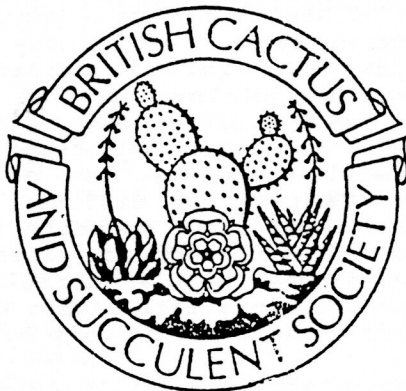


**Manchester
Branch**



NEWSLETTER

MAY 1988

Editor...Peter Schofield

The Society is about people first and plants second. So, people first this month. Congratulations to Geoff Bailey who became, on April 9th, Hon. Secretary of the British Cactus and Succulent Society. His election at the A.G.M. was a cliff-hanger, three recounts being necessary before a 272 - 262 result could be declared. Equally sincere felicitations are owed to Peter Bint: at the same meeting he was honoured with Fellowship of the Society and their Gold Medal in recognition of service to the Society in many ways over many years. Finally, thanks: to Mavis Singer who for no less than 14 years has been responsible for the financial affairs of this Branch as well as for her own very demanding job. She is retiring as Treasurer after a term of office which culminated in the - quite horrendous - task of dealing with the local financial control of the National Show. She has served us well, and we appreciate it. We can be both proud of and grateful to all the Officers who set such high standards for our Branch

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

The April meeting was treated to a magnificent exposition by Geoff Hedgecock on the subject of the Asclepiadaceae. These are named after the Greek god of medicine, a reference to the medicinal properties claimed for the milky sap possessed by many of them - hence also the name of "milkweeds". Of the 200+ genera, mostly from Africa and tropical Asia, some 50 have succulent members. Among them are *stapelia*, *caralluma*, *hoya* and *ceropegia*. Taxonomy is confused, with much playing of "musical genera", and until recently was dependent on floral characteristics. The flowers in general are in five parts, usually with a 5-lobed tubular corolla. Pollination involves transfer of beads of waxy pollen onto the back of the visiting insect, a characteristic shared only by orchids.

Cultivation can be very difficult, especially to achieve long-lived plants, and it is wise to disperse cuttings as a back-up in case of loss. Many need temperatures above 50 F and may be difficult to revive if allowed to dry out cold; Geoff recommends watering from below through the winter, with a succession of fungicides to counter the tendency to rot. Regular summer watering should include systemic insecticides to guard against red spider. Cuttings root readily; seed germinates quickly but is viable only for a short period; grafting onto larger *stapelias* or *ceropegia* requires little fuss. In propagation the keeping of good records is strongly urged, since there are many hybrids about.

A superb series of slides followed, many of the flowers demanding disbelief: if you had invented them everyone would say they were impossibly far-fetched. We saw the six-inch flowers of *Stapelia grandiflora*, and the amazing twelve-inch seed-horns of *Huernia*, which dry and split and from which the tufted seeds can be collected in a nylon sock. There were *carallumas* from Kenya and India, *C. sinaica* from Saudi Arabia with its tendency to 'annual winter rot', *C. europeae* found in mainland Spain and far less susceptible, *C. moroccana* from N. Africa and the Canaries, *C. wismanii* from the Yemen where Alan Butler collects them as a change from selling kettles, and *C. dodsonii* with almost black flowers from Somalia.

Fascinating as the flowers of *caralluma* are, they are more than equalled by those of *duvalia* - such as *D. elegans* with petals reflexing into tubes surrounding a raised central annulus. The *duvalia* are, apparently, excellent plants for the asclepiadaceal beginner: "you can't go wrong with them". *D. angustiloba* can have 50 flowers open on a 3½ inch pot. Hybridisation between *duvalia* and *huernia* can yield the deep tube of the latter combined with the reflexed petals of the former. *Huernia* itself is also a relatively easy genus to grow and usually flowers whilst quite small. Stems are four-angled and flowers have remarkable "wallpaper patterns" often with papillae to guide flies down. *H. hystrix* is a basket plant with large numbers of porcupine-like flowers, *H. transmutedata* is red with white spots, *H. oculata* has a white throat with deep

purple lobes. Some have the raised central annulus, like a ring of ketchup in *H.confusa*. *H.whitesloania* can generate a hundred stems in a 2½ inch pot

All of the hoodias from Namibia are similar to one another. They start to flower at 6-7" and in cultivation reach about 12", but in habitat can have four or five foot stems. The echidnopsis, now split off from *caralluma*, are from East Central Africa. *E.califormis* has pale yellow flowers and is quite hardy. Some of the orbeas are also refugees from the genus *caralluma*, but *O.variegata* was formerly known as a stapelia and was first sketched in 1624 - the first recorded stapeliad. *O.ciliata* is unusual in that cristates outnumber normal forms. Other *carallumas* have turned into *pachycymbium* and *pectinaria*, including *P.morganii* with beautiful sulphur-yellow flowers. *Pieranthus* are very late flowering, and often abort unless autumn is unusually warm

True stapelias include *S.hirsuta*, red and very hairy; *S.erectiflora* with 6-8" stems and peduncles of similar length with exquisite silky flowers; *S.glanduliflora* totally covered by hairs on a pale corolla and *S.leanderzii* with very deep trumpets. *Tridentia* is a renamed group of stapelia, including *T.penduncularia* (? - can't read my own notes!) with purple hairs on orange lobes and *T.virescens* with clear yellow flowers.. *Stapelianthus* is from Madagascar and shares the tendency of plants from that island to have dark green colouring; flowers again are superb. *Sarcocaulon* have tiny flowers, some smooth stemmed and some spiny.

A final photographic tour took in *brachystelma* - large tubers, underground in habitat, amazing cage-like flowers and appalling smells...*dischidia* from Malaya - an epiphyte in which one leaf pair swells up to become a home for ants...*ceropogia* in variety: *C.stapeliformis* which grows a yard a year, *C.barlkeyi* with its fly-trap flowers, *C.fusca* from Teneriffe with red flowers all the way up its stick-like stems, *C.haygarthia* dying back in winter and then growing rapidly to produce hundreds of flowers...*cynanchum* from madagascar, a hanging plant covered in yellow cages...*fockea* - six inch tubers with miles of vine...*sarcostemma*, vigorous, twiggy and flowering through the season...and, finally, *hoya* - the well-known *H.bella* from China and N.Australia, the more vigorous *H.carnosa*, and a selection of others. Truly a feast of photographic and floral delights. Thanks, Geoff.

OUT OF THE MOUTHS

Not many years ago, our Gillian advised a somewhat surprised teacher that people in tropical countries sometimes died of *mammillaria*! Well, perhaps!

OUT & ABOUT

The main wandering this month was, of course, the Annual Trip - this time to Brookside at Hitchin and East Midlands Cactus Nursery by Milton Keynes. We were, of course, well received at both; our main impression was of just how much you can fit into your back garden if you really try. A further impression at Hitchin was of the remarkable weight of a Golden retriever leaning purposefully upon you. As usual we seemed to have a heat of the "Who can find the silliest looking plant" competition and spent happy hours looking into each other's boxes. Prize of the day may have been a top cutting of *Cereus jamacaru* which, although only a couple of feet long, had several flowers approaching opening. My less spiny half was tempted by some choice alpiners for our new rockery - a structure not unconnected with my severely distressed back! At East Midlands we wondered how the neighbours react to coachloads of day trippers strolling up their intimate little close; some members expressed disappointment at the limited range of material here. A raffle on the way back brought the trip marginally into profit, Hilton Park services actually sold a plant (another alpine), and a good time was had by all.

Locally, we called on a couple of nurseries who were advertising at the Harrogate Show. Neither have succulents, but both are worthy of mention: the Vicarage Garden at Carrington, just down the road from the editor, is run by an evangelical Christian community who bought it three years ago and have transformed the derelict garden into a place of great beauty with a wide range of well-grown and fairly priced plants, again with an emphasis on alpiners. Well worth a visit if you've never been. For those who like lewisias, Delamere Street Nursery in the centre of Winsford will provide pleasure and profit. Tatty looking and a bit run down, but they put on a fine display at Harrogate and have some lovely plants. On a different tack, if you happen to be on the A57 going west through Irlam, just before the Pool you may see a portable sign on the left to Princes Park Nursery. Call in - it's a very worthwhile venture run by Salford Social Services for the rehabilitation of the handicapped and, presumably, using Parks Dept. stock for propagation. Assorted odd shrubs and herbaceous, and the bedding plants will be ready by now - prices extremely reasonable.

Finally to Warrington Branch for the Plant Auction last Wednesday. Harold Gaulton stole the show by walking in with a large *Echinocereus gentryi* in full and magnificent bloom; in his capacity as Auctioneer he extracted £11 for it from a very determined Barbara Beesley. Around a hundred plants were on offer, starting with a pachypodium at a bargain £4 before folks had warmed up. There were moments of wild excitement as grim faced contenders forced each other up to dizzy heights in 10p increments, often actually bidding over a pound before sanity prevailed! There were spells of intense apathy as Harold announced reserve prices beyond people's intended

limit. There was a pair of 'plantpot pliers" obviously designed for extracting 'that one in the middle'. One member bought at least three *Lophophora williamsii* and obviously needs watching closely for any tendency to become airborne. Seriously, it was an excellent evening with a good profit for the Branch and some good plants changing hands. Perhaps not quite as spectacular as Bolton , but still most enjoyable.

WHERE'S ETHEL ? Ethel Marshall is in Australia, visiting her children. She is enjoying herself enormously, but they have promised that we can have her back before too long

BEST WISHES to Philip Barker, who is going into hospital for running repairs the week after next. He should be back in action before long, but we hope the interim period is not too uncomfortable

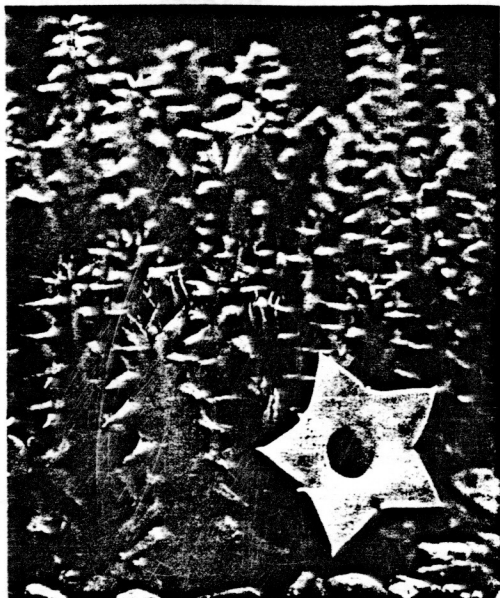
MINI - WHAT ?

..... Variously described as a Miniventon or a Miniposium, it's a desirable event whatever its title. It's on Sunday June 12th, at the Liverpool University Botanic Garden at Ness, on the Wirral. This is well worth seeing at any time, but especially when, for the price of £4 you can also join the Zone 5 symposium with Bill Maddams, Roy Christian, Bryan Makin & Bob Potter, and buy plants and have light refreshments. Details from Mike Walton on 060 684 2613.

THINK ABOUT IT. The new meeting place is cosy and warm. The other side of this coin is that it does not have fifty feet of roof space in which to lose your cigarette smoke. One or two members have expressed discomfort; we can open some windows, but perhaps those who don't really need to smoke might feel able to cut down a little for the sake of their fellows.

NEXT MONTH..... *Zurich and Heidelberg*, by Brian Bates; the Table Show invites *Parodia/Notocactus* from the cactophiles, and *Euphorbiae* from those with other interests. Remember that visitors are always welcome, and especially younger enthusiasts.

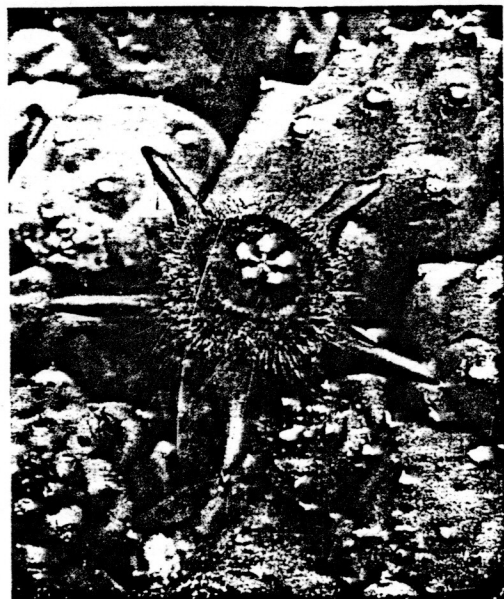
Saturday June 11th, 7.00 for 7.30



Huernia primulina. This is the only *Huernia* species with really yellow flowers, most others being mixtures of red, brown or cream. It is fly pollinated, but has little noticeable smell so it is hard to see why the flies are attracted to it.



Ceropegia woodii, the Rosary vine has long greyish green leaves on stems that trail prettily from a hanging basket. Other *Ceropegias* can be trained round a hoop or trellis and all produce similar tube-shaped flowers.



Duvalia corderoyi. The star-fish shaped flowers are this *Duvalia*'s main attraction and to make sure that they appear, always keep the plant in a very sunny position. When taking cuttings, do not remove too many of the young, freshly developed shoots as it is on these that flowers are produced.



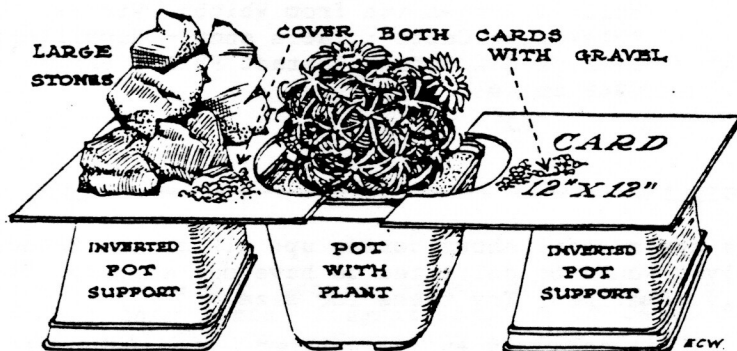
Caralluma carnosa's thick, green succulent stems are deeply indented and, unlike those of *Caralluma trerei* do not produce leaves. The flowers are pollinated by flies and are known as carrion flowers because they are said to look (and smell) like bad meat.

Annette and Jim Black have been browsing through old Society magazines and came across this interesting tip for those who like to photograph their collection. They assure us that it does work, but I'm not at all sure I approve! It seems able to convey a pleasing but quite false impression - or is that taking it too seriously?

"PHOTOGRAPHY OF PLANTS" by Peter W. Dove (Secretary of Scarborough Branch).

It has always struck me when looking at the slides of many other people, how little thought and care has been taken in the presentation of what one would imagine to be their prize plants. These same enthusiasts have probably grown their cacti with a great deal of skill and patience, and then when it comes to sharing the joy of their specimens with other enthusiasts, they do not do themselves justice. Being a professional photographer of some 25 years, I decided that I would try to produce some slides that would do justice to the subject, and at the same time provide a method simple enough for any competent amateur to copy.

For the purpose of this exercise I will assume that the reader has all the equipment in the form of camera, tripod etc., and concentrate on the artistic side of the operation. What I set out to do is to make it appear as if the plant was photographed in habitat. It will be seen from the diagram how this is achieved.



Requirements: Two pieces of card cut as shown. Coloured gravel or small stones and large stones to form an appropriate background. Selected plant in its pot. The card, cut as shown, is placed round the neck of the plant and the entire area is covered with the gravel, the large stones being used to form the background. This will make an interesting picture after very little practise.

ROUND THE SOCIETIES

WIGAN.....Weds. 18th May, 7.15 for 7.45, Independent Methodist Church, Stopford St., Higher Ince: Alan Hart "Interesting succulent plants"; Table show - any succulent. Contact John Harrison on 0942 218465

PRESTON...Thursday, 2nd June, 7.00 for 7.30, St. Andrews Church Hall, Blackpool Rd., Preston: Details not announced; contact Jean Kendall on 077 478 2957

HESWALL...No June meeting - see below

WARRINGTON...Weds. 8th June, 7.30 for 8.00, Penketh Leisure Centre: Alan Butler of Hitchin - "Succulents of South Arabia Pt. II "; contact Barbara Beesley on 051-424 9432

EAST CHESHIRE...Monday, 13th June, 7.30 for 8.00, Wilmslow Public Library: Dr. A.T. Glen, "Mammillaria A - Z" Table show - Mammillaria & Haworthia; contact Barbara McKnight on 061-431 8148

BOLTON....Tuesday, 14th June, 7.00 for 7.30, Bolton Town Hall: J. Arrowsmith from Whitby, Wirral, "Flowering Cacti"; Table show - Mammillaria, Lithops/Echeveria: Contact Philip Barker on 0942 56440

ON SHOW ————— ON SHOW

There are several shows coming up; all of the Branches involved would be delighted to have our support. It can get lonely sometimes! Try these for size...

May 28th - 30th - LIVERPOOL - Croxteth Hall

Sat. June 4th - HESWALL & CHESTER - Heswall Hall

Saturday June 4th - LEEDS - Centenary House

Saturday June 11th - SOUTHPORT - Formby Guildhall

Saturday June 18th - BOLTON - Bolton Town Hall

Saturday June 25th - BRADFORD - St. James' Hall

Sunday June 26th - WARRINGTON - Woolston L.C.

ON SHOW ————— ON SHOW