

THE NATIONAL CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY

Manchester Branch - News Bulletin  
September Issue

Editors:-

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Dear Members,

We hope Everyone has had a good growing season and all plants have made their owners proud of them. While the weather is still reasonably warm don't forget to overhaul and check the heating in your greenhouse. As you are about this task get ready your favourite method of insulation and let us know how you go about it. Now is the time to reduce the watering of your plants. Mr. Ivan Aphid tells us in his article in this issue of the bulletin.

Since the last Bulletin was issued we have had a very sad loss in the Manchester Branch and we would like to send our deepest sympathy to Mrs. K. Robinson. Our librarian Mrs. Hayes and her husband were involved in a road accident whilst travelling to Torquay and we hope that they both are well on the way to recovery, and that they will soon be able to attend the meetings.

Before this December, could you please write and let us know your method of heating for your greenhouse - and the pros. and cons. of it. Which are your favourite species of cactus and succulents and why etc.etc. If nothing on cactus just let us know if you like the News Bulletin - and if you don't, why you don't. In other words - an article from you please!.

Colin and Carole Harper

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OBITUARY

Mr. Keith Robinson

We in the Manchester Branch all know Keith Robinson. From the newest member to the older ones who had pioneered the Branch with him. To a great extent he was the branch, being a member almost since its formation. He was also well known and respected in realms far beyond the limits of Manchester. Apart from his seemingly unending efforts as Branch Treasurer for many years he was an outstanding influence on the National Executive being one of its Vice-Presidents. He had been honoured with the Award of Merit in recognition of his devotion to the service of his fellow members both locally and nationally. We all took his organising ability for granted; he had the knack of knowing and obtaining the right speakers, he was fundamentally responsible for many social events and we all remember with gratitude those very happy trips which he made himself responsible for. He was exceptionally fond of show work being in great demand as a judge, and serving as Chairman of the National Executive Show Sub Committee. Also for many years an official of the Didsbury and South Manchester Agricultural Society.

He wouldn't have done all these things unless he really loved doing them. We shall miss him, every single one of us.

Our sincerest condolences go out to Mrs. Robinson.

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SPEAKING FROM THE CHAIR - "Don't miss it this year"

"It's only the Annual General Meeting - I think we'll give it a miss this year". I wonder in how many of our members' homes these words, (or very similar ones), will be echoed when you look in your Syllabus for details of our December meeting? The Committee appreciates that A.G.M.'s are not the most interesting of meetings, but they are nevertheless necessary both to satisfy the Society's constitution, and also to ensure the smooth working of the branch for a further twelve months. This is the day in the year when the committee and officers give account of their stewardship during the past year and report on the success, or otherwise, of their efforts on your behalf. We occasionally 'come under fire' on this day, but we do not mind that, we are not a 'closed shop', neither are we dogmatic. So

this year, do please come along to the Annual General Meeting. A big and representative meeting is what is needed, for it's from well attended meetings that good ideas accrue.

C. Partington  
(Hon. Chairman)

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THIS MONTH IN THE SUCCULENT WORLD - Sept/Oct.  
By Ivan Aphid.

The month of August, having been unusually dry and sunny this year, has suited succulent plants admirably allowing new growth to ripen and encouraging many plants to indulge in a second burst of flowering. Although some plants are still making new growth the nights are getting noticeably longer and cooler and it is advisable, therefore, to reduce watering to once a fortnight or so, and only then if the weather is warm and sunny, as excessive watering at this time will encourage soft, bloated growth which renders the plant prone to rot in the cold months to come. Ample fresh air should still be given during the daytime, but do close the vents before sundown to conserve heat as the first frosts of winter are just around the corner.

Lithops, conophytums, crassulas and Kleinias, by the way, should be growing vigorously now, and Stapelias, Carallumas and Duvalias, are in flower and can still take fair amounts of water in spite of the foregoing remarks as they hail from South Africa and refuse to conform entirely to the growing season of the Northern hemisphere.

The wise cactophile should not allow this season of 'running down of growth' in the greenhouse to infect his own activities - rather should it inject in him a new lease of life for, as the necessity to water disappears, so other jobs take on a new urgency; the overhaul and preparation for winter service of the greenhouse heating system, be it paraffin, solid fuel or electricity, is now a priority job - and what about clearing away that pile of leaves, pads and dismembered plant bodies that have accumulated under the staging? This job is a must if greenhouse pests are to be eliminated.

Finally any plants that have been bedded out in the garden or stood on terraces should be returned to the greenhouse without delay.

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A CEREUS PHANTASIA

by J. Morris

Down in the greenhouse, something stirred.  
It wasn't a mouse, it wasn't a bird.  
Now you won't believe this, but I'll have you know  
T'was two mealy bugs, named Samuel and Joe.  
Poor Samuel and Joe were in a queer plight  
They'd cried and sobbed for many a night.  
Mealy bugs sobbing? A peculiar sight.  
But just to repeat they were in a queer plight.  
Poor old Joe, poor old Sam,  
Breaking their hearts, 'cos they'd lost their 'MAMM'

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THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO COMPOSTS - PART I

by Hugh Muss

There are many things about cactus and succulent culture to mystify the beginner and quite often each book that he picks up for advice tells a different story. This is not to say that any of the books are necessarily wrong because what suits one set of conditions does not suit another. In writing their books, the experts do not always make it clear that their advice is only correct under certain specific conditions. Hence the reader is told in one book not to water his cacti in winter, and in another to water them once a week; but it is not made clear that the first condition applies to plants in pots sunk to the rim in peat (or some other moisture retaining medium) in a greenhouse, whilst the second condition

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of extra water may be for plants growing in small pots in a heated living room, where instead of a cool, damp atmosphere there is a dry, warm one.

So it is with composts - each expert having his own mixture and each thinking that his is the best. This situation is not peculiar to succulent growers but applies throughout all types of gardening. It was this situation that, in 1933 led the John Innes Horticultural Institute to investigate the ingredients and proportions of composts from a scientific point of view and, eventually, to evolve a single compost that serves for all plants. In this compost they claimed to grow cacti and succulents along with many other types of plants, and in this claim I have found them to be quite correct. In the case of cacti and succulents, however there are one or two other considerations, such as the length of time between re-potting, and the very dry 'resting period' which suggests certain slight modifications to produce an even better compost for use in this particular case.

I shall deal with these slight modifications in a later article, (I hope) and explain them. However this one compost will suit most cacti and succulents and needs only slight changes for even the most awkward plants. In my humble opinion the list of 25 different composts given by C. Marsden in 'Grow Cacti' is quite unnecessary and I would suggest that a better title would be 'Compost Collecting for Beginners'.

Even Borg mentions some 17 composts differing slightly from each other but an analysis of these show that most of them are very similar to the modified compost I mentioned before, the ingredients of which you are no doubt waiting for with baited breath!

In order to understand why apparently different composts reduce to practically the same formula, we need to learn a little about plant foods and compost materials, and this I hope to deal with in the next issue of the Bulletin.

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We would like to thank all contributors to this issue of the Bulletin. We hope that everybody has found it as interesting as we have found it.

Colin and Carole Harper

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Walt Disney's "THE LIVING DESERT"

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AT OUR NEXT MEETING

Saturday November 14 th.

At the Milton Hall, Deansgate.

7.30 p.m.

DON'T MISS IT.

BRING A FRIEND WITH YOU.

. but don't be late !