



MANCHESTER  
BRANCH

MANCUNIAN  
CACTIVITIES

THE NATIONAL  
CACTUS  
AND  
SUCCULENT  
SOCIETY

**THE NATIONAL CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY**  
**MANCHESTER BRANCH**

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EDITOR Mr. L. Nyman,  
25, Broom Lane,  
Salford. 7. LANCS

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EDITORIAL

Show time is very nearly with us again, and although our worthy chairman has something to say on the subject elsewhere in this issue I will use my prerogative as editor to say my piece concerning this important event. Important, because once each year we have the opportunity of showing off our treasures, but unfortunately too few of us are willing to do this, I am sure this is modesty on the part of many, because although some of your collections may be modest, here and there are always a few plants of which we are particularly proud and are worthy of showing.

Must we only be willing to show plants that have a good chance of winning? many plants would be worthy of admiration by the public who come to view, even if the worthy judge didn't give it a winners certificate. We need entries in bulk, because we need to put on a good show for the public. It's very simple, we need their money (desperately) and we need to interest people in our hobby so that perhaps some of them will join us. We need also to fire others with enthusiasm, the greater our numbers, the more benefits we will receive in the long run.

We had entries I believe from fourteen members only last year, out of a membership of well in excess of one hundred, well I ask you is this good enough? What are you other eighty six or more members doing? You come (some of you) to our meetings, you read our 'Cactivities' but you won't participate in our activities.

This year special classes have been devised for the beginners and also for those with modest collections, and there is no excuse for not helping the branch by not participating. We might even be able to help with transport those of you who have genuine difficulty in getting plants down to the show. Now how about it?

We also need everybody to help by encouraging friends to come along and see our show, but above all we need you to come yourselves. We need this show to be a success, or it may well be that there won't be one next year.

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FORTHCOMING PROGRAMME

May 10th Mr. C. Pitcher, Leeds. "Cultivation of Rare Succulents"  
June 10th Mr. G.M. Taylor, St.Annes-on-Sea "Epiphytes and Hydroponics"  
June 17th Branch Show  
July 18th Mr. C. Williams, Preston. "Treatment of Imported Plants"

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## SPRING FEVER

by C. Williams.

The Spring in sprung,  
The grass is riz,  
I wonders .....

Indeed I wonder. How are my plants in the greenhouse? Have they come through the winter successfully? How many losses have there been? How do I get them growing again? How ... ? We can go on all day asking questions, the only real answer is to go into the greenhouse and have a look round.

The first thing we notice is the drab look of the plants. Being without water for 4 - 5 months has made the plants shrivel somewhat and lose the sheen on the body of the plants. Leafy plants have lost a number of leaves, offsets have fallen from some plants; in general things look rather tatty. Still, a little time spent in the greenhouse and everything will look better.

How do we effect this transformation? We commence by tidying up. Pick off all dead leaves from the plants, not forgetting those that have fallen onto the staging or floor. This should not be too difficult since they ought to have been removed as they fell during the winter. As this job is done, make a note of any infestation of mealy bug, local outbreaks can be dealt with immediately, more serious trouble can be left until the tidying-up is done. A quick look over the cacti will soon tell you which plants are starting to grow, the growing point will show up cleaner and brighter than the rest of the plant. This past winter has been one of the worst I have known for mildew. This I attribute to the very damp warm conditions we have experienced. If there has been a serious outbreak of mildew or black fungus steps must be taken to eradicate it; one of the fungicides, copper spray, or dusting with flowers of sulphur will help matters enormously.

The greenhouse being tidy, and all the sickly plants having been gathered together in one place for special attention we consider watering the plants. This first watering of the season is most important. One has to ensure that the plants are not left in a soggy mess otherwise rot will quickly set in. My technique is to use very hot water to which has been added a little Stergene or Clensel. (The addition of the wetting agent is to wash the plant free of any dust which has accumulated during the dry period and to give even penetration of the soil by the water.) A fine spray

is used and the backs, as well as the fronts of the plants are thoroughly washed. If there are many pests around, Nicosoap can be used instead of the Stergene, but I prefer to take two bites at the cherry, and treat the pests separately. Plenty of ventilation should be given after the spraying so that the plant bodies will dry quickly and there is no fear of rot from stagnant moisture. Care should be taken with some of the succulents which have a waxy surface. The wetting agents will remove the wax and in some cases spoil the plant. In these cases only the soil should be watered.

We are now left with the plants which require individual attention. Pests are dealt with in the usual way, either by hand picking or by use of an effective insecticide. Some plants just look sickly. These should be taken out of their pots and the plant and roots thoroughly examined. Any remedial action necessary should be taken and the plant then repotted. A close watch should be kept on these plants until you are sure that all is well (either the plant has died or is growing!) A little individual care and attention at this stage is amply repaid during the rest of the growing season.

Some people like to repot their plants in the Spring before any watering is carried out. This of course is a personal preference. I prefer to start my plants into growth and then repot any which I consider need new compost or a bigger pot. Once the plants are growing cuttings can be taken, any Kalanchoes, Fcheverias etc. which have become leggy should be cut down and the top re-rooted. Don't throw away the old stem and roots, grown on these will provide more cuttings for exchange or sale purposes.

In the early spring watering should be done with care. Too much water will cause the roots to start rotting, too little water and the plants will not start to grow. The ideal is a uniformly moist compost. Only when the weather has really warmed up and the plants are in full growth should heavy watering be carried out.

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#### STICK A PIN.

by I.M. Boggide

Assailed by doubts, (and who isn't) as to my methods, I did the obvious thing by referring to the Authorities. What did I find?



On the subject of spraying one's plants, I find the following comments:

<u>E Lamb</u>	frequent sprays overhead.
<u>Vera Higgins</u>	spray the plants in warm weather.
<u>R. Ginns</u>	spray in the evening.
<u>J. Borg</u>	spray preferably in the morning.
<u>H. Jacobson</u>	"there should be no spraying or fumigating in Succulent Houses."

On looking up watering, most of them suggest that the water should be the same temperature as the house in which the plants are growing. According to Gordon Rowley, in his book "Flowering Succulents" "another myth has been exploded" by carefully controlled experiments it is found unnecessary for water to be allowed to warm up to the temperature of the glass-house.

Aint it lovely! If anyone has other ideas on the above, please keep it to themselves. I shall only get more muddled.

It was with relief that I find that all the above agree on one subject, i.e. ample ventilation throughout the year except in inclement weather.

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#### EXHIBITING YOUR PLANTS.

by C. Williams.

During the year, one is often exhorted to enter the various classes at Cactus Shows in one's immediate area. To the beginner, this is a frightening thought. He immediately thinks back to the show held the previous year, and sees in his mind's eye the large plant which won the specimen cactus in the open class, and decides that he cannot possibly enter the show as a competitor. This brings me to the first, and possibly the most important point when considering whether or not to exhibit.

Read the Schedule carefully, and then re-read it to make sure you understand everything in the schedule. I don't think there is a show where someone has not put in an entry which has been not-according-to-schedule (N.A.S. on the exhibitors card). Sometimes a vigilant show manager has

prevented the exhibitor putting a Euphorbia in a cactus class, but it is really up to the exhibitor to make sure he is entering each class correctly. If in doubt, ask one of the more experienced members, he will give you all the advice you require. Having read the Schedule you will find that in almost every case, there is at least one class which is tailor-made for you. The schedule compilers go to great lengths in order to make sure that everyone is catered for so it is really up to the individual to bring along his plants.

One is now in the position of having decided which class or classes to enter. Have a look at your plants; are they in a fit condition to be put on the show bench? How can you improve them? Do they in fact stand any chance of winning? These are the questions one must ask oneself when considering the entry.

Taking the questions in order. Any plant which shows any sign of disease should be rejected. The plant to look for is an unmarked plant, showing plenty of new healthy growth and free from pests and disease. Remember, the first impression that the judge has of the plant is important. If he sees a well grown, clean plant he will automatically put it amongst the possibilities for a prize; conversely, a dirty, badly marked, pest ridden plant will be rejected out of hand. Therefore, a careful check of each plant must be made and all pests got rid of, any compost or peat which is stuck in the spaces should be removed and the plant generally tidied up. Plant pots should be scrubbed clean. This is best done by using hot water to which has been added some Domestos or other bleach. I have tried using a small scrubbing brush and most recently one of the nylon pot scourers; the latter has proved to be the most effective since it also secures the top surface of the pot, removing the majority of the white salts which collect on the outside of the pots. (The above remarks apply of course to clay pots; plastic pots only need wiping with a damp cloth). To finish off the preparation of the plant, a top dressing of small pebbles should be given to the compost. Labels should be cleaned and the plant name made legible. Attention to detail is all important.

We now have a plant which is fit to be put on the show bench. Do we just wander up to the table and put it in the first place available? The answer is NO. In some shows places are allocated on the bench and the exhibitor must determine his allotted number from the Show Secretary. In other shows, the secretary will give each exhibitor a series of cards which must be placed alongside his entries. In the former case, the position on the bench is obviously fixed; in the latter case the exhibitor is free to choose his position, remembering that other exhibitors also require some room on the bench. The choice of position can be important. If you are

exhibiting a plant in a 4 in. pot, try not to put it alongside a plant in a 12 in. pot. A place further along the bench will be better. In a class for three or six plants, don't just place the pots in a straight line, try to display them to their best advantage. With six plants, if there is a tall plant amongst them, place it at the rear, then place the next two tallest plants immediately in front of the tall plants, finally placing the remaining three plants right at the front. One then has an arrangement of plants (1, 2, 3) which is pleasing to look at and also shows off all the plants to their best advantage. Other arrangements are possible and may be better, for example (1, 2, 2, 1); everything depends on the plants which have been chosen in the first place.

You will notice that we keep coming back to the statement that the choice of plant is important. Besides the obvious points which have already been made, are the less important points such as spine colour. A white spined plant always attracts attention, so also do richly coloured spines (the bright yellow of *Floresia johnsonii*, the rich red of *Mammillaria rhodantha ruberrima*, especially when seen against the light). Rarity only carried with it 20% of the possible total points so too much attention to rarity is wrong. A well grown fairly common plant will often score more points than a rare plant, since the rare plant is usually very badly marked. Size of plant is another minor consideration. It should be remembered that plants do not grow the same uniform size. For example *Echinocactus grusonii* grows to about 2 ft diameter whereas a large clump of *Copiapoa equimbana* may be only 1 ft in diameter. Therefore, don't worry if you know that Joe Elloggs has an *Echinocactus* in a 15 in. pot and you only have a *Melocactus* in a 9 in. pot. When choosing plants for the multi-numbered classes (e.g. 6 plants in 3 in. pots) try to choose plants which are all the same size but if this is not possible consider carefully the possible arrangements which can be made with the plants available.

I have deliberately avoided discussing what the judge looks for since the N.C.S.S. shows Sub-Committee have published a booklet dealing with that side of a show; anyone who is interested in judging should contact the Branch Secretary who will give them all the necessary information on how to obtain the booklet. I have tried to bring to the inexperienced showman's attention some of the points to look for when deciding what to put on the showbench. Obviously there are many other "tricks-of-the-trade" which space will not allow me to go into. Instead, why not have a go yourself? It is hard work preparing for the show, and afterwards you may say "never again", but I will guarantee that once the show-bug has bitten, you will be there again next year, hoping to show the other competitors that you are a force to be reckoned with.

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"IT SEEMS TO ME....."

(Random Jottings by YOUR CHAIRMAN)

"THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOW BUSINESS", - or so the song tells us, but the hard truth that our Manchester branch members are NOT show minded is slowly, but surely and reluctantly being impressed upon your Committee. Despite the publicity given to this year's NATIONAL SHOW in our National Journal, in the last issue of "Activities", and by numerous announcements at Branch Meetings, Manchester Branch (which is numerically one of our Society's largest branches) is only able to muster 8 people to join a coach party organised by a neighbouring "independent" Society to visit Nottingham on May 6th, this is a most disturbing state of affairs and is something of an indictment of the branch as a whole. I would like to think that this apparent lack of interest in the National Show was engendered by a misplaced parochial interest in our own BRANCH SHOW to be held some five weeks later, but our experience in past years suggests that this too would be wishful thinking. Your Committee spend many hours each year drafting and re-arranging our Branch Show Schedule in order to provide some classes of interest to every member whether their collection be two dozen plants on a window sill or two thousand plants in a thirty foot greenhouse. Each year we are bitterly disappointed by the lack of support from members. Last year our Branch Show provided a wonderful array of quality plants for the delight of the general public and the few members who bothered to attend - but the whole show was put on by a mere 14 competitors assisted by only a handful of willing helpers! - this from a total membership of over 100 people. To quote another song "It's a great big shame, and it never ought to be...." No wonder your Committee is "BEMITCHED, BOUNDLED, and BEMILDERED"! I can only hope that your response to this year's show will really allay their worst fears.

CHAIRMAN'S OPEN DAY. Following the apparent success of last year's Open Day when 57 members visited my collection at 38, Kingsway, Worsley, my wife and I will once again be pleased to welcome Branch Members and their friends to this year's Open Day on SUNDAY, JULY 9th 1967 from 2 p.m. onwards. My greenhouses will be open to all so why not drop in for a "natter" and some light refreshment? Kingsway, Worsley is easily reached from Manchester by Service No. 9 from Victoria Bus Station or 12 from Greengate Bus Station. Visitors coming by car from Manchester should take the East Lancashire Road (A.580) from Irlam's 0'11'height and turn right at the second set of traffic lights, Kingsway is then a sharp left turn immediately after leaving the East Lancs. Road (A.580).

Will all intending visitors please fill in the enclosed chit and post to me:-

C. PARTINGTON,  
38, KINGSWAY,  
WORSLEY,  
Nr. MANCHESTER.

before July 1st in order that my wife may have some idea of the number of visitors she is likely to be providing refreshments for!

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## TAKING STOCK.

by Mrs. J. P. Harris

How ashamed I felt when our Journal Editor said that he was having difficulty in getting copy from our own Branch Members. I went to him and promised that I would make an effort for the next issue. Anyway here goes.

Like the majority of people I have had my losses where plants are concerned this Winter. I did think that I had lost a lot of my Stapeliads but have been re-potting them and think that I have managed to save most of them. They were all root and no compost I am afraid. Anyway this will certainly be a lesson to me.

As most of you know I am a great "seed girl" and this year have sown one hundred and thirty seven varieties against eighty two last year. Most of them are up but there are one or two stragglers. I sent to Stichting for quite a lot and was delighted to receive most of what I asked for including *Optica Rubra*. There are only three up so far but am living in hopes that more will come. *Lapidaria margaritae* was another one, and there are quite a few of them I see. I have also sown quite a lot of *Mammillarias* and most of them are germinating well. Some of these can be in flower two years from sowing, and believe me it is a thrill when this happens.

Last years seedlings are coming along fine and have all been re-boxed. Most of them look like miniatures of what they will eventually be. Take *Astrophytum ornatum*, it has its little ribs dotted with white hairs and tiny spines. Some of the *Rebutias* should be flowering this year, and those that don't will certainly do so next year.

This year we have used the University of California mix and it is useful having someone to do this for you when you are a woman. Jack does this quite willingly for me even though he does not like them and calls them "American Weeds."

Most of my *Rebutia* plants are in bud, big buds now and I notice quite a few *Mammillarias* with fat, juicy buds too. The *Epiphytes* are in too and will soon be opening. Even my Rat's Tail will be in flower, and it has never done this before for me. *Frithia Pulchra* has filled out, this is quite an easy one to raise from seed and it flowers the following year. You don't believe me, well I did not believe the book when I read it but it did and has flowered every year since and it certainly is lovely in flower and they last quite some time.

Oh I must tell you that I sowed three seeds last year of *Trichocaulon meloforme*. All three germinated but two of them went the way of all things but am delighted to say the remaining one has survived the Winter and looks as though it is growing again. I feel like a dog with

two tails. It has lived in the seed raiser all the time so far but I am going to re-pot it soon and in the summer it will come out into the collection.

I think that this is all I have to tell you except that I am busy re-potting the whole of my collection as the Stapeliads have certainly taught me a lesson. The ones in bud will have to wait for a later date but they are definitely going to be done.

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