

# Gaultonia

Newsletter of the  
**Manchester Branch**  
of the  
**British Cactus and Succulent Society**



*Mammillaria  
Plumosa*

**Winter 2009**

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**PHOTO CORNER**



*Stapelia mutabilis*



*Stapelia peglerae*



*Tavaresia barklyi*

**Above 3 pictures courtesy of Tony on a trip to the Hull Branch Open Day**

**Above 3 pictures courtesy of John**

## NORTH WEST MESEMB SHOW

Hosted by Manchester Branch of BCSS

By Peter Bint

(Photos courtesy of Chris Leather from his website: more can be seen at:  
<http://www.cactuscorner.co.uk/apps/photos/album?albumid=7227445> )



This was the third North West Mesemb Show and, I am pleased to say, the best so far. Once again we were lucky to have a fine day for the event which made things much easier for all the people unloading their plants to bring into the hall. I would like to thank all the people who travelled from near and far to make this such a success. Exhibitors, 18 in all, came from Dunbartonshire in Scotland, Coventry, Newark, Leeds, Liverpool, Northwich, Frodsham, Sheffield and many places from closer at hand. A mighty array of plants was on show and even though the odd class was a little thin on the ground others were bulging with teens of plants with one class even boasting 20 entries.

It was pleasing to see so many visitors walking round the tables, studying all the exhibits, as well as purchasing the many and varied plants available on the sales tables. The kitchen was also busy quenching the thirst of many people. Visitors came from many different places but I think one visitor really does deserve a mention. All the way from Almeria, in Spain, we had the pleasure of the company of Catherine. Admittedly she had been on holiday here, mainly in North Wales visiting her mother, but she still gave her last day to visit the show and stay for our evening branch meeting before going to Manchester Airport to return home. We thank her and all the attendees for the support given. Once all the exhibits had been staged and checked – I'm pleased to say there was not a single NAS – it was time for our judge to test his skill. Though the occasional class did not prove too demanding, he was stretched to the limit with many classes.

The last task was to award the various prizes and he came up with the following results:

Best plant in the show went to Alex Martin for his entry. He was the recipient of the award of a year's free subscription to the MSG (our grateful thanks to Suzanne Mace who offered this prize from the group).

Most points in the show went, once more, to David Porter, who had an entry in almost every class. He was awarded the Jumanery Mesemb Trophy for this achievement. He is a great competitor who helps to ensure the classes are well stocked with plants.

The Oakdene Trophy was awarded (yet again) to John Collins for his entry in Class 36 of a single genus in a 21" square. This year he used *Lithops*, all in 3.5 inch pots, for his entry and they were worthy winners of the trophy.

The entry for best *Conophytum* also went to John Collins for a much admired plant of *Conophytum herreanthus* that was in full flower. It is not the first time this plant has won a prize. For this he was awarded the Abbey Brook *Conophytum* Trophy.



The final trophy was at the judges' discretion. This is a prize that really does tease the judge's sensibilities and requires much thought. Eventually he came up with Gordon Foster's entry of a bowl of *Lithops* on class 20. For this he was awarded the Theaker Trophy.

Time flew by and before you knew it 2pm had arrived and it was time to settle down for Andy Young's talk, "Conophytum Highlights". Andy's photography was stunning, his love of the plants hugely transparent and infectious and he is highly knowledgeable. He concentrated on plants that bore strong markings, showing us plants in habitat, in the collection of that incredible Conophile, Steve Hammer, and occasionally from his own collection. All too soon the talk was over and it was left to Ivor Crook to express the thoughts and thanks we all felt for this wonderful presentation.

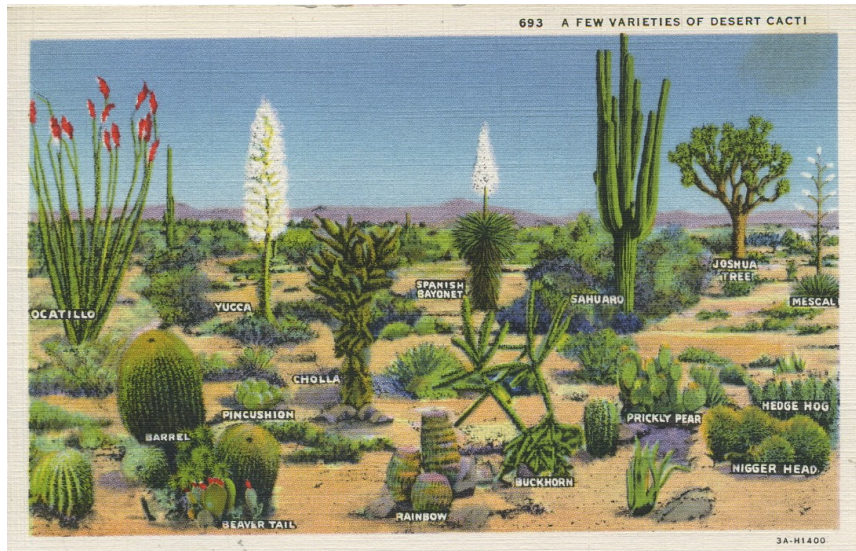
As always there was a last chance to look at the exhibits one final time, check the sales tables in case there had been any plants that had been missed or have a last gossip with assembled friends after the talk. Andy's talk did ensure that any sellers who had *Conophytums* amongst their sales items did a final flurry of business. Thanks to the willing band of helpers the hall was readied for the evening meeting by 5 p.m. Plans for 2010 are already made so place the date, Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October, at the same venue, in your diaries. As we have already engaged that enthusiastic Mesemb officianado, Eddy Harris, to both judge the show and deliver the talk so I believe we are assured of a stimulating day. The show coincides with our regular meeting on the Saturday evening so anybody who wants to come to the show and also stay on to hear Dorothy Minors expound on the subject of "And Ivor makes three...plant hunting in the Eastern Cape" is very welcome to do so. You can be assured of a very interesting Southern African day, from beginning to end.



## Cacti and Succulents in California – 100 years ago

By Sylvia Jones

These are postcards sent by ‘Mary’, around 1910, to her family back in East Lancashire. From other correspondence she had moved to California with her husband, who was working in the orange growing trade. Mary was clearly interested in the flora of her new habitat and I have used some of her messages.



Varieties of Desert Cacti card “Sahuaro variety are in Arizona. There are thousands – acre after acre; they took me to see them”



A Clustered Schuaro – (Giant Cactus)  
*(Carnegie gigantea – Saguaro, Sahuaro or Giant Cactus.*Distribution Sonoran Desert, primarily in Arizona and S. California at elevations of 180 – 1350 m. *C.gigantea* is not listed as endangered or threatened but Arizona has strict regulations regarding the harvesting or selling of them. Urban developments have affected the population of Saguaros but developers are now required to salvage or protect them.



Cactus in Southern California  
*(Cereus spp.)*  
 “I could send you a cactus leaf – no I forgot – no parcel post (war on) Hope the war will not cause you all to suffer.” (Must have been 1914)



Yucca in Bloom, Glendora  
 “Our mountain sides are in full bloom in April with this beautiful flower – cream colour with a pinkish edge – bell shaped. They are a wonderful tall flower – I just like them. I have sent, in a magazine, some bells taken from a flower today”



Under the Cactus – *Opuntia spp.*



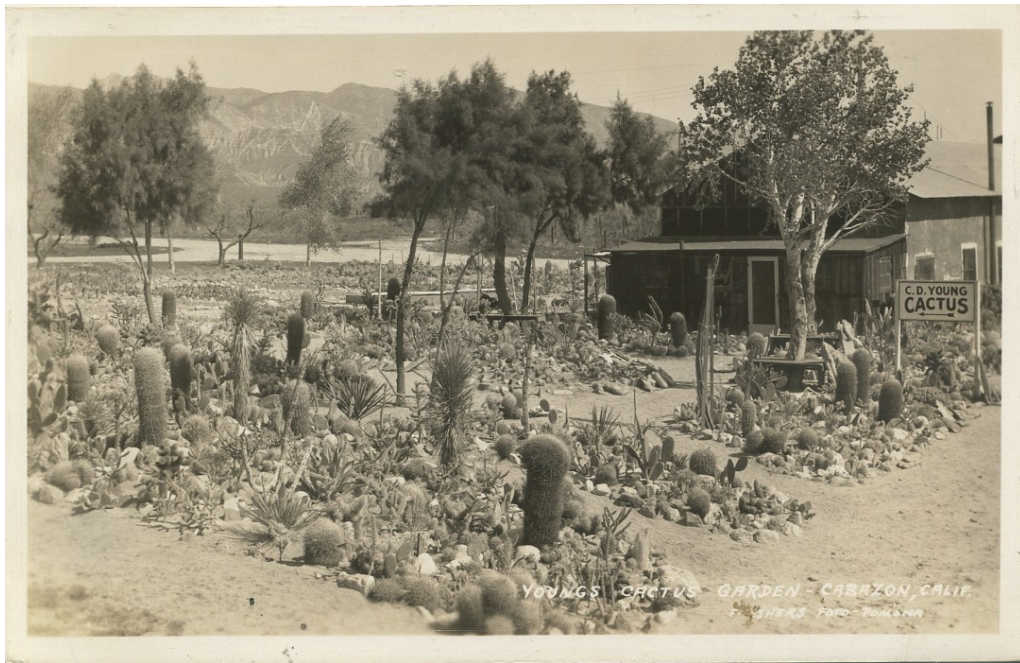
Cactus Blossom card - *Cereus spp.*



The Palm tree entwined with night blooming *Cereus* – California



Cacti in Smiley Park, Redlands.



Young's Cactus Garden, Cabazon, California.

Have any readers been to these places? It would be interesting to know what they are like today.

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## HELP 1



This 8 month seedling came from a packet labelled *Echinocereus rigidissimus* - but it clearly isn't. Suggestions to John Jones please.



**HELP 2** - Plants seen by Frank in Cyprus. Suggestions to Frank.  
First one may be *Euphorbia canariensis*?



## Let's look at some *Mammillarias*.

by Peter Bint

### Introduction



*Mammillaria zeilmanniana*



*Mammillaria Crinita (duweii)*

The genus *Mammillaria* is one of the largest in the world of cacti and succulents with in excess of 160 known species and varieties recognised. Although the vast majority are to be found in Mexico they can also be found in the south western states of America, the Caribbean Islands, through Central America and in Columbia and Venezuela in South America. The first *Mammillaria* was described by Carolus Linnaeus as *Cactus mammillaris* in 1753, using the Latin *mammilla*, meaning ‘nipple’, as a specific way to describe the main feature of *Mammillarias*, the tubercle. At this point in time any cacti discovered were known as *Cactus* something or other in spite of the vast variation in appearance. In 1812, the cactus specialist Adrian Haworth described the genus *Mammillaria* to contain this and related species. The Americans love giving their native plants common names or nicknames so that numerous species are known as ‘**nipple cactus**’, ‘**fishhook cactus**’ or ‘**pincushion**’.

What makes them so admired and collected in the cactus hobbyists domain? Well, there are several features which are attractive. To start with there is the neat spiralling formation of the tubercles which spiral differently clockwise to anticlockwise. Then there is the woolly nature of many species to the point where the body is totally hidden by wool. For some people the fact that many species remain small even in maturity is highly attractive especially if space for their plants is at a premium. Equally some species can grow to in excess of two feet in diameter making a highly spectacular exhibit in the process. White spined species have been popular right from the outset and there is no denying how a gleaming display white spined *Mammillarias* catch the eye when they are all gathered together. Flowers undoubtedly attract the collector and *Mammillaria* flowers fall into two categories, both very appealing. In the main, *Mammillarias* flower with a profusion of small white, cream, yellow, pink or red blooms. These are arranged in rings on the shoulder of the plant and will last for several weeks in spring as they open progressively round the rings.

The flowers make up for their size by the pure numbers exhibited. This is clearly shown by *M. zeilmanniana*, the red flowered form, which can hide its multiple bodies beneath an absolute profusion of colour at the height of its display. However there is one group that has evolved to provide the beholder, and the pollinator, with blooms to die for. The Longiflora group of *Mammillarias*, which includes plants such as *M. longiflora*, *M. napina*, *M. deherdtiana* and the *M. theresae* section, possess huge flowers which are resplendent.

*Mammillarias* provide the enthusiast with a remarkable range of species to grow. The vast majority of them are very easy to grow, can be grown in pots under six inches in diameter and provide the grower with an interesting range of growth features that will be pleasing to the eye. There are single headed globular plants; small bodied, multiple headed plants; stately tall specimens; white spined or woolly species; all providing variety as only nature can provide. However, for every ten easy ones there is an opposingly tricky one that will test even the most experienced grower. The main areas of the *Mammillaria* genus where these plants are found are in the Longiflorae, the Ancistrocanthae and the Lasiacanthae series. Without a doubt the hardest to grow are *M. tetrancistra*, which is virtually impossible in our climate on its own roots and still difficult on a graft, and the group centred round *M. beneckii* (including synonymous names such as *M. nelsonii*, *M. balsasoides* and *M. colonensis*) which is rarely seen in collections. These are closely followed by the *M. wrightii* group (including *M. wilcoxii* and *M. viridiflora*) which are only marginally easier. Of the three series mentioned above, plants in the Ancistrocanthae are the hardest and most challenging to grow. They have superb, showy flowers which, though not as big as those in the Longiflorae, are just as striking.



*Mammillaria hemisphaerica*



*Mammillaria winteriae*

Through the centuries there have been many names for plants now considered to be *Mammillaria*. Many people have been involved in the 'name game' which has caused much confusion down the years. Early classifications were performed by Pfeiffer in 1837, Salm-Dyke in 1845 and Engelmans in 1856. At one time or another, genera such as Ariocarpus and Coryphantha have been included under the umbrella of *Mammillaria*. Later classification attempts were made by Schumann in 1898, Britton and Rose in 1923, Berger in 1929, Buxbaum in 1951 – 56 and Moran in 1953 when the genus was alternatively split apart or joined up together again. Later classification has been carried out by cactus experts such as Hunt at Kew, Reppenhagen and Luthy where they looked much more scientifically and botanically at all the species. They took original descriptions and synchronised them with modern taxonomic requirements, they studied the morphology of seeds and plants as well as ecological aspects of the plants to bring about the classifications we have today. Very few new genera are likely to be found in future as botany shows the relationships between previously separated species but there will still be the occasional surprise waiting round the corner.

Amongst the cactus diehards some of the old names will continue to live on. Amongst those names that persist is *Bartschella schumanii*, now *M. schumanii*; *Cochemia* species with their atypical flowers which make it hard to believe they are *Mammillarias*; *Dolichothele* with their large, yellow flowers and larger tubercles than in most *Mammillaria* species; *Mammillopsis* for the single species *M. senilis* that can be red or white flowered and extremely early to flower in the year if you are lucky enough to succeed; *Oehmea beneckii* mentioned above as *M. beneckii*; *Mammilloidia candida* about which some people still disagree as to its inclusion in *Mammillaria* due to its seed characteristics; *Phellosperma* for plants now called *M. guelzowiana*, *longiflora*, *pennispinosa* and *tetrancistra*; *Porfiria schwartzii* for what is now known as *M. coahuilensis*; *Solisia pectinata* which is now *M. pectinata* and finally *Krainzia* which was another name by which *M. longiflora* was known. Other names which have been used for plants, now known as *Mammillaria*, in the past are: *Chilita*, *Ebnerella*, *Haagea*, *Lactomammillaria*, *Leptocladia*, *Leptocladodia*, *Mammariella*, *Mammilaria* (note only a single –l), *Neomammillaria* and *Pseudomammillaria*. So it can be seen that *Mammillaria* has had a varied and highly controversial life.

In the next in the series I will look at the different groups into which *Mammillaria* is divided up.



**Wishing You All a  
Very Happy Christmas  
And All the Best for 2010**

## EARLY INSPIRATIONS

I was amazed when, at the AGM, it was reported that previous attempts to interest the general public in cactus displays had been met with apathy. There again, I'm somebody who, on any visit to a park or garden, has always made a bee-line for any greenhouse in the hope of finding some cacti or succulents to look at.

It was in Victorian times that the idea came about, of collecting and displaying exotic plants (and other things) from overseas, to educate ordinary working class people about the wonders of the world around them, in the hope of enriching lives which were often bleak. People really would come away saying they'd never seen anything like it! I suppose that now such things can be seen in nature programmes on TV, some of the novelty has been lost and only enthusiasts go that extra few miles to be inspired by the real thing.

Here are a couple of my discoveries of cacti and succulents in Britain. Perhaps other members can suggest other places, with the aim of compiling a 'cactus trail' which could be passed on to anyone interested, in place of the suggested temporary exhibitions/school visits.

I first visited Kew Gardens in the 60's. At that time the entrance fee was 1d (but watch this space!). Apart from the iconic Palm and Temperate Houses, full of exotic greenery, there were smaller greenhouses including one of succulents and one of cacti. The cactus collection had been presented to Kew by Mrs Sherman Hoyt of Pasadena, California, after she had exhibited them at Chelsea, in 1929. She also generously donated the greenhouse to contain them and it was opened in 1931. A painted backdrop to the exhibit represented the Mohave desert, where many of the plants were native.

In the 70's I was a regular visitor, while I was a student in London (entrance fee still only 10p). The greenhouses were usually busy, although it would be interesting to know what proportion of visitors were there for the plants, and what proportion were taking respite from the constant bombardment of aircraft noise. Kew is on the flight path from Heathrow and I timed it that a plane roared across every 90 seconds.

I have written about this cactus house in the past tense as it has since been replaced. The Princess of Wales Conservatory, opened 1987, is now the largest area of Kew under glass and is divided into 10 climatic zones. The Dry Tropics, where the cacti and succulents are displayed, is the second largest. It includes plants native to Mexico, Bolivia and Brazil including *Echinocactus*, *Myrtillocactus*, *Cleistocactus*, *Parodia*, *Opuntia*, *Ferrocactus*, *Euphorbia*, *Mammillaria*, *Agaves*, *Aloes* and *Crassulas*.

In the same year disaster struck with the 'Michael Fish' hurricane on October 16<sup>th</sup> 1987, causing much damage (over 1000 trees damaged or destroyed), and this was after an expensive time, renewing the Palm and Temperate Houses and other innovations. The entrance charge had to rise steeply to £9-50 in Winter and £11-50 in Summer (ouch!).

I was going to call this piece 'Cactus hunting for softies', until I remembered my trip to see the Tresco Abbey Gardens on the Scilly Isles, a place with such an exceptionally mild climate and low rainfall, that it specialises in plants from all over the world, which can't be grown in the open anywhere else in Britain. The journey involved a 30 mile helicopter flight from Penzance, at the West tip of Cornwall. 'Piece of cake', I thought as we took off but, seeing the spinning panorama below us as we banked and circled in to land, made me glad to have my feet firmly on the ground again. Not for long though – we still had a short boat trip from the main island (St Mary's) to the island of Tresco. We were not disappointed. Even on the short walk from the boat landing there were massive blue agapanthus lilies growing at the side of the road like wild flowers. Once we were in the Abbey gardens there was so much to look at that I didn't know which

way to turn. Rockeries provided a natural setting for succulents, with psychedelic pink blankets of *Mesembrianthemums*, *Sedums*, *Aeoniums*, *Agaves* and *Aloes*. Much of the gardens are set out informally but there are fascinating flowers everywhere. Go round a corner and there are great banks of giant *Proteas* (from South Africa) or *Pelargoniums*. Some attempt has been made to place them in regions such as the Australia gardens. The Mexico garden contains cacti such as *Opuntias* and *Echinocacti* and prickly succulents. There is also a rockery of cacti and succulents native to Arizona. A small greenhouse provides refuge for more tender cacti in Winter.

The overall impression is of a great lushness as there are exotic trees and shrubs planted between areas, providing a living backdrop of *Araucarias*, *Cordylines*, tree ferns, *Phoenix palms* and *Yuccas*. While adding to the beauty of the place, these have a practical purpose, screening the gardens from the worst of the winds from Atlantic storms. Looking around, it's hard to believe that in 1834, when the garden was begun, it was just a bare, windswept island without even a gorse bush.

Finally, cacti nearer to home ..... or not? I came across this postcard (Alexandra Park, postally used in 1926) and put it on my postcard website asking for info. Straight away I had a reply from a chap in Bristol who used to live nearby and regularly visited it in the early 60's, but when he last drove through, in the late 60's, there had been a big clearance programme and he feared it had been demolished. Next day, a reply from Bradford – a lady who said it was the most important collection in the UK. Finally I was sent a brochure of gardens in the North West, which details the attractions of Alexandra Park, but no mention of a cactus house/greenhouse which seems to put the lid on it – unless readers know better?

### **Cards (see images on CD) – Kew**

(3 in colour) The Sherman Hoyt Cactus House (No 7A), presented, together with its printed background of the Mohave desert, by Mrs Sherman Hoyt of Pasadena, California

One card shows the night flowering cactus *Hylocereus undatus* – a native of tropical America. The flowers open between 8-9 p.m. and close by 10 a.m.

B/w 4) Succulent House (separate from those above) showing the flower of the Giant Cactus from California (caption on back).

5) *Agave*: The Century Plant – *Agave Atrovirens* from Mexico. Some succulents were moved outdoors for the Summer months. From the lady's dress, this would have been pre-WWI.

### **Tresco**

1. Artistic impression, again in Edwardian times of *Agaves*, this time growing permanently outdoors
2. The sea, on the horizon, means that these islands are windswept, even though the climate is milder than the mainland.
3. & 4. Views showing the lush greenery which shelters more tender plants

[NB Because the photos are from original postcards, which I own, and which are over 30 years old (i.e. not copied from books which may have been published later), I understand (from previous article writing) that they can be used as illustrations without contravening copyright.]