

EDITORIAL

One month of 1999 already done and dusted. Where does the time disappear these days. A sign of age, alas.

Time for another request.

REBUTIA BRUNNESCENS: it may also be found under the specific name of *Digitorebutia* or *Aylostera*. If you have that plant could I beg an offset to study, including any information regarding its source no matter how scanty.

REBUTIA MARSONERI: the same request as above.

Moving on to another genus;

WEINGARTIA—information about the rootstock is required here. The southern species of *westii*, *lecoriensis*, *vilcayensis*, *cintiensis*, *fidaiana*, *kargliana* or *neumanniana* are the plants in question.

1. Is the rootstock tuberous or stringlike?
2. If tuberous is the tuber continuous like a carrot or does it narrow under the plant base before widening out again, thus giving it a restricted neck?

Whatever the answer the following is also important. Is the plant seed grown, a cutting from a plant, or from habitat?

Now we move to **SOEHRENSIA**. The plant in question is *S. "bruchii"*, in inverted commas because it is doubtful. The particular form is under the form Lau 553. Here the flower is the important detail. One has been reported bearing this name but with a flower akin to *Trichocereus*. If you have this form I would be interested to see it.

Finally, do any of you grow any plants from the genus **ARTHROCEREUS**? They are small growing plants that usually flower quite freely. Have you:

1. flowered them,
2. set fruit on them,
3. may I borrow them to try to set fruit?

I hope you can help me with some or all of the above enquiries.

EXTRA DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Looking through the final Journal issue for 1998 you should have noticed two Marts were advertised. If you haven't I draw your attention to the following:

SPALDING CACTUS MART

Saturday 17th. April, 1999. At Springfield Gardens, Spalding. It is open from 10am to 4.30pm admission 50p.

If you haven't visited the said venue it is well worth looking at. You may well find some nurseries at this event that are not at the one following.

NORTH WEST CACTUS MART

Saturday 27th. March 1999. At Woolston Leisure Centre, Warrington. It is open from 10am to 4pm admission 50p. I am sure details will be forwarded to the secretary. Failing that a number of the committee members will be able to appraise you of how to find the location.

Talking of nurseries, should you visit a nursery which is not perhaps frequented by most of us due to distance, for example, please do let all members know about it through the auspices of these pages.

NEW BOOKS

If by any chance you purchase a new book that has not been mentioned in the Newsletter we would like to hear about its relative strengths and weaknesses. Please send or give me a review of it whenever you can.

DUE IN MARCH.

For those of you who have an interest in the *Haworthias* a new volume is promised from the pen, or maybe the computer, of the expert Bruce Bayer comes **HAWORTHIA REVISITED**. The advert reliably informs us of a volume 300 pages long including 450 colour photographs. Though the address is of a printing company in South Africa it will certainly be available through various book

outlets in the UK. Three that spring to mind are:

Whitestone Gardens (Roy Mottram)

Cactus File (Southampton)

Oakdene Nursery (Gordon Foster)

There will be others.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Have you paid up yet? If not you could find your March Journal is late arriving. If you can't find your renewal form see me as I have plenty of spare ones.

FEBRUARY'S SPEAKER

This gentleman needs no introduction to any of you. A collector for many years now, he has had many likes and cactus mood swings. Through the years he has shown a keen interest in South American genera, particularly *Gymnocalycium*. I think it is fair to say that Geoff Bailey has a leaning more towards cacti than succulents but you will still find some very presentable specimens of the latter in his collection today.

He is meticulous about his labelling. It is a source of useful information. In addition to the obvious, the plant's name, you will learn about its source, be it seed, cutting or nursery acquisition. Its size on arrival in the collection is also to be found. After many years as part of the collection and a certain haziness about its origins has crept in it is very easy to travel back along memory lane to see how much girth it has gained.

Of late, I think it fair to say he has become besotted with a new partner, one that carries age with great charm. *Ariocarpus* is the present buzz word in his vocabulary. Along with John Miller, Geoff has been encouraging the mating ritual of these plants. There have been straight crosses and more bizarre associations as the two of them have been attempting to produce seed, sowing and begetting offspring and then recrossing to see what gems can be produced. It is long and tedious work given the growth rate of *Ariocarpi*. Grafting has speeded up the process somewhat and some very strange happenings have been witnessed. But no more of that. Let Geoff

himself enlighten your mind.....if work permits that is.

So I spoke too soon. Work has taken Geoff to Montevideo, in Uruguay, where he informed me that the temperature at 6pm local time was a paltry 25 degrees on Wednesday last. His main regret was the absence of time to go looking for *Gymnocalyciums*. The place was absolutely splendid, clean, modern and very civilised. Doesn't it make you feel sorry for him that he has to trek to these far distant climes to earn a crust?

Saturday evening? I'm asked to bring forward my talk about Maltese cactus experiences from next January to now. Sorry if you had come specifically to see the talk on *Ariocarpus*. This has now been put back 11 months.

CACTI IN THE COLD NORTH cont.

So the Leningrad Club meets twice a month. Like us they have a library so that members can learn as much as possible about their beloved plants. The year's plan is produced by the membership at the last meeting of the term in June. Then they have the best part of three months to put everything into place. An example of what they might expect comes in the form of one of their year plans:

talks about *Parodia*, *Lophophora*, *Discactus*, *Uebelmannia*, *Melocactus*...delivered by knowledgeable people;
talks from fellow club members about "From the history of Cactology and Cacti growing", "The exploration of South America", "Our colleagues abroad", "Cacti in the latitude 60 degrees north";
talks about propagation by grafting, seed, cuttings;
discussions about the relative merits of clay and plastic pots.

One interesting way to deepen the interest of beginners is to hold a seminar for them where experienced growers offer many tips on the various facets of the hobby and attempt to name plants. They also give away offsets, cuttings and seed free of charge.

The Society as a whole has 5 main tasks.

1. To popularise cactus cultivation in the country.
2. To learn biology, ecology, physiology, systematics and botanical geography of cacti and other succulents.
3. To arrange cactus exhibitions, seminars and conferences on the most important problems of cactology.
4. To arrange experience exchange between the Leningrad Cactus Society and other cactus clubs and societies in Russia and abroad.
5. To develop new methods of cultivation of "difficult" and rare species for the sake of their conservation in private collections and botanical gardens.

Not much has changed in 20 years has it? The emphasis on cacti is understandable because the boom in other succulents was only just gathering pace throughout Europe and had not filtered into the Communist Bloc. (Ed).

Members of the L.C.S. are kept well informed about the cactus world through magazines and journals from Poland, West Germany, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, U.S.A., Mexico and Great Britain. All the articles are translated to make them available to the whole society readership.

There exhibitions were adventurous. In 1977 they held one which attracted 25 exhibitors who contributed over 1000 plants from 500 different species. In excess of 5000 visitors attended the exhibition where not only the plants could be viewed at leisure but also the could see photos of cacti in bloom, stamps exhibiting cacti and succulents from around the world, books of gardening and journals from many countries. They certainly made it an event worthy of note. At weekends thematic lectures and slide shows of flowering cacti attracted hundreds of visitors.

Their climate? They are included in the wet temperate climatic zone. This coupled with their northerly position affects the growth and flowering of cacti. However it is testament to the adaptability of the plants that they rapidly acclimatise themselves to the conditions. They grow well, flower annually and produce seed.

Just like ourselves different growers have different appetites and passions for these wonderful plants.

PERSONALITY PORTRAIT

This month I am pleased to offer you a portrait of a regular visitor to our Branch in his guise of Zone Representative. Alasdair Glen is the gentleman I refer to this time. This particular feature has been missing from the newsletter for a few months as I await the arrival of the promised articles from those I have approached.

Peter asked me to write about Zone Reps in general and me in particular. I hope the following will be of some help.

The Zonal Representative, or Zone Rep as he or she tends to be called in official Society parlance, is expected to maintain contact with the branches in the zone which, in our case, happens to be a small one consisting only of Macclesfield, Manchester and Stoke-on-Trent Branches. The Branches should be visited at least once in the year and AGM's are suggested as suitable and useful times to do this. While this is a good time to get the feel of the business side of a Branch the AGM is hardly an average meeting so I also like to experience how things are at a typical meeting with a visiting speaker. Besides it gives me a chance to hear more talks! If a Branch has not been represented at a Society Executive or AGM I should pass on any important and pressing information that comes up. Since each Branch Secretary receives the Minutes of these meetings in due course, they can the more mundane items in a more leisurely fashion.

There is a Zone Committee which consists of myself and 2 representatives from each Branch. Manchester's representatives are Geoff Bailey and Philip Barker. We meet about three times a year or more frequently if necessary. In recent years we've arranged two speakers each year to do a Zone mini-tour with the cost being spread over the Branches. For example, Keith Mortimer and Bill Weightman were the "tourists" last year. Unfortunately, this won't be happening this year partly due to Manchester's problems in providing overnight hospitality and partly due to the uncertainty over whether Stoke would have

a meeting place. The latter problem has been resolved recently. A successful Zone 19 Symposium was held at Alderley Park in 1997 and another is being put together for September 25th. this year.

Constructive comments about the BCSS made either to your Branch representatives or to me are very welcome and can be discussed at the Zone Committee or, if need be, raised with the appropriate Society Officer, as has been done in the past.

Looking in the opposite direction, the Zone Reps respond to the Society Vice Chairman who once a year chairs a meeting with them together with the principal officers of the Society. It's usually held on the morning of the October Executive Meeting. I also provide a summary of how I perceive things to be going in the Branches. All of the above are pleasant tasks but less pleasant things the Zone Rep should do, if necessary, are to mediate if there is severe difficulty or strife within a Branch and to oversee the closure of a Branch if that sad thing has to happen for any reason. I'm pleased to say that in my 5 years as Zone Rep I haven't been faced with either of those situations.

As for myself, I've been growing cacti and other succulents for about 25 years and have been a member of the Society for about 20 years. I was Chairman of the Macclesfield and East Cheshire Branch for 12 years and since standing down from that Office in 1995 I've edited the Branch Newsletter. In the 10 years that I've been on the Speaker's List I've visited more than 40 Branches at least once so I've had a good chance to judge how the Branches in our Zone compare with others round the country. I regularly attend the Judge's Course and I am an Approved Judge of Cacti and Succulents.

I grow mainly cacti but admit to more than a passing interest in Lithops, some Echeverias and a few Haworthias. I favour globular cacti over the columnar cereoid types so there's lots of free air space in my greenhouse but no bench space since it's overcrowded with mainly Mammillarias, Neoporterias in the wide sense, and members of the Rebutia group. I'm a keen seed raiser hence the large number of seedlings in my collection. I find more satisfaction in growing a plant from seed to

flowering stage rather than in the long term cultivation of large specimen plants.

Thank you Alasdair. So there you are. If you would like to know more from Alasdair please approach him when he visits us.

IN THE GREENHOUSES

I thought it might be interesting to take a look at a year in the greenhouses so here we go with instalment number one.

In the warm house several cacti are showing signs of waking up. Flowers are already evident on *Notocactus bueneckeri* v. *conjugens*, *stockingeri* and *agnetae* along with *Rhipsalis platycarpa* and *Mammillaria perezdelarosea*. Amongst the other succulents, *Monadeniums* are aflower, most noticeably *M. echinulatum*. *Crassulas*, *Aloes* and *Echeverias lauii* and *tolimanensis* have all been flowering for some time. Elsewhere in the other houses not much is moving yet but surprisingly *Mammillaria brandegeei* v. *gabbii* has well formed buds.

Growth is evident in many plants. *Idria columnaris* from seed enjoys winter growth. Many *Euphorbias* are showing ample signs by either new growth in the crown or new leaf formation after dormancy, notably *E. sepulta*, with flowers as well, *phillipsae* and *trichadenia*. *Brachystelma nanum*, *praelongum* and *pulchellum* have put up new stems. *Dioscorea elephantidens* grows when it pleases but always at the same time, so I have one winter grower, two summer growers and one in early autumn.

The natural winter growing *Tylecodons* are coming to the end of growth but will retain their succulent leaves for a long time yet as will my only specimen of *Othonna*, grown from Society seed many long years ago. *Fockeas crispa* and *edulis* are well away now with obvious new stems. *Kedrostris africana*, in the warm house, never stops growing. Two seedling *Pachycormis* discolors have been in leaf throughout the winter though the older plant remains dormant till spring.

Elsewhere the Lithops are all shrinking back preparing for growth later in the year. The *Conophytums* have finally stopped growth and flowering and winter growing *Mesembs* are asking for another drink.