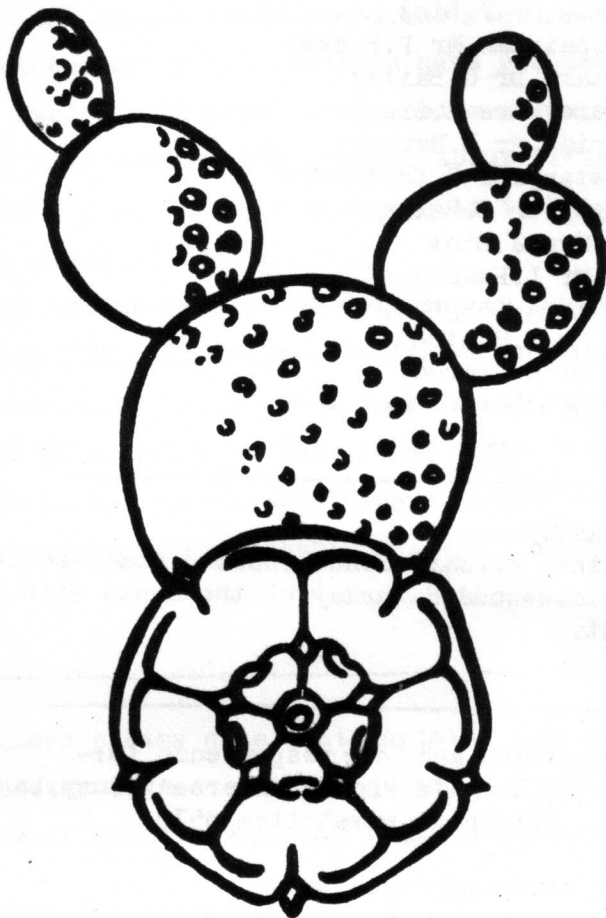


**B.C.S.S.**  
**MANCHESTER BRANCH**



***NEWSLETTER***

BRITISH CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY, MANCHESTER BRANCH.

NEWSLETTER, SPRING 1984.

LIST OF OFFICERS:

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Show Manager. Dr G. Bailey

Committee. Mrs J. Bint

Mr L. Percy

Mr A. Campbell

Mr J. Hinton

Mr H. Ormrod

Mrs Scrimshaw

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MONTHLY MEETINGS:-

St. Augustine's Primary School, Bolton Road, Pendlebury.

At 7.00 p.m. second Saturday of the month with exception  
4th August.

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General Enquiries and correspondence to:-

Dr G. Bailey, 4, Hargate Close, Summerseat, Bury, Lancs, BL9 5NY  
Telephone Ramsbottom 3570.

Newsletter correspondence to:-

Mr L. Percy, 36, Hillingdon Close, Hollinwood, Oldham, OL8 3QJ  
Telephone 688 9920

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to this first issue of the newsletter. The aim of producing this bimonthly publication is to open up the branch to more members who hopefully will not only attend the monthly meetings with more regularity but also increase communication amongst individuals, their collections etc.

How many other members collections have you seen?

There are over one hundred registered members with the branch but attendances only average about fifty. Tell us why you don't come: Are the meetings too technical?. Is it too far to come?. No transport?.

The success of the newsletter does depend on everyone. If members would like to write articles on any aspect of the hobby I would only be too glad to print as many as possible. The layout of articles in this first issue have been put together with the aim of producing a balanced blend to cater for beginners and experts alike.

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Would members please note that anything concerned with the newsletter contact Les Percy and any other queries contact Geoff Bailey. Telephone numbers and addresses on page 1.

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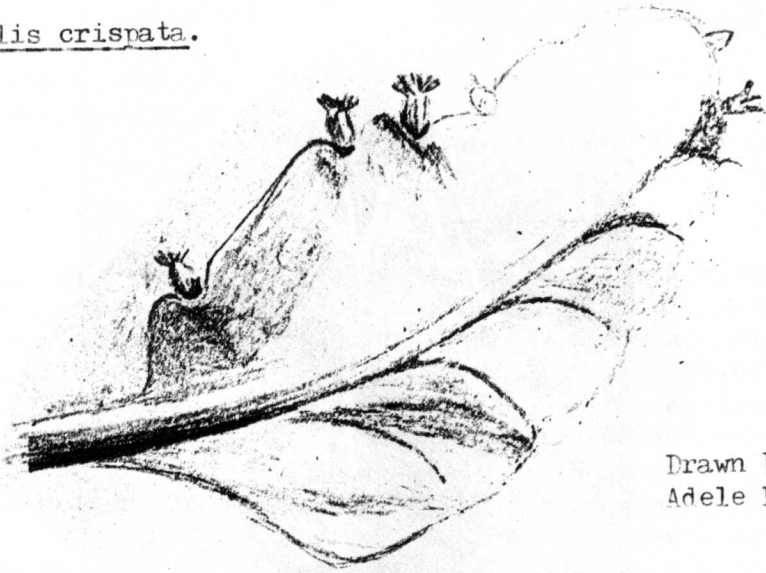
Remember the success of this venture depends on you.

Les Percy.

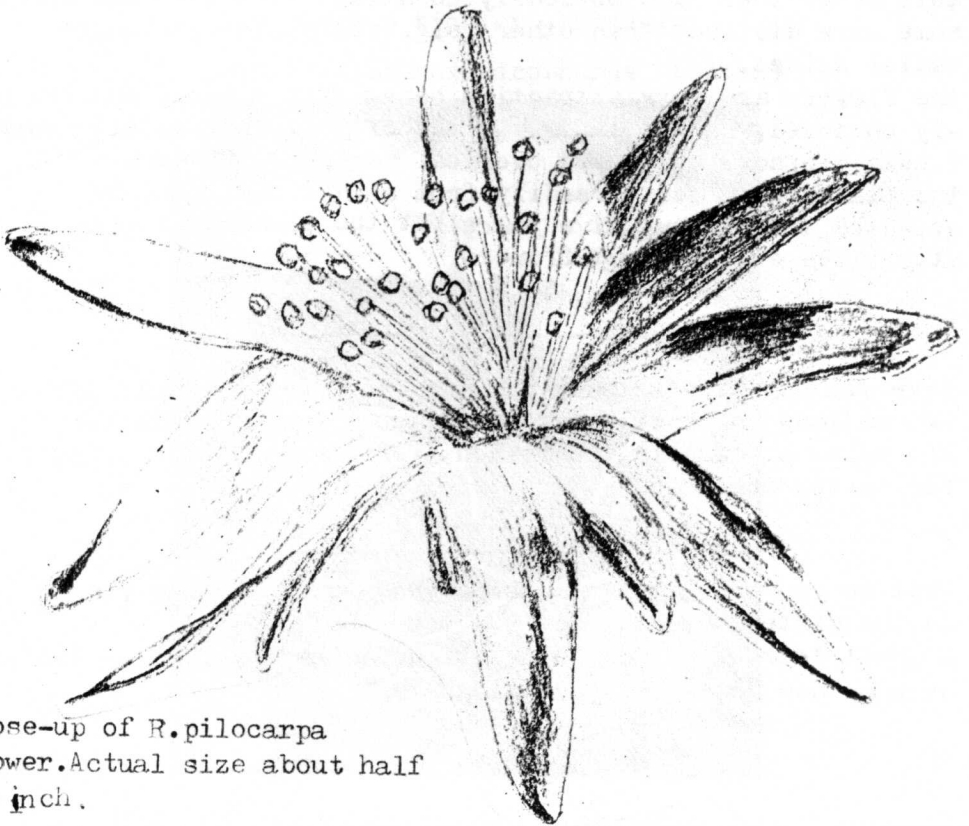
In the early months of the year most collections have little to show in the way of flowers. There are usually a few plants flowering, the odd Mammillaria, Crassula, Echeveria etc., however one group of plants not often encountered in most collections are the Rat-Tailed cacti which can bring a real splash of colour in these dull days. Although most of them are not very exciting when out of flower when they are in bloom there is nothing to touch them. Why not try a few Aporocactus (The common Rat Tail Cactus), they can be hung from the roof out of the way and you will have a lovely show of flowers lasting over several weeks at a time when there is little else in bloom. To give even more colour and variety why not try the hybrid Aporophyllums. These are crosses between the Aporocactus and Epiphyllums, having the habit of the rat-tails but with much larger flowers borne in profusion. There is a large variety of these plants available from specialist nurseries, quite inexpensive to buy. They respond to a little love and feed and they will respond with an exciting show of flowers. Cultivation is easy, no real problems are apparent although with a little extra heat the flowering can be expected quite early, I usually have flowers starting in February through March and April. I realise that some collectors shun hybrids, but where would our gardens be without our hybrid roses, annuals and herbaceous plants, full of dog-roses, dandelions and daisies etc., so why be a purist in the greenhouse.

If your interest has been aroused you could go on to the other epiphytic group, the Rhipsalis and related genera. They offer a vast range of stem types, mostly with small white flowers produced in profusion followed by 'mistletoe' like fruits that persist all through the summer, some changing colour through the season from orange to deep purple. One such plant worth trying is Acanthorhipsalis monacantha, a pendant plant with flat twisted stems with a profusion of orange flowers, fairly small but followed by a crop of lovely berries changing their colour through the summer from cream to yellow orange and finally deep purple when ripe. Cultural requirements are easy, they are very tolerant of most compost mixes but they do respond to the addition of some leaf mould or failing that extra peat. It is essential that it is free draining so add some grit. In the winter months the plants should be placed in full light conditions but in the summer months semi-shade is preferred, but they will tolerate good light. In fact I put mine outside in summer and the results speak for themselves.

Rhipsalis crispata.



Drawn by  
Adele Pearcy.



Close-up of *R. pilocarpa*  
flower. Actual size about half  
an inch.

In this and future articles I will be discussing plants that appeal to me, some easy to grow, some difficult, but all offering something for the grower.

THELOCACTUS

Thelocactus is a genus of plants often neglected by many Cactophiles. Containing between ten to thirty species (depending on whose classification you follow) of very attractively spined plants, which in general offer few cultural problems although they are a lot slower growing than many other North American cacti.

Flowers can be expected after about five years from seed, although those species in the (sub)genus *Gymnocactus* will flower at a smaller size.

The species most commonly encountered in one form or another is *T. bicolor*. The plant is found over a wide area from the southern states of U.S.A. through to central Mexico. With this range there are obviously countless varieties and forms, some more distinct than others e.g. *v. bolansis* with white radial spines.

The flowers are very attractive being fairly large and brightly coloured, red/purple in the majority of species, although *T. hexaedrophorus*, pictured overleaf has white flowers.

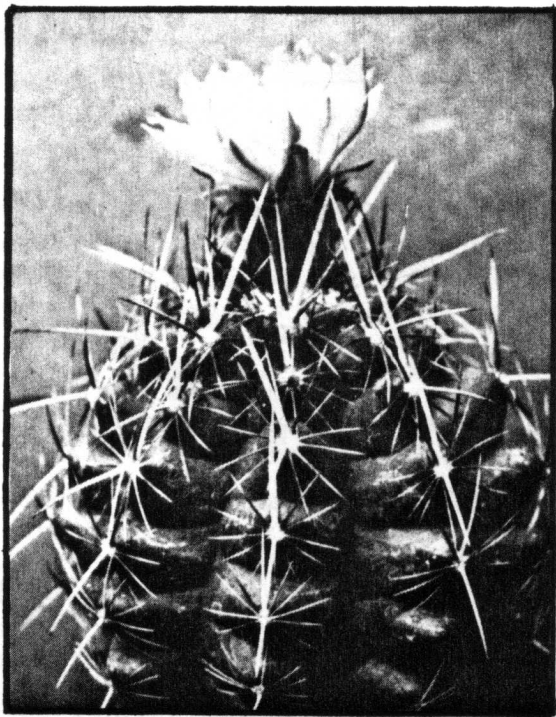
The plants grow quite readily from seed, flowers can be expected after about five years, but the plants are very attractive even without flowers.

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Have you any plants that you want and can't get hold of? Let me know and I will put your wants in the newsletter. Who knows someone in the branch might have the plant you've been after for years.

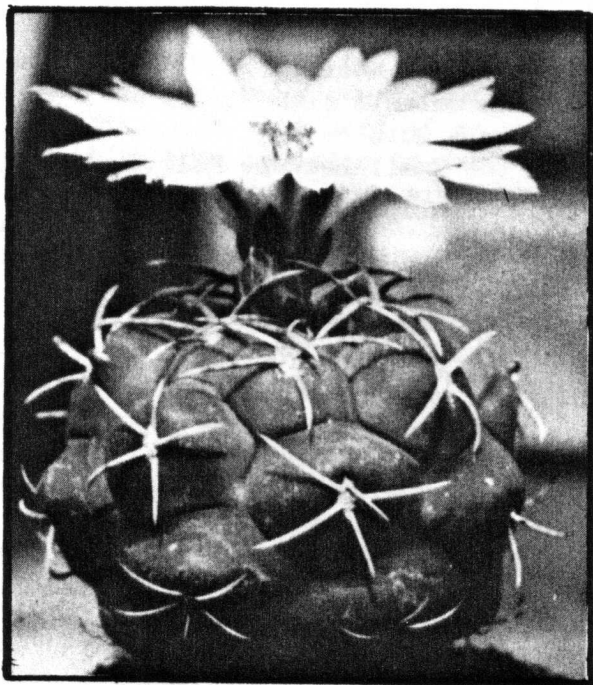
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What do you grow your plants in? Do you water your plants in the winter? When do you sow your seeds? A great deal of useful information can be obtained by letting us know how you grow your plants



*Thelocactus bicolor* (above)

*Thelocactus hexaedrophorus* (below)



FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

MANCHESTER BRANCH MEETINGS:

MAY 12th UNUSUAL SUCCULENTS ALAN HART.

This promises to be a most informative meeting by one of the North West's most knowledgeable speakers. Alan grows the more unusual and rarely seen succulents, his greenhouse being a veritable wonderland of fabulous plants.

JUNE 9th EUPHORBIAS BILL LLOYD.

Bill has collected Euphorbias for many years and with this very diverse and large genus to choose from this should be a very interesting meeting about one of the most popular genera of succulent plants.

JUNE 2nd Sunday. Branch Outing to York.

Coach leaving Manchester around 9am. First stop York itself to drop off people wishing to explore the sights of this historic city. First nursery visit Walkers to the east of York. Then to Cruck Cottage at Pickering and finally to Whitestone Gardens at Thirsk. Returning via York to pick up sightseers and arriving back in Manchester about 9pm. Further details at the next meeting or from Geoff Bailey.

OTHER LOCAL EVENTS:

Bolton & District Cactus Society.

May 15th Unusual Succulents Alan Hart.

June 12th Mini-Show & Quiz

Meetings held in the Small Lecture Hall, Central Library, Bolton.

Warrington Branch.

May 9th Plant Auction

June 6th Road From Nevada To Alamos Clive Innes.

July 11th Trip To Canada Bill Stevens.

Meetings held in Meeting Lane Leisure Centre, Penketh, Warrington.

Mid Cheshire Branch.

May 2nd Succulents For Cactophiles Ian Robinson.

July 4th The Wouters Collection Neville Vernon.

Meetings held in Queen St. Institute, Middlewich, Cheshire.



Do you enjoy growing your plants? Does it give you pleasure to gaze round at other people's collections? These are two of the necessary ingredients which will inspire you to enter the world of showing your plants. I look for any opportunity to visit fellow cactophiles and succulentophiles to browse around their greenhouses. Even in the smallest collections there are many plants which deserve praise and attention.

Showing your plants at an organised show is only an extension of visiting others or being visited by them. You may ask why go to all the fuss of carting plants hither & thither when people could visit you just as easily, but that is only a partial truth. Just imagine how many people would be deprived of the pleasure of musing over your pride & joy because they were ignorant of your existence. At any show a large number of visitors have no connection with our society but their comments show the enormous appreciation they possess at being allowed to share the varied beauty that our plants exhibit.

Many people, on being encouraged to participate in one of our shows, immediately become totally defensive. "My plants are not good enough" or "I'll grow them for another year" or "You don't really need my plants" are a small example of the reasons I have heard for not entering a show. They are hollow statements really. If you are proud of what you grow then why not show that pride. I appreciate the fact that only a few plants can win prizes but it is those plants that do not win that make the show worthwhile. It would be a paltry exhibition that possessed only three entries per class throughout the entire show. So please don't hide under that sort of an umbrella.

"What do I need to know in order to exhibit my plants". That is the crux of the matter really. The simple reply to that is: - plants that look in good condition. So agreed, it is not quite so straightforward as that but it is 95% of the answer. Let's have a slightly deeper look into the requirements for successful showing - not prize winning but simply making people want to look at your plants and want to own some like them. The main emphasis is on having your plants in the prime of condition. That entails making sure that they are growing happily, something you will be doing anyway. If your plants are enjoying life they will exhibit this quality through their spine colouration and strength, their glossy coats etc. Added to this your plants are greatly enhanced if they show signs of having flowered or being in flower. Equally important is the obvious necessity of keeping your plants free from any form of pests & diseases. Maturity is an important factor also. What do we mean by maturity? We cannot possibly compare our greenhouse specimens with their wild counterparts which have spent many years coming to a slow

state of adulthood. No, it is a relative state of existence in all honesty. A relatively easy way of judging maturity of a plant within a class is to enter plants that are reasonably close to the maximum pot size stated for the class. Flowering is also another sign that a plant has acquired an adult status. Added to all this is the way you present your plants on the show bench. Your plants are enhanced if they are in clean pots, suitable to the size of the specimen growing therein. Plant & container should complement each other. Also worthy of consideration at this point is the position of the plant in the pot. A covering of grit over the soil looks good, prevents over rapid evaporation of water from the surface of the soil and eradicates totally the growth of moss and algae which make the soil surface look unsightly. Another small but worthwhile consideration is to have your plant labelled correctly. If you experience any difficulty with naming your plant there those in-the branch who will gladly assist you in your predicament.

Having made use of these few tips you are well on the way to entering lovely plants in any show. There are other considerations to bear in mind, but these will be dealt with in a later edition of the newsletter. They are important but merit only a small percentage of the judges attention. I would like to think that these few clues to showing will have cleared away some of the myths that exist about shows and showing.

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#### GROWING CACTI FROM SEED. BRIAN FEARN, ABBEY BROOK CACTUS NURSERY

To be successful you must try to imitate the conditions in which the plants grow naturally. Cacti are nearly always found under scrub or small bushes, on rocky slopes or on level ground where the soil is porous. This is because:

- 1) The slope and porous soil provide adequate drainage.
- 2) The scrub provides shade for the seedlings and young plants.
- 3) The rocks radiate warmth at night and the crevices between them trap pockets of humid air.

When to sow: If you do not have a heated propagator, the best time to sow is in spring, ie. from March to the end of May. Do not sow later than this as the seedlings will not be large enough to stand the following winter. If you have a heated propagator or a warm window-sill (do not use the airing cupboard) you can sow at any time of the year, but January and February are the best months.

Compost:We can recommend the following composts;

Either 1)Equal parts Fisons Levington potting compost and coarse lime free sand.

or 2)One part John Innes No.1 or 2 and 1/4 part lime-free sand

Sowing:Fill the seed trays or shallow pot sto within 1/4" of the top with the compost and level the surface,removing any la large lumps.Water with a watering can fitted with a fine rose. Scatter the seed thinly on the surface of the damp compost. Large seeds can be spaced out & light lyressed level with surface using a pencil.Cactus seeds need light before they will germinate,so do not cover the seeds with compost and do not put the containers in a dark cupboard.

Temperature:Temperatures of 60-70° are best for germination. Once the seedlings are 2-3 weeks old normal growing temperatur-es are adequate.

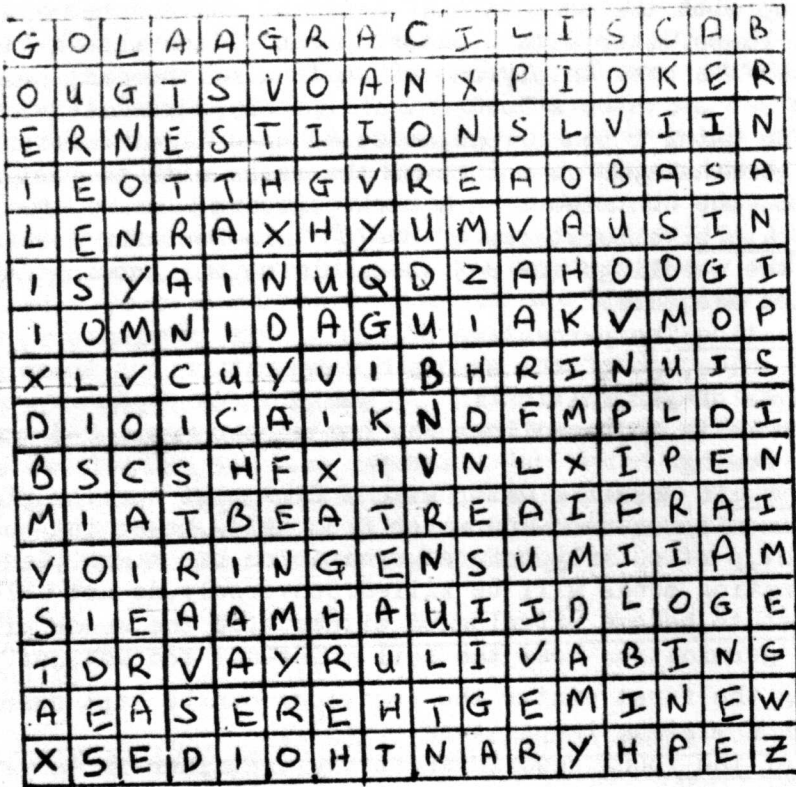
Germination:The percentage of seeds that germinate depends on the species,age of the seed a d temperature,but there should be signs of germination in 2-3 weeks.A few seeds may be slow to germinate and seedlings may not appear until 2-3 months after sowing.

Watering:If possible water with a fine mist sprayor place the container in asaucer and water from below.Never let the compos dry out,p rticularly before germination has taken place,of the germinating seeds will be killed.Conversely,do not allow the compost to become waterlogged either,else the seeds will rot. After germination keep the soil moist-not too wet,not too dry.

During the first winter the seedlings can be kept completely dry in a minimum temperature of 45° F.

Care of the young seedlingsKeep the container in an airy place to prevent 'damping off'.Shade the seedlings with a single thickness of tissue or newspaper forthe first two months,then avoid direct sunlight for a further 6 months.After that time treat as adult plants.Try to ensure the seedlings remain a healthy deep green(or occasionally brownish) colour-a bright red colour indicates that too much light has been giv given,thin,spindly pale green seedlings reults from too little li ht.

Transplanting:Do not transplant seedlings until they begin to touch one another in the container.If in doubt,leave the seedl-ings in the same container for 1 yearand do not transplat until the spring of the second year.They will come to no harm even if they look overcrowded.



Can you find the following Mammillarias in the above squares.

MYSTAX

SABOAE

LENTA

GRACILIS

LAUI

THERESAE

ZEPHYRANTHOIDES

PLUMOSA

DIOICA

GOLDII

REKOI

HAHNIANA

INGENS

GEMINISPINA

ERNESTII

SOLISIOIDES

TETRANCISTRA

YAQUENSIS

ZEIMANNIANA