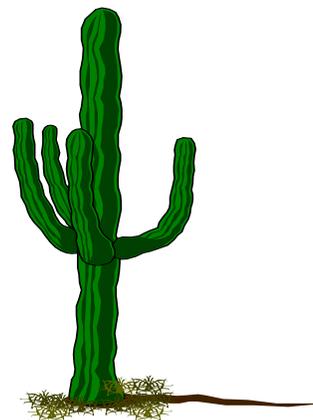


Oxotica

The Newsletter of the Oxford Branch of the British Cactus and Succulent Society

June 1998

Volume 3, Number 1



SPEAKERS, July-December 1998

23 July

Derek Tribble

Anacampseros and Avonia

For our July meeting we welcome Derek Tribble, who is well known for his field trips to South Africa. He will be speaking on two of his favourite genera, on which he is an authority. Who knows, we may also find some fun in this lecture - I seem to remember the joviality which ensued when your secretary took a certain plant, that she often exhibits, to the Judges Course last year. He is co-author of the book on *Adromischus* which has been recently published.

enables the Committee to continue issuing Oxotica.

24 September

Rick Marshall

Mesembryanthemaceae

If you are a member of the Mesemb Study group, you will know this name, as Rick is a regular contributor. His plants are a joy to behold, and he regularly does a Thematic Display of Conophytums at the Mesemb Shows that is the envy of all specialist collectors. We are in for an enjoyable evening.

27 August

Brian Bates

Personalities' Collections

Brian is certainly the personality of the Judges Course and AGMs, and it is therefore fitting that he should take you around the collections of some of the very well known European collectors. Brian is not only a judge, but also holds the Society's library and is on the Finance and general purposes Committee.

22 October

David Neville

Plants for a small greenhouse

The October meeting sees David Neville making one of his welcome visits to the Branch. Dave will be well known to you as Editor of the Society Journal since the beginning of the year. Previously he was the Vice Chair of the Society, before which he was on the Shows Committee and was Editor of *The Cactus File*. The talk will appeal to beginners and connoisseurs alike.

30 August - **BRANCH SHOW** at the Langdale Hall, Witney.

Even if you do not feel that you can show, please come and see us at this annual event. It is the branch's main fund-raiser for the year, and it is success with this event that

26 November

Bob Potter

Around the world in 50 minutes

Bob is always a very popular speaker, as he brings with him goodies for sale. On this occasion he will give a short lecture,

preceding the Branch's Annual General Meeting.

Please do come along. Let the Committee know what you would like to see and do in 1999. We have been known to run out of ideas, so please do let us know your feelings, on this publication, the meetings and their content, and anything else that you feel is important. If it's important to you, **we want to know!** And there will be plants for sale!!!!

Cathy Darbon

professional nurserymen want a fair crack of the whip, and (2) the branch will extort 20% of your proceeds towards the cost of the Show.

If you are not showing, but can provide plants for sale, please bring them along. Also, most plants suitable for children's bedroom windowsills are very welcome at a public event like this. Finally, plants can be sold at Branch meetings on the same terms and conditions as above.

Show Secretary

Plants for Sale

This Newsletter may remind some of us that our show is only a couple of months away. So, respectfully consulting our new Eighth Edition of the Guide to Shows, fair fruit of years of wrangling, we shall be checking out our best plants and getting them into top condition.

Having attended to the most important things in life, let us proceed to the lesser. Surplus seedlings and cuttings can be sold at the show, and so can surplus larger plants to make room for all the ones you are going to buy from Brookside and Plantlife. This is not a consideration to leave to the night before the Show. Plants for sale need to be clean and well-potted, with decent labels. As we used to chant when we were little:

"No garden soil
No mildew spots
No plastic spoons
No yoghurt pots"

The most difficult bit is the pricing. You need to supply a second label in each pot clearly labelled with the price required and your initials, monogram, or nomen conservandum. The price should not be pitched too low, given that (1) the

Poem



Said a cactus enthusiast "Oh dear",
"My house I must christen 'Parodia'".
Said his neighbour, one Hans
(who was troubled by ants)
"I must call my abode 'Myrmecodia'"

A parfumiere called Amelia
Invented a scent called 'Stapelia'
But her neighbour, a Dane,
Wouldn't see her again
So she shared the same fate as Ophelia

A cactus fanatic called Sawyer
Kept the reference collection of cholla
But he lost half his skin
When dermatitis set in
And now he specialises in Hoya

A delicate lady called Mabel
 Wrote as finely as she was able
 But try as she might
 She never could write
 Echinofossulocactus zacatecasensis on a
 label

An incompetent grower called Tucker
 Could never get growth from his yucca
 He pruned off its shoots
 And cut off its roots -
 "With luck my yucca will sucker"

There was a young fellow named Harvey
 Who fell on a vicious agave
 In the place where he fell
 There's a terrible smell
 Of flies, and their eggs, and their larvae

There was a young man of Naupactus
 Who fell in love with a cactus
 The result of his folly
 Was Gordon Rowley
 A fact that could hardly attract us

While visiting mother, young Thelma
 Said "What is that horrible smell, Ma?"
 But she said "Don't fret,
 You've smelt nothing yet,
 There are buds on my new Brachystelma"

John Watmough

As promised, here are the answers to the
 crossword in the last issue:

Across

1 LAMPRANTHUS
 7 CAN
 9 UMBILICUS
 10 VIRGO
 11 BOLSTER
 12 SINALOA
 13 RIBES
 15 GIBBAEUMS

17 IDIOBLAST
 19 TRAIN
 20 ATHEIST
 22 NAMIBIA
 24 TEMPT
 25 RECTITUDE
 27 SEA
 28 NOPALXOCHIA

Down

1 LAU
 2 MABEL
 3 RELATES
 4 NICARAGUA
 5 HOSES
 6 SAVANNA
 7 CARALLUMA
 8 NEODAWSONIA
 11 BORZICACTUS
 14 BRIGHAMIA
 16 BOTANICAL
 18 BRITTON
 19 TAMPICO
 21 THRIP
 23 BRUSH
 26 EVA

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The Branch meets at 7.30 p.m. on the 4th Thursday of each month (except December) at the John Bunyon Baptist Chapel, Cromwell Road, Cowley, Oxford.

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The CSSA Convention 1997



Part 1 - Visit to Punta Banda

The 27th biennial CSSA convention was held in San Diego in July last year, hosted by the local society of that name. It was held in the Town and Country Hotel, a huge 1000-room place with accommodation ranging from tower blocks to single-storey chalets, four swimming pools, five restaurants and, of course, conference rooms - a self-contained holiday resort, right in the middle of town. Fairly luxurious then, and it was just as well we had convention rates at less than half normal price! As usual, the talks were of excellent standard, the highlights for me being those by Ted Anderson on the cacti of the Galapagos Islands, and Sheila Collette's two talks

on her travels and discoveries in the Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

Stephen McCabe gave a good overview of the Dudleyas which are endemic to this part of America, and we had an opportunity to see some of them in habitat on a day trip to Punta Banda, just south of Ensenada, Mexico. To say that this was a trip to Baja California, though strictly true, is pushing it a bit for such a short foray into this area (read Dan Mahr's ongoing account of the post-convention trip in the CSSA journal to get a real flavour). Nevertheless, for me it was magic. Views of the high fence separating the USA and Mexico reminded me of seeing the Mid-German Border (as they called it) before re-unification; I am not saying that this one is mined, but its purpose is similar.

Looking out from the coach for juicy plants I soon noticed miles of sprawling

Bergerocactus emoryi – sort of equivalent to our rampant blackberry bushes on waste ground. This one is certainly not endangered by collectors – it is a ‘bear’ of a plant and nobody grows it. People more experienced than I started spotting Dudleyas – always on cliff edges overlooking the sea. The farinaceous ones were particularly easy to spot. We stopped at a beach and walked to the bluff at the far end (see picture), which was well-endowed with both green and silvery blue varieties, some of them inhabiting cracks in near-vertical rock.

At Punta Banda we had to walk through a long street of vendors’ stalls forming a make-shift village, to reach either the famous Bufadora sea blow-hole or the main object of our visit – a low hill side covered with an amazing variety of plants. There were Agave shawii, Mammillaria (Cochemia) maritima, Ferocactus viridescens (‘Coastal Barrel Cactus’), the yellow-flowered Echinocereus maritimus (only one flower to be seen!), Mammillaria dioica, Euphorbia misera, more Bergerocactus, Dudleya brittonii and farinosa, and others I could not identify. It was like a huge municipal rockery. Cameras clicked. After far too little time there, we were badgered to go back to the coach. A few of our people had found time to visit a more distant slope to inspect big clumps of the sprawling Stenocereus (Machaerocereus) gummosus (relative of the famous Creeping Devil further south), and they were yelled at to return.

Some people were disappointed that this was not a real field trip, and I see their point, but I was happy with it on the whole.

Part 2 – The National Show

Preamble

The CSSA Annual National Show was held last year at the Huntington Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Road (!), San Marino, California, on 5 and 6 July. We visited it on the Sunday on a day trip out from the biennial CSSA Convention, which was held for the rest of that week in San Diego. It was my second ever visit to these gardens – the first visit being 4 days earlier! Jean and I went there to see the famous 12-acre desert garden and to see the fabulous collection of manuscripts and paintings in the library. By chance we hit the one free day of the month – the first Thursday (they started charging for admission this year). The Show was being set up ready for judging the next day, when the gardens were shut for the 4 July American National Holiday. On the way from the car park was an avenue of tables full of cacti and succulents for sale to the public. One of them was manned by a fellow wearing an Oxford Branch tee-shirt! Turned out to be our own Alan Butler, of Brookside Nurseries, who was helping a friend out; next day he would be helping to judge the show, he said.

On the Day

The first thing that surprised me about the show was that it was smaller than the British one. Surprising, perhaps, because every trade show, conference, or convention that I have been to in the States has been BIG. One factor may be the huge distances that hobbyists from most parts of the USA would have to travel. I spoke to Duke Benadom, the show secretary, and he said that several big exhibitors were absent this year, as it coincided with the Convention. He did not regard the timing as wrong, however – they had planned for delegates like us to visit. The choice of Huntington as venue ensured that a lot of the general public visited the show as well.

The second thing that struck me was that it was all beautifully staged - quite artistically, in fact. They pay much more attention than we do to the appearance of both the overall layout and the individual exhibits (which get a higher proportion of their marks that way, compared to our shows). The table sizes and even shapes were varied. There was a splendid centre display of the award-winning plants with their trophies. Lay visitors would have been favourably impressed, I should think.

Exhibitors have to fill a long card in for each exhibit, and they then fold it as instructed. The top part, which the judges see, shows the class category and the name of the plant, and check boxes which have to show whether the plant is grafted and whether it was grown from seed by the exhibitor. The possible awards are pre-printed on each card, to be ringed by the judges as they go. Below the fold is the exhibitor's name, then a perforation. After judging, the whole of this half is removed for the records. The lower half of the card below the perforation stays with the exhibit, and is turned over so as to be seen by visitors; it has a repeat of all of the above information. As a show visitor I welcomed their attempt to get all the plant names displayed so clearly.

Outside the main building where the show was held, the main impressions of the rest of the day for me were the huge bed of Creeping Devil - *Stenocereus* (*Machaerocereus*) *eruca* - in the Desert Garden, the large collection of specimen cacti and other succulents under glass in the Conservatory (open to the public for part of each day), and the ISI plant propagation areas. The latter are not open to the general public, but John Trager, the curator of the Desert Garden, took some of us round. It was interesting to see the young plants which will be offered to us in the coming years. Part under glass, part

under lathes and the rest in large open frames, the whole enterprise came over as a labour of love, rather than as a commercial undertaking. I understand that it relies a lot on volunteer helpers.

Overall I preferred the Tucson Convention two years before, but the week was still well worth the trip over the pond.

David Greenaway

From the Web...

(cacti_etc newsgroup, received 14 May 1998)

The *Adenium socotranum* at Arid Lands Central has just opened its first flower in over 14 years. The plant was collected on Socotra in the late 60's by John Lavranos. Frank Horwood brought the plant with him from England when he emigrated in the 70's. It flowered several times for Frank but he was unable to self pollinate it. The plant came to Arid Lands when Frank died in 1987. The plant is almost nine feet tall and very handsome!

This is the rarest species of the genus, endemic to the island of Socotra. We have one other clone (too small to flower) and Huntington Botanical Garden has another clone (also too small to flower). This species has never produced seed in cultivation and will remain very rare unless self pollination is successful this time. Much more is known about the pollination of *Adenium* since Frank Horwood last tried to self this plant so maybe it will succeed this time (alas, it didn't - Ed).

Chuck Hanson
Arid Lands Greenhouses