

Gaultonia

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



All open to offers - at the forthcoming auction

SPRING 2010

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The challenging conditions have meant a difficult start to the year with problems like extra heating costs and lost plants (including the entire contents of one member's greenhouse when the seals failed under heavy snow). Let's hope this is all behind us now as there is much to look forward to in the year ahead.

Please continue to send us your news, photos and written pieces, long or short, for publication.

Post to:

J & S Jones, 20 Pennine Way, Brierfield, NELSON, Lancs BB9 5DT

Or E-mail photos or articles to:

sjones@sjones41.freemove.co.uk

New For 2010

Cactus Mart

At the A.G.M., Philip announced that the annual Cactus Mart *would* go ahead – at the hall where we hold our monthly meetings. This has the distinct advantage that there will no longer be the need to transport the tables. Here's hoping for a successful event – perhaps attracting new visitors who might become new members. (see back page for details)

Another chance to fill some gaps left by the hard winter is the Easter weekend, when Croston Cactus hold their annual sale event.

Monthly Table Shows

Peter was so pleased with the turnout of plants at last year's Table Shows that he has decided to continue this year and has produced a new programme, based on his survey of favourite plants at the November meeting, so get your copy from him if you haven't already got one and bring the appropriate plants – you know how they enjoy a night out! This year there will be the opportunity to win a cup for the most points notched up by the end of the year.

There will also be a new category – of any cactus or succulent in flower so if the awkward little so-and-so doesn't bloom until the month *after* its designated date, or there isn't a category for a cactus or succulent you have in flower, bring it along then, for a chance in the flowering plant category.

Note – these are in addition to the Branch Mini Shows which will take place as usual; Cacti – May and Succulents - August

Auction

In May there will be an exciting one-off event of the auction of a former member's plants. We went over to see them, along with Peter, Chris and Tony and between us, photographed over 130 plants, mainly cacti. Chris has set up a website <http://Manchesterbranchauction.webs.com> to give you a preview of some of the plants, but there are many others and they must all go, as the greenhouse is to be dismantled. No reserve prices have been set so you could get some real bargains. If you want a chance to see what else is on offer, how about volunteering to help in some way with the setting up? Peter needs all sorts of help, from lighter jobs like packing plants into trays for transportation – to the heavier work of loading them into the van. The plants will also need to be set out in the hall, ready for the auction and it will really be a case of many hands making light work. (Exact date T.B.A.),

Raffle Prizes

Peter is also seeking help by the provision of raffle prizes and would welcome anything you can donate.

Open Gardens Day

This is an event, which only takes place every two years and will be held on the 15th June, the day after the June meeting. Several members of Manchester Branch will open their gardens and greenhouses to other members and visitors from other branches. We had a great time at the last one, despite the unseasonably cool, wet and windy weather. We saw inspiring plants, picked up useful growing tips and had a fantastic tea and a chance to meet members of other branches. Look out for further details nearer the time.

Cactus Corner. by Chris Leather

What is Cactus Corner? Well it depends who you ask. A quick search on the internet reveals that it might possibly be a Truck Stop in Alberta, California. Or it could be a web directory and search engine for Arizona where you can rent accommodation and vehicles. They also have lots of nice pictures of the Grand Canyon and they even have their own screen saver! It also appears it might be a Grocery Store in Watsonville, California. Cactus Corner is also the name for the intersection of County Road 98 and Russell Blvd, Davis, California. Apparently the intersection bristles with many cacti, namely Opuntia and Cylindropuntia. Passing through this intersection is the bike path that starts from Russell Blvd. Cyclists often pass through Cactus Corner on their way to Stevenson Bridge and Winters. You can also apparently buy a cactus corner table. These tables look quite good. It comprises of a horse saddle and cowboy boot propped up against a tall cactus with two arms and on the top of the cactus is a glass table top. Yours for only \$69. Hum....I wonder how much shipping will be from the USA?

Of course none of the above are correct. If you are reading this then you probably like growing Cacti. You probably know also that no matter how many plants you buy there always seems to be room inside your greenhouse for more plants. Where does this space come from? Well each greenhouse has a cactus corner in it that enables you to squeeze in those additional plants. It moves around from place to place – but it is always there just when you need a space for another plant. It is a bit like that “safe place” in the house where you always lose your car keys or your wallet or your glasses – except here you find something instead of losing something.

Cactus Corner is also the name of my website. Hopefully you’ll have all looked (access from the Manchester Branch Website) and seen what’s there, but perhaps there are some of you that don’t know it’s there and what there is to see. Well what is there to see?

On the homepage there is a list of photo galleries that I’ve uploaded. To see these you need to click on “Picture Pages” at the top of the homepage. There are pictures from the recent North West Mesemb Show and the two branch mini shows from last year. There are also several galleries of older pictures from the shows that were held at Rochdale, Wythenshawe and Daisy Nook in the 1990’s and pictures of a couple of nurseries that I’ve been to. I’ve also been busy taking pictures of some of my own plants. The photos I’ve taken so far are of Gymnocalyciums. I hope to add more photos once the weather warms up a bit. There is also a selection of pictures from the lake where my Grandfather and I used to go fishing. Finally there is a gallery of some of the many flowers my Grandad has grown in his garden.

You'll also see a square of very small pictures. These are some my Panoramio pictures. Panoramio is a photo sharing website and the bonus for this particular site is that the photos (if they are landscapes/buildings/views and not people and transport) are more than likely to be selected for the Panoramio Layer within Google Earth. This means that your photos show up as those little blue dots you see in Google Earth. If you click on one of the pictures in the square you will be taken to one of my Panoramio pictures. To see the full gallery you need to click on my user name underneath the photo you've selected from the square.

If you've already been to Cactus Corner and had a look then thank you and I hope you've enjoyed the visit. If you haven't – please take a look. If anyone hasn't got access to the internet then let me know and I'll see about bringing some pictures to a future meeting.

You can get to the site by visiting <http://www.cactuscorner.co.uk> or via the Manchester Branch website <http://manchestercactus.co.uk> and clicking "Chris' Cactus Corner Web".

Below: two more views of some of the cacti to be auctioned. Pictures of individual plants can now be see on Chris's website <http://Manchesterbranchauction.webs.com>.

Left - the Cereoids



Right - the Gymnos



Let's Look at Mammillarias II

by Peter Bint

Those Mammillarias once called Cochemia

When looking at plants of Mammillaria once called Cochemia it is a little difficult to visualise them as Mammillaria at all. Without exception they are Mexican, mainly from that exciting peninsular called Baja California (or Lower California) that adjoins California on the western extremes of USA. The finger of land that stretches south for hundreds of miles has been well catalogued through the years and is well known for the variety and magnificence of its cactaceous flora.

Compared with most Mammillarias, the plants from the section Cochemia look like skinny relations that have been underfed. Whereas a greater percentage of Mammillaria are fat and globose and those that are more columnar still have reasonable girth, Cochemia are very thin stemmed and considerably longer than wide. Almost without exception they are armed with hooked spines that can be quite vicious if approached unwarily. They cling tenaciously to any woollen jumper only letting go their grasp reluctantly. Quite often the spine cluster will part from the parent plant as it retains its grasp of its victim.

All plants in this group actively cluster and can form clumps two or more feet across with age. In habitat they achieve a width of up to two metres. However it is by its flowers that the genus reveals its attractiveness. They are as un-Mammillaria like as you could hope to meet. They form a long tube before rolling back at the end leaving the stamens exerted. These flowers are formed on the shoulder of the stem, are normally bright scarlet and last several days before closing.

There are five species generally accepted by growers in this group: *Mammillaria (Cochemia) halei*, *Mammillaria (Cochemia) maritima*, *Mammillaria (Cochemia) pondii*, *Mammillaria (Cochemia) poselgeri* and *Mammillaria (Cochemia) setispina*.

M. halei. (right) This is not seen in collections very often. The stems can grow to 20" in length and up to 3" wide. Clumps can reach 6 feet in diameter. Flowers are scarlet. Spines are not long but are numerous and this species is the only one to produce wholly straight centrals. In habitat it is found on the Magdalena Island off the west coast of Baja California – an island not visited as often as the other islands off the east coast of Baja California.



M. maritima. (Left) This is another species that is rare in collections. Like the previous species it has stems up to 20" in length but these stems are thinner. Clumps only reach 3 feet across with age. Flowers are scarlet. Again spines are numerous and about 2 inches long and one of the centrals is strongly hooked. It is found in Northern Baja near the fishing village of Punta Blanca on the Pacific coast.

M. pondii.(right) This is a smaller growing species which does not clump as strongly as the two already discussed. Stems are shorter reaching a foot in length and an inch to an inch and a half across. Consequently it does not form large clumps. Spines are numerous but short apart from the centrals which may achieve more than an inch in length. Central spines can number 4/5 of which a couple will be hooked. Flowers are bright scarlet. It comes from the Cedros Island in the Pacific Ocean level with the mid point, north/south, of Baja California.



M. poselgeri.(left) This is the species that is most common in collections. It can become very untidy in its growth pattern in the greenhouse but in habitat the stems can achieve 18” in length and over an inch thick. Again the flowers are scarlet. It makes a cluster of cylindrical stems which branch from the base. Sometimes, in habitat, the stems will hang freely down the rock faces. Spines in this species are few per areole and only the single, hooked central spine achieves a length of an inch. Its original habitat was reported as Puerto Escondido, which is the southern half of Baja on the coast of the Gulf of California.

M. setispina (right). Like *M. poselgeri*, this species is also more common in collections. Unlike the others which have darker spines this species is white spined with black tips. The spines are more slender in appearance. Clumps can be large but it is reluctant to flower at a small size. The flowers, when it obliges are red rather than scarlet. Spines are again numerous in the species and vary considerably in length from $\frac{3}{4}$ inch to an inch and a half with centrals achieving a full 2 inches. The lower central spines at each areole are hooked and the upper ones are straight. It is found at San Borja and San Julio Canyon, Baja California in a rocky soil. This is the only one of the five species to grow inland, well away from the sea.



How I grow them.

Following advice from a knowledgeable grower many years ago I transferred them all into hanging baskets. I was told that they will not flower unless they are saturated in sunlight. Thus I grow them as close to the glass at the top of the greenhouse as I possibly can. This does make it harder to water them thoroughly as the water runs down the internal sides of the pots and escapes through the basal holes. As I do not want them crashing down onto plants on the benches below they are all securely fastened to the metal bars from which they are suspended making it impossible to take them down and water. I give a little at a time so it will be absorbed by the soil and, if I remember, several times at each watering. In spite of many years up in the gods they are still reluctant to flower. Only *M. pondii* is a regular flowerer with *M. poselgeri* having obliged once. The soil is at least 50% grit to allow good drainage. They do not prove difficult to actually grow, just in their flowering. All visitors to my greenhouses are given the timely warning – Beware low flying Cochemias!

Cactus Hunting in Yorkshire

Our abiding memory of our last visit to Cliffe Castle, near Keighley (nearly 30 years ago) was of the run of conservatories filled with cacti and succulents with a separate area of rainforest exotics like orchids and bromeliads. However, after our recent experience of council-run collections suffering under funding cut backs, we set off in some trepidation that they would have been knocked down and replaced by easier-to-care-for lawns, so it was a pleasant surprise to find them even better than we remembered. There was a good variety of mature, healthy plants with clear labels and a new layer of gravel, but even in these well-tended beds our old friend, Oxalis, was springing up here and there.

The raised beds may have avoided the problem of plants being accidentally kicked over and, since the cactus area was in full view of the cafeteria, this might have deterred deliberate damage.

If you fancy a trip out there, entry is free to Cliffe Castle and its grounds and there is even free car parking. The Castle has exhibits of stuffed birds and local geological finds in addition to exhibits on Egyptology and the history of the area.



c1980



This year



General Views of the 'L' shaped greenhouse



Left - our 'old friend' Oxalis, trying to swamp an *Echinopsis*

Right - a 5 ft *Opuntia subulata*



Left *Mammillaria polythele*

Right *Rebutia violaciflora*



Left - *Mammillaria spinosissima* (horizontal)

Right - some form of leafy *Euphorbia*



Opuntia tree that clearly had to be cut back but is doing fine



Opuntia

SEEDLING SWAP

We grow a lot of seeds but, due to a lack of space, we normally only try about 20 different per year. If they germinate readily we end up with a dozen or more seedlings of one type, whereas we only really want a couple. If other members are in the same position, why not swap the surplus seedlings?

The way it could work (at a meeting to be announced):

- a) Each member brings two trays - one with seedlings they don't want (INTRAY) and one empty (OUT-TRAY) (I can do some labels) and puts them on a marked side table. Seedlings should be 1-3 years old and clearly labelled (preferably with a year as well as a name)
- b) Before the meeting you can take any plant from anyone else's INTRAY, put it in your OUT-TRAY, and put one of yours in their OUT-TRAY (if they're not there to pick one)
- c) Before the meeting you should not swap more than one seedling of each species/genus (to give everyone else the best choice)
- d) During the interval you can swap a second one
- e) At the end you can swap any that are left, and anyone who hasn't bought a trayful can buy what's left for a nominal sum
- f) You should NOT remove any seedlings from anyone else's OUT-TRAY without their permission
- g) We all go home with a new selection of seedlings!!

NORTH WEST CACTUS MART

Saturday 17th April 2010
St Thomas More Church Hall
Kirkway, Off Mainway, Middleton
Manchester M24 1PP
10.30 am - 3.00pm
Admission £1.50

Traders/Sellers:

Oak Dene Nurseries
Croston Cactus
Rene Geissler
David Rushforth
Harry Mak
Ray Allcock
The Plant Lovers
Harry Mays

Richard and Wendy Edginton
Tony Irons Seedling Cacti
Philip Barker (BEF Pots etc.)
David Quail Dorothy Minors
Maurice Williams
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