared in 1956 - it then vanished for a few years and was rediscovered in habitat in 1977. Although it was thought to be a small plant, some clones can form large clumps. *Mammillaria laui* keeps quite small. *Mammillaria guelzowiana* has spectacular flowers but it is hard to keep alive, if you restrict water it dies and if you give it more water it still dies. *Mammillaria perbella* forms a ring of flowers around the whole body. *Dolicothele sphaerica* was originally placed in a different genus but is now considered as a group within Mammillaria. *Krainzia longiflora* is also now considered a mammillaria. *Mamillopsis senilis* has spectacular red flowers but it needs good light levels in the summer months in order to flower. Tom said it grew well on the west coast of Scotland - the northern part of the country has long days in the summer.

Melocactus was another genus that was very popular, due to the plants producing the unusual cephalium on top of the plant. Of course they need some heat in the winter months since they come from mild climates. *Melocactus peruvianus* was the featured plant and Tom mentioned that in some habitats the plants are so dense that you can't walk on the ground without walking on some of the plants. They are shallow rooted, and in habitat, a rainstorm can wash them out.

*Neochilenia jussieui* is now placed in the Eriosyce group. It has yellow flowers. *Neoporteria laniceps* - used to flower for him at Christmas time. *Notocactus mammulosus* has intense flowers, and *Notocactus ottonis* has typical yellow flowers with a little red in the centre. *Notocactus uebelmannianus* is one of the few non-yellow flowered Notocacti. *Notocactus rutilans* has glossy flowers with pink and yellow shades. *Notocactus werdermannianus* has pink flowers and of his plants put on a spectacular show, with a dozen of the magenta/yellow flowers open.

*Notocactus magnificus* produced a weird columnar stem and Tom decided to chop it off - after a couple of years, the plant was in a 7 inch pan and the other heads had grown well and you could not see any sign of the cut stem. *Wigginsia* is now considered part of Notocactus/Parodia. He had a plant with feeble flowers and he decided to take a top cut and re-rooted this. Following this, the plant of *Wigginsia erinacea* flowered quite well. Parodia of course now encompasses Notocactus and we saw *Parodia aureispina*.

Obregonia at one time was considered to be related to Ariocarpus. We saw *Obregonia denegrii* in flower - it is the only member of the genus.

Rebutias always been very popular - they grow easily from seed and can be flowering in just 1 or 2 years. We saw *Rebutia xanthacarpa* with pink flowers. *Rebutia spinosissima* was flowering from quite small heads. *Rebutia grandiflora* was in a 3 1/2" pot and flowering well. *Rebutia krainziana* was flowering despite being less than an inch across. Sulcorebutia consisted of just eight species and "new" discoveries soon expanded this to over 80. However DNA analysis has revealed this number is not correct and the genus is shrinking rapidly.

Sulcorebutia consisted of just 8 species and then spread to 80 species but now after DNA analysis, the number of species has reduced considerably. We saw *Sulcorebutia breviflora* and also saw *Sulcorebutia arenacea*. The genus *Aylosteria* is now part of *Rebutia* and we saw *Aylosteria albiflora* and *Aylosteria heliosa*. To grow these to any size was always difficult since they used to rot. We saw the hybrid of these two species - *Rebutia* cv "Sunrise" (white with pink stripes) which was another free plant handed out by the branch.

After the half time break, Tom resumed with some succulents. He started with an early slide showing a couple of lithops seedlings in black and white. Along with these "flowering stones" were some real stones. *Lithops aucampiae* can grow amongst the largest of bodies. *Lithops schwantesii* was in a 3 1/2" pot. Lithops have two flower colours - either yellow or white. *Lithops schwantesii* has yellow flowers and *Lithops salicola* has white flowers. *Lithops pseudotruncatella volkii* has nice grey bodies which contrast with the yellow flowers. We also saw a couple of mixed pans of lithops. Tom said that Lithops have long roots and he compared them to goldfish - if you keep them in a small pot they remain small but give them more room and they will grow larger. With the seed pods - it is quite tricky to get the seeds out unless you have the right knowledge. The seed pod is tough to prevent animals eating the seeds, and a drop of water is needed on the seed pod to make it automatically open. If you let it dry then it will close up again. You can spread the seeds on the ground and they will germinate within a couple of weeks, although they do germinate in 2 batches. The first batch germinates quickly and others will germinate at a later time. This is a built in protection mechanism to ensure that the seedlings aren't caught out by a dry spell after the initial rain. We saw a slide featuring Lithops in all sorts of different colours - someone had assembled a collection of around 60 or 70

different body colours. This initial arrangement of heads looks nice but it wouldn't remain like that for long since the heads will grow at different rates and will also split into multiple heads in due course.

Next we saw a plant of *Conophytum obcordellum*. Tom said the genus is difficult to identify unless you have a flower on the plant. Many have been given names independently and people didn't know the same thing had already been described previously. With *obcordellum* - it has some 30 synonyms and these dated from 1803 to 1960. Some of the *Conophytums* are night flowering and the flowers will only open when it gets dark. Tom mentioned that he waters them from August through to February. In his experience, if you water them in the summer months, they don't grow well at all. We saw *Conophytum steinkopf* and *Conophytum ornatum* and they looked quite similar. *Conophytum wettsteinii* almost looks like a green lithops. With *Conophytum bilobum*, when he tried to grow it in the summer, it only used to grow a few heads and these just died off so the plant wouldn't get any larger. Changing to the winter water watering has improved matters. Basically you leave them dry until late summer. *Berrisfordia khamiesbergensis* is now included in *Conophytum*. It was a plant he wanted to get for a long time and it didn't last very long for him.

We saw a collection of *Glottiphyllums*. They flower in the autumn and are good for flowers in that season. *Glottiphyllum oligocarpum* has a nice greyish body. *Muiria hortense* is a very tricky plant. It is egg shaped and a winter grower, and it need careful growing in the winter months. *Dactyloopsis digitata* was in a 2 1/2" pot. It grows in salt pans and some people initially suggested that salt should be added to the soil, but that probably wasn't wise advice. They do come from a winter growing area and need water for just a couple of months. He kept them alive for 4 years but the flowers never emerged properly. *Dinteranthus microspermum* was in a 3 1/2 pot. These have nicely patterned bodies but they need careful watering as well. Some of these plants can split their bodies if you over-water them. *Monilaria pisiformis* - little green shoots emerge from the brown stems. It does flower but he wasn't able to flower it properly. *Mitrophyllum* goes through a cycle of having two sizes of leaf in alternate growth periods. *Argyroderma pearsonii* had a nice flower - it's another plant which you have to be careful with, to avoid splitting the body. *Lapidaria margaretae* was in a 3 1/2 pot. It was just coming into flower now, so it's an autumn flowerer. *Frithia pulchra* is a nice plant to try. Tom mentioned that earwigs seem to like them and chew bits off. It is a summer grower. *Pleiospilus* produces

some nice colour when it flowers in the autumn. The flowers are 3 inches across. *Pleiospilus bolusii* was growing in a 3 1/2 pot and it has nice grey bodies. *Pleiospilus nelii* is perhaps the most impressive, the orange flowers have a white centre. Aloiopsis look quite small but they have large tap roots. *Aloiopsis schooneesii* is a winter grower and it needs some additional light in the winter for the plants to flower - you can either use artificial light or strong sunlight. In the summer they just need a small amount of water. *Aloiopsis rosulata* has a nice flower. *Deilanthe peersii* used to be an Aloiopsis but it has been moved. The flowers are slightly different from the other Aloiopsis - the flowers are not as evenly tight as the true Aloiopsis. *Vanheeredia roodiae* was the last of the mesembs.

Next was *Brachystelma nanum* which is a deciduous plant. He had it for a long time, around 20 years. They can be quite tricky and he used to keep it quite warm and also give it some water in the winter so that the roots were alive at the start of spring. It has nice little flowers. In South Africa, the natives eat the caudexes but that's rather expensive - and if they only taste like potatoes - what's the point?

Next was one of the indian Carallumas - *Caralluma sarkariae*. This genus was very popular at one time, and he did assemble a big collection of asclepiads. It is tricky to grow, some of the plants need a bit of heat and mealy bug were also partial to them. This particular plant was named after Dr Sarkari - an Indian botanist. Although it had a etiolated look, this is typical of many of the Indian plants. The flowers are 1cm across. *Boucerosia frerei* is a plant which took him a while to get. It grew well for a few years and then just keeled over. *Caralluma pauciflora* - this was Arabian and was a plant he grew under light in an area where there was a central heating boiler. These plants loved the conditions and Tom mentioned that he used to be given cuttings from people and found it very easy to root them. *Caralluma lutea* was a plant he had for a long time. In 1976 when he was living in Scotland, the plant rotted in the middle, so he tore it up into 4 pieces. That summer was particularly hot and one of the plants the plant flowered. Tom said the flowers have a really bad smell and the smell persisted for weeks after the flowers died. He was quite pleased when it didn't flower again.. *Caralluma macrocarpa* v *arabica* is a little bit smaller.

*Ceropegia stentiae* and *Ceropegia ampliata* - he saw the latter in Germany and it took him 15 years to get hold of this clone of the plant which has large flowers. *Echidnopsis cereformi* was a plant he actually got from Woolworths. They used to sell regular garden plants and on one occasion they had

a mix of unusual planta including this and Tom was able to buy it. *Duvalia reclinata* was growing in a little pan in a little pan - it doesn't need much soil. It was quite easy to grow. *Huernia boleana* was named after Justus van Heurne - but it was misspelt by the plant collector and the original spelling had to be retained. *Pectinaria arcuata* - little tiny plants - in habitat the plants like to grow under the soil and the flowers grow above the soil.

*Pseudolithos migiurtinus* is tricky at the best of times. a chap in Oxford can grow these well in propagators. *Pseudolithos cubiformis* - these were €89 at Specks. *Stapeliopsis dacaryi* was a little tiny plant in a 2 1/2" pot.

Hoyas have intense scented flowers. they also produce a lot of nectar and this can drip onto the floor. *Hoya longifolia* was a plant which he kept in his bathroom for many years and it really liked it there - west facing light and moisture from shows means it grew very well. Dishidia are unusual plants which are epiphytic. *Cynanchum gerrardii* was in flower but the picture was highly magnified.

*Sarcocaulon multifidum* also goes by the name bushman's candle. They occur in large quantities in South Africa. *Turbina holubii* also comes from South Africa - grows for him early in the year, into January. We saw *Cotyledon paniculata* and *Welwitschia bainesii* being grown in a collection. He has grown the latter from seed but they don't like being transplanted. We saw a picture of him posing next to *Welwitschia bainesii* in Namibia - the plant was probably 500 years old. It only has only 2 leaves which grow wider and wider, and the wind tends to cause the leaves to form strands.

TCPs refers to turnips, carrots and parsnips and it was the term used for caudiciform plants. We saw a varied assortment at Specks nursery in Germany. They were quite expensive and most had been collected in habitat. *Pachypodium bispinosum* was priced at 60-70€. *Pachypodium brevicaule* was a plant he bought as a habitat collected plant. He kept it in a propagator and watered it all year round because he was worried about the plant entering dormancy. We saw the same plant in flower, with large yellow flowers.

Euphorbias became more popular after the series of Euphorbia books detailing all the species were published. We saw Euphorbia suzannae and a female plant of *Euphorbia obesa* in a 4 1/4" pan. *Euphorbia groenewaldii* was a plant he had for a long time -

it had grown some long leaves and then started to produce a new set of shorter leaves. He cut the longer pieces off and it looks quite nice right now. *Euphorbia bupleurifolia* was quite popular at one time - but is quite rare now. *Euphorbia ambovombensis* was a plant from Madagascar - it cost him 12€ at Specks. We saw a picture of grafted Euphorbias at a nursery.

We saw *Haworthia comptoniana* and *Haworthia glauca* - the genus became popular after publication of John Plbeam's book on the genus. *Gasteria armstrongii* is quite a nice plant which is quite popular. *Nolina recurvata* was a plant which he grew from seed - it was now in a 12 inch pot - but it had some way to go compared to the massive plant at Monaco. *Eriospermum erinium* is a South african corm - it sends up a stalk with flowers which are quite complicated and then it grows a leaf afterwards.

Massonia is an interesting genus of South African bulbs and we saw *M. jasminiflora* which has white flowers and *M. pygmae* and *M. citrina* both with yellow flowers. The latter plant is a winter grower and would flower in a month or two. We also saw *Polyxena maughanii* which has a similar growth habit. Next we saw *Haemanthus paucifolius* - this is called the shaving brush plant due to the shape of it's flowers - it looks quite impressive if multiple blooms are open. *Haemanthus deformis* was growing in a 3 1/2" in pot. *Ammocharis coranica* is an Amaryllid which grows from parts of central Africa down to South Africa. It has pink or white scented flowers and is a summer grower. It needs a dry rest in the winter and can withstand a degree or two of frost.

Vinay Shah

## Next Month's Meeting

Our final meeting of the year will be held on **December 6<sup>th</sup>**. This will be our Annual General Meeting followed by the Christmas Social.

After receiving reports from some of the branch officers, electing next year's committee, and handing out the Table Show trophies, it will be time to dig into some food and refreshments! Drinks will be provided by the branch, but please do bring along some items of food for the buffet table.

In order to give the Committee members a chance to participate in the festivities, there will be no plant sales, sundries sales, table show or library at the December meeting.

## Forthcoming Events

Sat	12 <sup>th</sup>	Nov	Isle of Wight	Tales of a Christmas Tree Salesman (Richard Ridley)
Sat	19 <sup>th</sup>	Nov	Portsmouth	Cactus and succulent oddities, variegates, crests etc (Stuart Riley)
Sat	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Dec	Portsmouth	Annual General Meeting & Christmas Social
Tue	6 <sup>th</sup>	Dec	Southampton	Annual General Meeting, followed by Christmas Social
Sat	10 <sup>th</sup>	Dec	Isle of Wight	Annual General Meeting followed by American Supper

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

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