

## **The Cathy Darbon Memorial Show 2014**

*(A Judges perspective)*

Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2014 was probably the last time that Oxford Show would be held at the Langdale Hall, Witney and it was fitting that the Show was dedicated to the memory of Cathy Darbon who did so much for the B.C.S.S. over many years.

I had the pleasure of judging the Cacti and Succulents with David Hutchinson, while Tony Morris attended to the Mammillarias.

David and myself have judged together on half a dozen or so occasions and we have very similar opinions when it comes to analysing classes. With over six hundred entries, certainly more than last year, Oxford remains the premier provincial show in the U K.

For the first time, we were judging in accordance with the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Guide to Shows; in this edition greater emphasis has been placed on presentation and less on maturity, whereas rarity carries little or no weight.

Class 2 was for one plant in the Aloe Group and the winner was a fine example of *Aloe parvula*, which had no dieback on the leaf tips - a problem with so many aloes.

Class 4 enabled exhibitors to display their *Echeverias* and the winner stood out - a clean example of *Echeveria longissima* filling a 7inch pot.

Class 9 (One Mesemb.) was won by a large and immaculate *Glottiphyllum oligacarpum*.

Class 13 (*Ariocarpus* Group) was extremely competitive but the winner was a fine, healthy two - headed *Ariocarpus retusus* - the same plant that won the National Show in 2012. This plant was awarded Best Cactus in Show on Sunday.

Class 14 - Two very large and clean examples of *Astrophytum ornatum* took first and second prize. Five and six inch pots of *Astrophytum asterias* and its many hybrids just do not compete against entries that are many times older.

Class 17 (*Echinocactus* Group) contained four examples of *E. horizontalonius*, which took the first three prizes, two were superbly presented.

Class 19 (*Echinopsis* Group) was won in clear- cut fashion by the largest *Lobivia thionanum* either of us had seen.

Class 23 was won by the best *Uebelmannia* I have seen (the same plant was pictured on page 8 of the show schedule and the National Show Schedule 2008) a real tribute to the grower.

Class 31 (*Ceropegia* or *Stapelia* Group - 14cm pot) had only three entries, but an outstanding example of the difficult Namibian *Stapeliopsis uniflora* (syn *neronis*) won the day and was eventually given the award of Best Succulent in the Show.

Class 35 (Two *Haworthia*'s - 16cm) was well supported and a fine example of *H. sordida* coupled with the attractive form of *H. lockwoodii* took first prize.

Class 42 (Two pot - restricted *Astrophytums*) - here we were looking for different species suitable for inclusion in 14cm pots. *A. myrostigma* and *A. ornatum* are not really suitable for small pots, whereas *A. asterias*, *capricorne* and *digitostigma* are more appropriate. A couple of entrants had paired together plants of the same species and variety, not always advisable.

Class 47 (pot- restricted *Eriosyce*) this was won by a fine example of *Rhodentiophylla* certainly not the easiest to grow.

Class 51 (pot restricted *Rebutia* Group) this was lacking competitive plants and was won by an attractive form of *Sulco. rauschii*, which will grow a lot bigger. The best

plant for a small pot would have been *Rebutia einsteinii* ssp *gonjani*, but is rarely seen on the show table nowadays.

The judging took two hours and David and I enjoyed the challenge, although I noticed that he slumped into a chair once it was all over.

John Betteley (Aug. 2014)