



**MANCHESTER  
BRANCH  
NEWSLETTER**

**Winter 2016**



## THE GENUS TYLECODON

By John Gregory

The name of the genus, Tylecodon, is an anagram of the genus name Cotyledon. It is only in recent times that the plants which now belong in Tylecodon were segregated from the one time all embracing genus, Cotyledon. The two genera are closely related to one another and to the genus Adromischus, all three belonging to the large family the Crassulaceae.

Tylecodons grow basically in the winter rainfall areas of Southern Namibia south into the North Cape, the West Cape and even just into the East Cape of South Africa. Rainfall in these areas is not copious nor particularly regular. The plants are perennial, deciduous herbs or shrublets with one or two capable of growing to the size of a dwarf tree, eventually achieving the height of 6—8 feet though I have never seen one this size in any collection. Root systems are of three types: fibrous, where the roots are thin and winding (*T. paniculata*, *T. reticulata*), succulent, that is thickened (*T. singularis*, *T. atropurpureus*) or tuberous (*T. fragilis*).

The growing period for Tylecodons is from autumn through to late spring when watering should be decreased as the plants shed their leaves. Some species, *T. wallichii*, *T. cacalioides*, leave a small tubercle upon shedding their leaves. These tubercles or, as they are known botanically, phylopodia, can be from 1 to 7mm in length. Flowering tends to occur in late summer before new leaf growth appears and can be quite long lasting.



*Tylecodon wallichii* clearly showing the phylopodia from previous years' leaves

### **Propagation from seed and cuttings.**

Generally speaking plants are easy to raise from seed if germinated at lower temperatures, around 12 to 15°C, as do most winter growers. This makes perfect sense as rainfall which will trigger germination, is only available during the cooler days of winter in habitat. Unfortunately, good seed is difficult to obtain. This is because most seed offered for sale has come from habitat collection rather than greenhouse cultivated specimens and thus freshness is suspect. Propagation from stem cuttings of species that produce branches is also relatively easy with the best results being achieved from early autumn, their natural growing period. A little bottom heat to the container is helpful in prompting them to produce rootlets quickly. As most of the 40+ species are relatively slow growing they are ideal candidates for being treated as bonsai and look splendid in the right container.



*Tylecodon shaeferianus being grown in an attractive pot as a bonsai specimen*

Tylecodon need to only be watered sparingly in the greenhouse and water should be withheld during the summer. This makes sense on two counts: rainfall is not heavy in habitat; even though it is winter in habitat and the nights will be cold daytime temperatures will rise above what British conditions allow and sunlight hours will be far more numerous. Those plants being grown in small or very shallow bonsai pots will need extra water as they will dry out more quickly. Compost should be very free draining to prevent roots being kept in waterlogged conditions which will be fatal for the plant. Adding good amounts of grit to your

usual compost will prove sufficient. The plants also look more like their habitat companions if grown hard.

In my opinion all Tylecodons are choice because most are not generally available as seed or as plants for sale in this country. Those plants normally found on sales benches are of the commoner species. Some of these do appear to be habitat plants . ( *If you want to try some Tylecodons keep an eye on John 's sales plants because he has some from time to time. Ed* ) If your interest runs to something a bit different then Tylecodons could be for you.



*Tylecodon decipiens* which is an excellent specimen for propagation by cuttings



*Tylecodon singularis* two separate plants



*Tylecodon reticulatus* & *Tylecodon grandiflorus*

## Plans for 2016

Be innovative—that is the message from the Senior Officials in the Society. At a recent meeting of Plant Societies around Britain, arranged I think by the Royal Horticultural Society, it has emerged that all groups are under pressure due to falling numbers. However, though our membership in the cactus and succulent world is struggling as we endeavour to increase numbers and while the average age of membership is steadily rising we are doing very well compared with those Societies who represent a single type of plant—for example the Rose Society, the Chrysanthemum Society, the Fuchsia Society, to name but three. It would appear that Societies like ours and the Hardy Plant Society are faring much better in the area of catching the interest of new members and retaining current ones. This is explained as being due to the fact that we deal with such a wide range of diverse plants that we provide a huge horizon of potential interest.

This is extremely good news and provides us at Manchester Branch with the opportunity to build on recent successes. You will recall we won the first ever prize for innovation in the year 2014. There was no winner in 2015 because not a single branch in the whole Society entered the competition. We are blessed with many hard workers among our members who are willing to pitch in and help whenever asked and who support events we put on. I am also very pleased to see a new and much younger member join the committee this year, namely Jo Addeley. This is vital for the continued good health and administration of the Branch. This combined with the huge amount of IT work that goes on behind the scenes with all the work Chris Leather puts into administrating the Branch Web Site, that has gained a large following during his efforts, is splendid news indeed.. Apparently the Society main committee is considerably worried by the fact that most branches have been run by the same people for decades. They are not worried by who the people are but by the fact that they are aging somewhat without any sign of younger replacements. We have, luckily, had a steady flow of new recruits to the committee in recent times so there are always new ideas to be had and new people to implement them. That said, however, I have been given recourse to take heed of these words because I do fit into the niche suggested. I joined the committee in the early 1970 's and have been an ever present for 40+ years serving as ordinary committee member, show secretary, show manager (in the days when we had major annual shows), secretary and chairman in the intervening years. I am not indispensable and perhaps someone else should be tracking my footsteps to see what responsibilities a branch secretary has through each year. I am not saying I want to step aside but who knows how to follow and complete the work I do? Is there anybody amongst you that has the ability and would enjoy looking after the branch money? How would you manage as

chairman of the branch and do you understand the role? Who would know how to run the branch library? I am not saying for one second that any of the officials are hankering after a less cluttered life and not one has given the least hint of wishing to stand aside but we have seen the death, very sadly, of a splendid worker who will be greatly missed, Tony Hesketh. This is a reminder of our frailty and the only certain, inescapable fact in life, death.

Where 's the innovation I hear you ask? We have in our midst one Ivor Crook who has the ability to challenge and make us look outside the box. He was the instigator of the innovation that won us the award for 2014 and he has set the ball rolling for something new in 2016. April 9th sees the attempt to open a new door, "the Succulent Explorers ' Day ", which will be our chance to imitate the work already being done by Graham Charles who organises and runs "the Cactus Explorers ' Weekend " held every September. That only deals with cacti and there is no room for all the other succulents so Ivor is initiating its sister group. I will be sending out a letter to all branches to explain the idea, Here is your chance to participate in this new venture. Forms will be available at meetings in January, February and March for all interested parties to book their place. There is further information in this Newsletter.

Last year 's outing was enjoyed by all who participated so we have more plans afoot for this year. Only exact dates need to be and will be firmly placed on the calendar. The first is using the fact that Jo is curator of the cactus and succulent collection at Chester Zoo. She took on the role with, as she will tell you, not all the information and experience she would have wished. Learning is being rapidly absorbed through her membership of the branch and through discussion on the Society Forum, as well as through her own research. She is willing to let you into the normally private section of the zoo and will be telling us the best date in June/July asap. It is worth a visit and you can look in other plant sections as well. Do you remember the "In my greenhouse " section recently in Mike Stansbie 's greenhouses? He has agreed to a visit from Manchester Branch on a date to be agreed in summer and I intend asking a good friend of mine in Milton Keynes if we can visit her extremely interesting collection on the same day. We have also received a request to visit Southfields Nursery in Lincolnshire so that will be considered as a possibility in the next 18 months. If you wish to take part in any or all of these events add your name to the list that will be available at meetings.

Yes, the Branch is coming thoroughly alive again after a few years of slight sluggishness. And, of course, we have the Cactus and Succulent Mart and Mesemb Show as well.

**NORTH WEST**

**CACTUS MART**

**SATURDAY**

**MAY 7TH**

OPEN FROM  
10.30AM TO  
2.30PM

loads of plants

plenty of food

All the usual attractions

# Succulent Explorers' Day

**Saturday April 9th**

**from 10am to 5pm**

**Speakers in attendance**

**Derek Tribble**

**Ray Stephenson**

**Andy Young**

**and one other**

**Warm lunch, refreshments  
all included in the cost of  
£15**