

MANCHESTER BRANCH BCSS NEWSLETTER AUGUST 1997

As was stated in last month's newsletter the speaker for August is Rodney Sims and you are assured of an interesting evening as he is a very knowledgeable grower of the Aloes.

Turning to September we are pleased to welcome David Rushforth back into our midst once again. He is a regular visitor to Manchester both as speaker and to hear others speak. I first had the pleasure of meeting David and his family many years ago when he lived in a very splendid house in Bristol. He very kindly invited me to visit his collection while I was returning from Cornwall after visiting my sister. My wife and I were treated regally and I thoroughly enjoyed viewing his extensive collection. The grafting bug had already bitten him in those days and he still continues to propagate many desirable genera using those same techniques. In those days he was in the pharmacy business.

He wisely moved north and people from the whole area have taken him to their hearts. Our gain is their loss I'm afraid. Very recently he has moved to a new house and I am led to believe he will now have more time to devote to the arts of seed raising and grafting. There cannot be many members who haven't succumbed to the array of plants he brings with him each time he comes and will probably do yet again this coming evening in September.

His talk "Where grow the potatoes?" shows his wry sense of humour. So many of his talks are titled in such a way as to make you ask "What on earth is he going to be

talking about?" He could easily have used a title something along the lines "Growing cacti in Czechoslovakia" or "Our hobby in Eastern Europe" but no, he uses as chance comment from one of the audience when he gave a talk over there. I'm going to risk stealing some of his thunder by explaining. being an economically poor country from the days of Russian rule it paid people to be self sufficient in the vegetable line. Growing a garden full of flowers was virtually unknown and regarded as a strange way of using the land. Consequently when they saw his garden, given over to prettiness as opposed to usefulness in their eyes it caused quite a stir. On enquiring what all the conversation was about the interpreter informed David that they were wondering "WHERE GREW THE POTATOES?" So there you have it.

David took over from me many years ago now in the job of seed purchaser for the society. It is an interesting job but also highly time consuming once the seed arrives because all the seed has to be transferred into small packets of 3, 5, 10 or even 20 seeds. He has a regular band who give up their boring winter evenings for this highly therapeutic and absorbing hobby but he is always on the look out for more people to swell the ranks. So if you feel inclined to offer him your services approach him in September. Don't be shy----he wont bite your head off.

We look forward to that evening's entertainment.

PROGRAMME FOR 1998

As happened last year, Brendan is looking for your "want's list". Is there any genera or subject you would like to be included in

the programme for 1998. Or maybe you would like to hear a certain speaker again irrespective of the topic. Please let Brendan know immediately as he is already in the business of approaching prospective parties before they become booked up for next year. It's not early. Hull branch had already completed their programme for 1998 as early as the end of March this year.

VISITS TO OTHER BRANCHES 1997

As you were informed some time ago and reminded last month we were invited to visit two collections in Bradford on the Sunday following our meeting. This was a reciprocal action for their visit to three collections in Manchester last year to which our own branch members were also invited.

Four of us crossed the impenetrable barrier called the Pennines and lived to tell the tale. Brian, Eunice, Geoff and myself navigated the valleys and hills, some of us occasionally getting lost as traffic lights played havoc with the convoy system. But we all lived to tell the tale.

A wonderful afternoon was had by all and the plants were a sight to behold. Ariocarpi in their hundreds being lovingly tended at one venue along with many other highly desirable North American and Mexican genera. No matter how happy you are with your collection you always see plants being grown in a way you don't seem able to emulate.

At another venue the problem of acid rain reared its ugly head. One gentleman had lost several plants of Ariocarpus and a Pelecypora (I'm not calling it by its most

recent name that the botanists would have us address it as so we can all recognise what plant I mean) asselliformis was in grave danger of following them to cactus heaven. He had been collecting rainwater recently as we're all told it is better than tap water. When he did a check using one of the proprietary brands sold by Garden Centres he found the water in his butts were turning the checking fluid bright red, a sure sign of high acidity. Needless to say he stopped using it immediately, reverting to tap water and thus saving the Pelecypora.

Is your rain water acidic? What to do about it? If you are worried bring a small container filled with water from each of your butts and sealed tightly and Geoff Bailey, a chemist by trade can test it for you and give you any advice that might be necessary.

Last Sunday five of us were invited to see two splendid collections in Hull. The weather was superb and the collections matched its brilliance. One collection contained mainly plants in small to medium sized pots, all looking very healthy. There was plenty of discussion about the feast of plants and this was matched by a mouthwatering feast of food. At the other collection, Colin Norton's, what a sight met us. Huge plants in a high but not large double glazed, purpose built wooden greenhouse. Marvellous monsters. Rows of Lophophoras. Too much to relate here. More of that later.

**OUR CONVENTION SEPT. 20. PLEASE
MAKE IT A SUCCESS. TWO SPEAKERS
YOU ARE UNLIKELY TO HEAR AGAIN.
DON'T MISS THIS GOLDEN
OPPORTUNITY. BOOK NOW**