

Gaultonia

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British Cactus and Succulent Society

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Editorial

After a quiet winter it is pleasing to note that I have now have both some news and further articles to print. I have recently noticed that the usual curtain raiser to the cactus season, the NorthWest Cactus Mart will be held at the usual venue.

The AGM in December failed to suggest a theme for this year. To date, the only suggestion I have received is the genus Rebutia. Since we chose a cactus genus last year as our theme, I think it would be appropriate to widen the scope of this year's theme to the letter 'R'. For those of you looking to put pen to paper for the newsletter this also includes Rhipsalis, the succulent genus Rosularia and several genera within the mesembraeanthamaceae. For the lateral thinkers out there, this could also include red flowered plants, rubricated lithops, red spider mite and much more.

Saturday March 23rd
North West Cactus Mart
at
Woolston Leisure Centre,
off A57, Warrington,
10am - 3pm.

FEBRUARY 2002 The Winter greenhouse report.

By Peter Bint

It is amazing what does go on in the greenhouse in winter. A lot of plants shrivel during this enforced deprivation of both water and sufficient cloud free daylight. But much is still happening in spite of this. Flower buds are preparing to form, even now new growth is but a whisker away from starting and in the Lithops the new bodies are well into formation as they absorb the goodness from last years bodies. This is clearly visible in my plants as the old leaves shrivel back in alarming looking fashion.

However, Haworthias such as *emelyae*, *emelyae* v. *multiflorum*, *emelyae* Sandkraal, *comptoniana*, *herbacea* fm. *Luteo-rosea*, *pygmaea* fm. *major* and a Joyce Cocozza hybrid "Michael Cocozza" to name some are steadily growing new flower spikes. The small Aloes have been a riot of flowers and *A. rauhii* is still well in bloom. *A. krapohlina* is sporting huge seed pods and *A. plicatilis* has also flowered. Several Euphorbias and Monadeniums have a new crop of flowers but *E. phillipsiae* is the pick of the bunch with every stem sporting myriads of tiny inflorescences. The hybrid *Crassula susannae* x *mesembryanthemopsis* is well in flower and growth and various other winter growing *Crassulas*, *Tylecodons* and *Cotyledons* are performing bravely. Even *Brachystelma pulchellum* has sprouted into growth. *Echeveria lauii* is looking resplendent in its fluorescent pruinose coating and new flower spikes are growing steadily from close to the crown.

Not to be outdone, several cacti are showing buds. First is the regular flowerer, *Rhipsalis platycarpa*, with its flattened stems sprouting buds at every areole. Soon the chrysaline white flowers will be in full array. *Mammillaria hernandezii* has already spent most of its blooms but there are still a few to open. *Mammillaria huitzilopochtli* has several deep carmine flowers fully open. An *Ancistrocactus* similar to *scheeri* has two buds well into formation and *Astrophytum* "Lotus Land" has three buds forming.

The Lithops seedlings are doing very well. These are mainly from seed produced on my own plants. It is seed from four summers ago and it has given me an excellent germination rate. Seed, planted two seasons ago, of mainly cacti are doing well and surviving the winter struggle.

In spite of the dreary weather Spring is just round the corner and it will not be long before watering will commence and repotting become necessary. May your new growing season be a resplendent one.

Opuntia Unravelled - Part 1.

By Ivor Crook

The sub-family Opuntia is probably the most diverse of all the genera of the cacti. It ranges from near the southern tip of South America up through the tropics and beyond the Arctic Circle into Canada. It was named by Miller in 1754 and as such is also one of the oldest named genera within the cactus family.

Over the years, as more species have been discovered, the number of genera within the sub-family has grown. Similarities between species in different genera lead to plants being moved from one genus to another as various authors studied the plants. After revisions by Britton and Rose in 1920, Backeberg in the 1950's and Ritter in the 1970's-80's it was David Hunt who proposed all species should be classified under the one genus - Opuntia.

Like all systems of nomenclature, it was soon realised this was not perfect. Several groups of plants have since been placed back within their old generic boundaries. For the plants of South America, the general rule of thumb is that the flat-padded and generally lowland species have remained within Opuntia. The high Andean plants and those of the adjoining Pacific coastal desert areas, generally circular or oval in segment cross-section, have been separated into several genera.

The best guide to current classification is given in Ted Anderson's new book, *The Cactus Family*. The table below details the genera and their general distribution. To the first five genera I have added Pterocactus and Maihuenia which is now thought may be a separate sub-family of the cactus family in itself.

Genus	Number of species	Distribution
Austrocylindropuntia	11	Andean uplands of Peru extending into Ecuador, northern Bolivia and northern Argentina
Cylindropuntia	20	Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina from Pacific coastal deserts through the Andes and on to the alti-plano.
Maihueniopsis	18	Mainly Chilean and Argentinian Andes
Tephrocactus	6	Argentina, from Salta, south to Mendoza
Tunilla	9	Mainly Argentina and Bolivia
Pterocactus	9	Argentina. South from Salta down to Patagonia
Maihuenia	2	Patagonian Argentina and Chile

Culture of these plants is usually quite straight-forward which you would expect from a genus with such a wide distribution. However, a few species can be quite tricky. Propagation by cuttings is the simplest way to start a collection. Individual segments or small groups of segments can be cut or even fall from these plants. After a few days left on the bench to callous over they usually root readily on moist compost during the warmer months of the year (April to October). Despite long-standing mythology, even the notoriously difficult to root *Austrocylindropuntia malayana* can be tempted to put down its own roots from a cutting. Rooting may also take place one or even two seasons after the segment has separated from the mother plant. Grafting produces quicker results and plants often pup more readily on a graft.

Growth from seed is often slow and difficult. Most seed benefits from assisted germination by chitting-the seed coat. Once germinated, usually at a hot and humid 26-28 degrees C, seedlings benefit from a less humid environment where damping off is less of a problem. Plants rarely attain more than the size of a thumb nail after two seasons. Pterocacti tend to be deciduous if grown cold with the stems dropping off in the winter and new growth emerging from the tuberous root the following spring.