

Martin Doorbar

Bio Update – October 2014.

I have been collecting cacti since I was around 8 yrs old, I cannot remember exactly when this all started. I saw a picture of some plants in flower in a gardening book of my grandfather's and told my parents I liked these wired looking things. A couple of weekends later and I am visiting a collection of a work colleague of my father's who lived locally and as you would expect I left his greenhouse with a tray full of small plants. I am glad to report that I still have a few of them today, nearly 40 years later. A Trichocereus (in the old sense of the species) a Ferocactus cylindraceus (acanthodes) and 2 Neporterias (sorry Eriocyce)

I grow a bit of everything and at the end of 2013 finally got my [dream greenhouse](#), a 20ft by 50ft Dutch Light style following a move to what will be our main family home for the foreseeable future while the family grows up.

New Greenhouse external view



Internal view from door



My interests have not changed too much over the past 10 years and are still very much cantered around cacti with *Ferocactus*, *Stenocactus* a growing interest in the smaller Mexican species and a strong leaning towards anything South American. I mentioned a growing interest in columnar cacti back in the 2004 bio and that's still the case today with quite a few of them now getting to a reasonable height and the odd one starting to flower. The collection has examples of most genera but I did say back then that there was a notable absence of *Opuntia* and its allies. This has funnily changed quite recently as I have started to acquire a small, but rapidly expanding, selection of these spurred by an interest in growing in an unheated cold frame. Within the succulents I continue to have a wide range of interest and will try anything but I specifically like, caudiciform plants and the smaller *Agaves* along with a recent swing into *echiverias* and *aeoniums*.

Echiveria cante



My main obsession is Thelocactus for which I was awarded [National Plant Collection](#) Status in 2007 by [Plant Heritage](#), the collection now has over 600 plants with around 80% of them being material with known provenance. I try to ensure I grow 2 plants of each accession and plan to start to produce controlled pollination seed at some point for the less available species / forms but have not been able to do this as yet. In addition this summer I picked up around 300

I mention in the last bio 10 years ago that I found difficulty in growing Notocacti and Haworthias thinking that the issues with Notocacti were that I kept them too dry. I must say this past few years I have watered all the collection more than I used to which during hot summers like Aug / Sept 2013 and this past summer of 2014 has resulted in much better growth on all plants. I cannot specifically comment on the effects on Notocacti as I was out of the country for the best part of 4 years living in the USA from 2008 – mid 2011 so I will see how they perform over the next couple of years. As for haworthia anyone who knows me knows how I feel about those. I am usually one of the crowd around the coffee machine at Rob Wellens Tissue Culture nursery on the continental trips mumbling about wasted bench space and glyphosphate being a cure !

I have been a member of a society since I started growing the plants, initially with the NCSS, attending the Congleton Branch in Cheshire, and then the Stoke-on-Trent Branch for a good number of years, apart from a short break during my 20's. We moved south to live in Oxfordshire in 2004 and I joined the Oxford Branch at that time, joining the committee from 2005. I had a sabbatical during our residence in the USA (Feb 2008-June 2011) but on return re-joined the Oxford team despite moving from South Oxfordshire to northern Hampshire in 2012.

Our time in the USA did enable me to visit a few habitats of our beloved plants for the first time and I have to agree this is very addictive and I can't wait to be able to again. I was able to see Joshua Tree National Park, large parts of Arizona, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park in California alongside a number of the desert botanical gardens in the South West, most notable of which was Huntingdon Botanical Gardens and Tucson Desert Garden. I am hopeful that a work trip will take me to Northern Baja California in early 2015 to be able to continue with the incredible experiences of seeing these plants in habitat can bring.