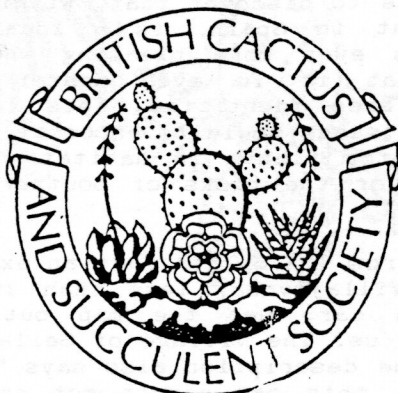


**Manchester
Branch**



NEWSLETTER

JUNE 1988

Editor...Peter Schofield

A slightly thinner issue this time: the Editor has been on holiday as well as wrestling with the mysteries of GCSE assessments, and has had less time to invent lies and half-truths. If nothing happens, it's usually illegal to make it happen, but something must be happening out there somewhere. Is nothing growing or dying? Haven't you been anywhere? Seen anything? Don't you feel like an argument about something? Nothing to advertise? Say something!

OUT & ABOUT

It was a surprise to discover that, within striking distance of our apartment in Spain, is a location for *Caralluma europea*; it was even more pleasing when Geoff Hedgecock pointed out that it is even nearer to a site where *C. munbyana* has been identified. This is a rare plant in cultivation and "seeds would be especially welcome". Cor! A chance to look for plants in habitat without the cost of Baja California or the risks of Southern Africa and Saudi Arabia.

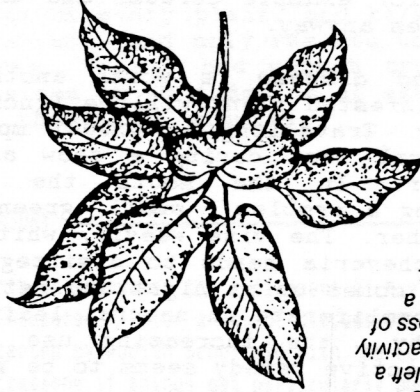
The literature from I.A.S. (in fact an extract from Bradleya 5) said "near Villajoyosa, less than 15km from the sea". Right - hire a car. Get the map out. Where does that description take us? The village of Sella looks about right; aim for that. The description also says "between 500 - 800m altitude"; damn, this car hasn't got an altimeter. "South facing slopes of dolomite" - well, that narrows it down to most of Spain. Better stop and try. Here is a hot, dry, south-facing slope. Looking around, there's an awful lot of it. Where to start?

Associated with *Stipa* grass, said Geoff, kindly sending sketches of same. Yes - there is a lot of that too. Bradleya says "very well hidden inside the tussocks". Thanks! Better start looking. Does one try every tussock, or a random sample? It also says "wedged into crevices" or protruding a few cms. from level gravel patches. Suddenly the hillside looks enormous, and but one of a seemingly infinite number of identical hillsides stretching into the distance. Encouragement comes from the appearance of quantities of *Sedum*, although I'm unsure which. Three species are reorted as present in the same area as the *Caralluma*. Better still, this particular locality is "notable for the presence of two species of *Erica* and there indeed is heather. Onward and upward!

Two hours; three hours; no sign. One begins to appreciate what lies behind the succinct "Lau 066" or "CF8496". EIGHT THOUSAND! I can't even find one! Every square metre looks the same, and there's no way of knowing if it's even the right hillside. Were they found round one village? On one hillside? In one single tussock? The problem is a complete absence of awareness or feeling of what to expect to see. It must be a very special moment to make a new discovery, but it can obviously represent the culmination of many, many hours of tedium.

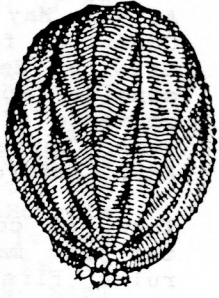
I wandered, lonely as a cloud....no daffodils, just stones, clumps of grass, 80 of Fahrenheit's best degrees, blue skies (are those vultures?), a growing sciatic awareness that this is a silly way to spend a holiday! So, I'm ashamed to say, I gave up - for the moment. I'll try again on subsequent visits, perhaps when it's cooler, and accompanied; for the present, though, PS.001 will have to wait before it bursts upon an unsuspecting world.

Succulents show two main lines of evolution from their hypothetical mesophyte ancestor (centre). To the right are types showing water storage in leaves; to the left a transfer of storage and photosynthetic activity to stems, with reduction or complete loss of foliage. The end stage of both trends is a sphere, having minimal surface to bulk.

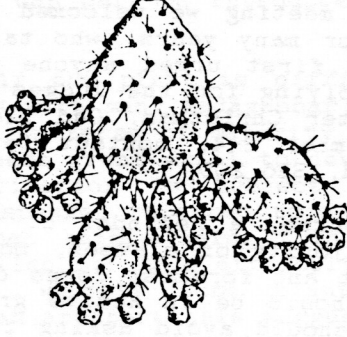


Mesophyte

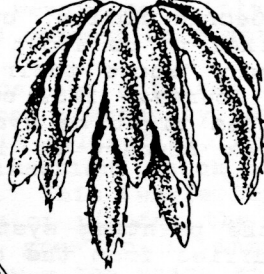
Stem succulents



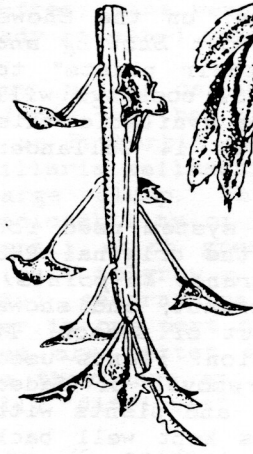
Euphorbia
Euphorbiaceae



Opuntia
Cactaceae

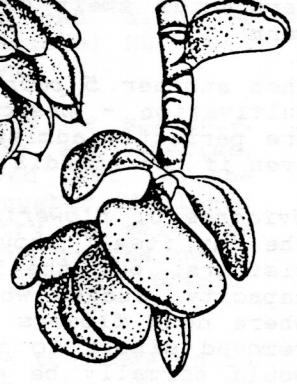


Stapelia
Asclepiadaceae

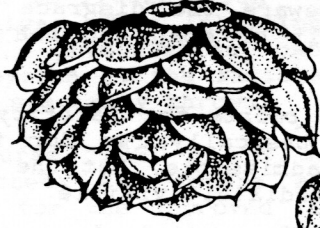


Senecio
Compositae

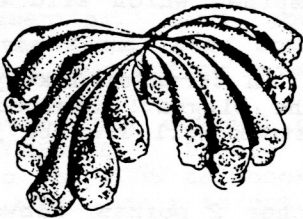
Crassula
Crassulaceae



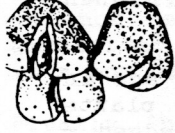
Echeveria
Crassulaceae



Haworthia
Liliaceae



Conophytum
Mesembryanthemaceae



Typical thin-leaved
plant of moderate
water requirement

Leaf succulents

SUCCULENT
PLANTS
(PART 2)

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

At the May meeting we welcomed George Hollis, on the Shows Committee for many years, who talked to us about *Showing and Growing*. He first urged anyone who "knows their plants" to consider applying for the Judges' Course - 1989 bookings will commence after Christmas. Odd places might be available this year: September 2-4, contact Derek Bowdery at 14 Callander Rd., Catford, SE6 2QD.

Then, of course, a reminder of the pointing system used for the vast majority of classes, modified from the original RHS rules. First and foremost comes *General appearance (5 points)*; the plant should be in active growth, not dormant, and shows committees should avoid asking for plants out of season. It should be not etiolated, and with full spination. Plants used for cuttings should be avoided, too-early removal of faded flowers can damage tubercles e.g. in *Parodia*, and plants with hooked spines are vulnerable to damage unless kept well back on the bench. Scarring will be marked down if high up on the plant. Tidying up of rosette species is fair for *Echeveria*, but with *Dudleya* can cause damage. Plants obviously forcing out of the pot are frowned upon, but overpotting is unimportant. Beware the disgrace of a Kent exhibitor, whose *Ferocactus* smelt of soap and had spines which slid off when warm!

Then another *5 points* for *Maturity*, in terms of likely age in cultivation - basically, go for the biggest! Grafted plants are perfectly admissible, but the stock will also be judged - even if not immediately visible.

Evidence of flowering can earn another *2 points*. Flowering on the day itself should not matter, except for the pleasure of visitors, but the plant should have flowered to its normal capacity. Judges would look for, e.g., tiny triangular holes where dead flowers have been removed, but they should not be removed simply to make the plant look "tidier". Common sense would normally be exercised in the case of plants which are difficult to flower, for example *cereus*, and these should be kept in separate classes anyway.

Freedom from pest and disease is worth another *2 points*; obviously a heavily infested plant will be ignored and should not be offered anyway. Travelling at 0.0001 mph, mealy bugs can still cover several feet during a show and make their owner very unpopular. In the south the tortryx moth caterpillar is becoming a problem - small, green, fast-moving, it spins leaves together. The vine weevil, white grub with a brown head, causes *echeveria* heads to disintegrate; it lays eggs at the pot base, comes up at night and retreats well-fed during the day. They proliferate in natural leaf mould and may well be encouraged by the increasing use of peat-based composts. The only effective remedy seems to be γ -BHC dust

mixed in with the soil, ideally in autumn. We should take more care to quarantine newly acquired plants until known to be pest-free; vine weevil certainly can only be introduced by an already infested compost or plant.

3 more points can be obtained if the plant is *difficult to cultivate* - either inherently, as with many Madagascar species such as *Euphorbia cylindrica*, or in terms of maturity as with *Mammillaria zeilmanniana* which needs great skill to develop as a large clump. This whole criterion is subject to the unpredictability of plants: the speaker referred to a *Huernia pillansii* which grew to 20 inches before being told it was difficult to grow - the shame killed it! More difficult is the reputed geographical variation, whereby some plants seem easier in one part of Britain than another; this suggests that judges are better employed in a region they know well and where they have an instinctive awareness of which plants are locally "difficult".

Rarity (2 points) is a controversial aspect: the speaker agreed with Peter Bint that as well as being closely related to the preceding criterion, it is often a measure of depth of pocket and should be discarded. He would prefer more points than the *single point* allocated to *Presentation* - clean pots, clean soil/grit, no weeds or algae. Neat labelling helps but is not essential. Mind you, presentation can also be expensive: the *Mammillaria bombycina* at the National Show was in a pot which cost £45 to have specially thrown.

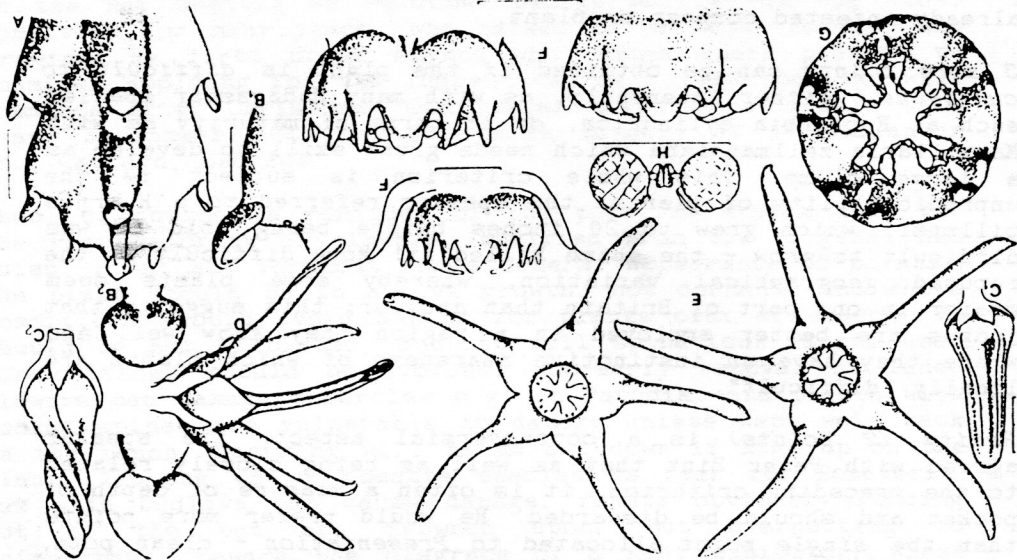
Finally, beware the dreaded curse "NAS" - *not as schedule*. READ THE SCHEDULE ! Double check the genera and species, referring to the BCSS handbook for the approved list. In the last-minute rush, don't forget to recheck the number of plants required and the pot size specified. Don't try to make the plant look more mature by putting more than one in the pot (although small adventitious seedlings and 'natural breaks' ought not to be penalised).

And after all this, pity the judge. He may have to judge up to 80 classes in less than a couple of hours. It would be impossible to point up every plant, and he/she relies first on experience and instinct, and only resorts to the points system for close decisions. We all had enough trouble with the two classes George invited us to judge as an exercise, and it took us a sight longer than three minutes.

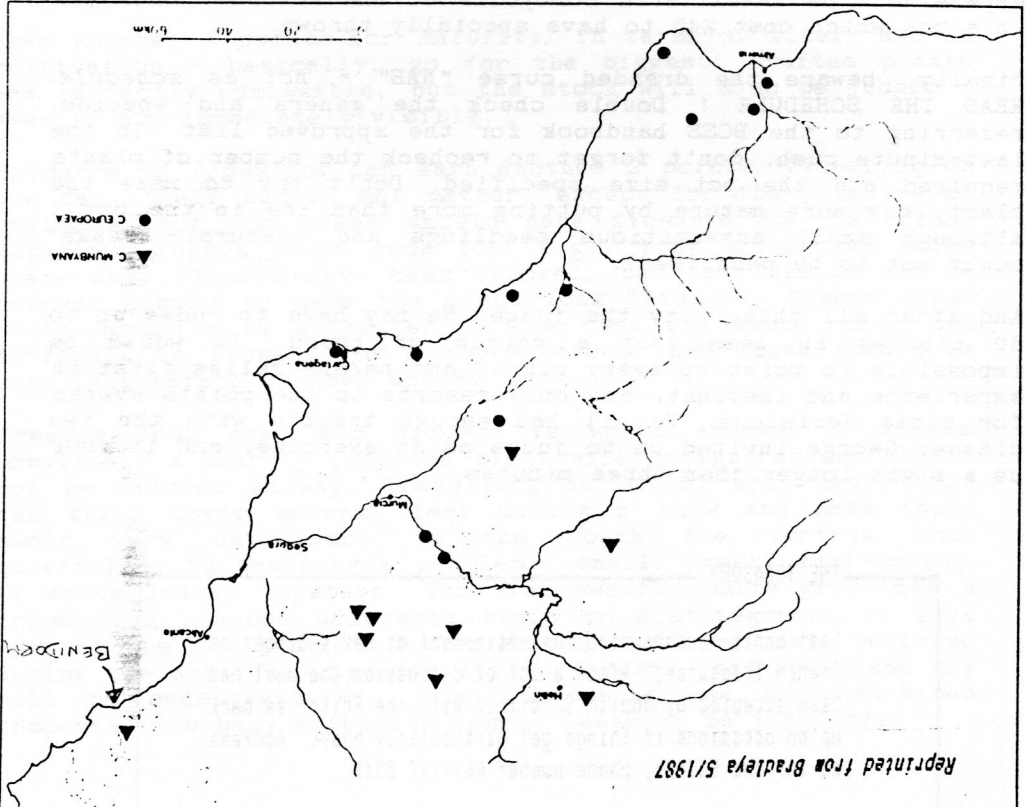
THE TREASURY

Last month we announced the retirement of Mavis Singer as Branch Treasurer. After a lot of discussion, the post has been accepted by Judith Schofield with the Editor as back up on occasions if things get particularly busy. Address as for the Editor, phone number 061-747 3948

Fig. 3. *Caralluma munbyana* (Decaisne ex Munby) N. E. Brown. A, side view of tip of piece of stem (scale: 5mm); B, side view of leaf (scale: 1mm as for B₁); B₂, rear view of leaf; C, bud (scale: 2mm as for D, E); D, side view of corolla; E, face view of corolla; F, side view of staminal column (scales 1mm, C as in lower scale); G, face view of staminal column; H, pollinarium (scale: 1/2mm). Drawn from: A, B, C; *Bryus* 2404 (K), Jumilla, provincia de Murcia; remainder *Bryus* 2400, Caravaca, provincia de Murcia, Spain.



Map 2. Distribution of *C. munbyana* (▲) and *C. europaea* (●) in south-east Spain. Based on records in MU and own observations. Dotted lines indicate 20km and 50km contours.



← YOU CAN HELP →

How ?, say you. Oh yes you do ! It's time to think Tombola ! On August 20-21 we make an exhibition of ourselves at the annual Salford Show. It's a time for welcoming potential new members, but also for welcoming potential new money. A big tombola is always a good help to Branch funds, and the essence of this is as many donated prizes as possible. Obviously we'll have to buy some, but we rely on our members to turn up trumps. If every regularly attending member offered three or four prizes it would make a fantastic difference. Not necessarily anything expensive - we need a large number of cheap, useful or frivolous items to keep the punters happy while they keep trying for the 'biggies'. Please do help: either bring to the July or August meeting, or give us a ring to collect, or bring to the show itself. *Every little helps. Details later of the show itself, venue, times and help needed*

THE LIBRARY

Another book has gone missing; who, please, has the 1986 American Journal, and can we have it back? Many thanks !

NEXT MONTH.....

David Phillips will talk to us about EUPHORBIAE, and the Table Show will include Gymnocalycium for the cactophiles and Caudiciform plants for lovers of root crops.

Saturday 9th July 1988 7.00 for 7.30
Sutherland High School Heywood

NOW YOU SEE US.....now you don't, Your Editor and his good lady have embarked on a Sponsored Slim, in aid of the School Library which is in an impecunious state, Having weighed in on May 27 at no less than a disgraceful combined 102kg., they hope to lose at least 20kg, by September 1st, Don't feel obliged, but if you would like to see less of them this is a golden chance to encourage them by offering a few pence per kilo.

A REQUEST.....Christine Kay, who acts as Organiser for this Community Centre in which we meet, has mentioned that she would appreciate gift of any surplus plants of any kind, suitable to brighten up the interior of the centre. If you have anything spare, please let it do them a good turn and bring it along to a meeting. Thanks

ROUND THE SOCIETIES

- WIGAN.....Weds. 15th June, 7.15 for 7.45, Independent Methodist Church, Stopford St., Higher Ince: J.Arrowsmith : "*Flowering Cacti*"; Table show Rebutia/sulcorebutia. Contact John Harrison on 0942 218465
- PRESTON...Thursday, 7th July, 7.00 for 7.30, St.Andrews Church Hall, Blackpool Rd., Preston: Bill Lloyd "*Plants of Madagascar*"; contact Jean Kendall on 077 478 2957
- HESWALL...Monday, 25th July: visit to 20 Beta Close, New Ferry, with *Plant Auction*; contact P.Robson on 0244 537393
- WARRINGTON...Wednesday, 13th July: Visit to John Henshaw's nursery; contact Barbara Beesley on 051-424 9432. Hope no-one went for the June meeting, which was cancelled at the last minute because of repair work in the hall.
- 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

A reminder of the shows which are in the offing;
please give whatever support you can

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