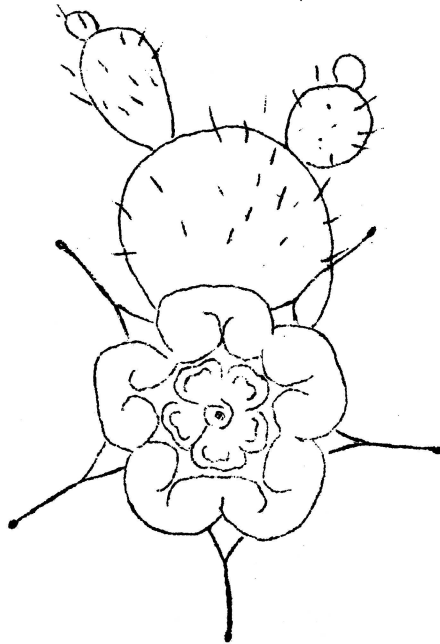


N.C. & S.S.

NEWS

LETTER



SHEFFIELD BRANCH

The National Cactus & Succulent Society

Sheffield Branch

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NEWSLETTER

4th Quarter: October - December 1963

Dear Members & Friends,

In submitting this current Newsletter we wish to apologise for the errors in the dates previously given for this Quarter's meetings. These have now been corrected in this issue and we would be pleased if you will amend any dates you may have put in your diaries.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

We have now received our Treasurer's report on the results of our annual show, which shows a very small margin of profit. Although we do not entirely run the show for profit we rely on the profits to help out with our Branch funds. In this case we made only £1. 14. 6d. The sale of tickets was down and also were the takings at the door. However we must hope for better things next year. It is thought that the televising of the Cup Final in the afternoon of May 25th was partly responsible for the reduced attendance.

The Annual Show for 1964 is provisionally booked for June 5th and 6th.

XMAS RAFFLE

Your Committee has decided to run a Xmas Raffle to augment the show profits. We are having 5,000 tickets printed, which will be sold at 3d each, 5 for 1/-. The first prize is to be a Xmas Hamper and we ask members who can afford to make a small contribution in the way of Xmas Fare to provide the first prize of a really good bumper Xmas Hamper. The second prize is to be a bowl of cacti and succulents which is being donated by our Chairman Mr. Kennewell, and Mrs. Kennewell is donating 50 cigarettes. There will also be

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prizes of a bottle of Whisky, Sherry, 100 Cigarettes and many other prizes. Tickets should be available during October for distribution to Members and Friends. Tickets should be accepted NOT as a raffle with prizes, but as a CONTRIBUTION to our Branch Funds.

SALE OF PLANTS AT BRANCH MEETINGS

Members are reminded that you can sell your surplus plants at any of the Branch Meetings. You set your own prices on the plants and all we ask is that you give at least 10% of your takings to the Branch funds. For some years now it has always been a feature of our meetings to have an interval for the sale of plants, but this feature has been sadly neglected lately. We ask members who have surplus plants to bring them along to our Branch meetings and so help themselves and other members to obtain plants at a reasonable price.

MEMBERSHIP

We are pleased to announce that we have made eight new members and associates during and after the show. We also regret to say that there has been a fall in membership of 8 in the total. That means we have actually lost 16 members and have made 8 new ones. It is thought that the severe winter is responsible for this as we have heard of members losing nearly all their plants. We had also about 5 members who have left the district and are now members of other branches.

The membership of our Branch is now 71 full members, 17 associate members and 4 Junior members, which gives a total of 92 members. The Per Capita Grant for 1963 is 2/6d for each member or associate member and we have received a cheque for £11. 0. 0. from the National Treasurer.

MEETING, FRIDAY OCTOBER 25th

For this meeting, Mr. Brian Fearn is to be the speaker. As you know, Mr. Peter Fearn has been in Mexico this year on a seed-collecting expedition and during his stay there he took many coloured slides of Cacti and Succulent plants in their natural surroundings. Mr. Brian Fearn will therefore be showing a number of the slides which should prove very interesting indeed. We expect quite a large attendance at this meeting, so make a note in your diary and reserve this date.

MEETING, THURSDAY NOVEMBER 28th

As previously announced in our last newsletter, we are to have a BRING AND BUY SALE in place of our usual monthly meeting. We give below a list of ladies who have kindly consented to act as stallholders and also a suitable list of gifts and suggestions for each stall.

We ask all members to do everything possible to make this occasion a social and financial success.

We appeal to those members who do not attend our meetings regularly to make an effort to attend, or if this is not possible send their gifts by post:-

- STALL NO.1: Mr. and Mrs. Hampshire.
CACTI, SUCCULENTS & SUNDRIES.
- STALL NO.2: Mrs. Parker.
STATIONERY, WRITING PADS, ENVELOPES, CALENDARS
PENCILS, BALL PENS, ETC. ETC.
- STALL NO.3: Mrs. D. Bramall.
ALL SOAPS, POWDERS, FOODSTUFFS, CANNED GOODS,
PEAS, BEANS, BUTTER, SUGAR, TEA & ALL GROCERY
ITEMS.
- STALL NO.4: Mrs. E.M. Farrance:
FANCY GOODS, DRAPERY, HANDKERCHIEFS, PILLOW SLIP
TABLE CLOTHS, GIFT GOODS, CUTLERY, JEWELLERY,
BEADS, EAR-RINGS, ETC.
- STALL NO.5: Mrs. N. Smith
WHITE ELEPHANT STALL: ANTIQUES, POTTERY, CUPS,
SAUCERS, SPOONS, IN FACT ANYTHING.
- STALL NO.6: Mrs. E. Thomlinson:
CAKES, PASTRY, BISCUITS, BUNS, TARTS, SWEETS,
CHOCOLATE & CONFECTIONERY.

Refreshments will be served during the sale at our usual moderate prices.

Do come along and bring your friends.



MEETING, FRIDAY DECEMBER 13th

Tonight is your Christmas Party night and as usual we expect to provide an entertainment of slides or films. Refreshments will be provided as usual and we hope to get together and have a natter.

For new members who have not previously attended these party evenings we ask each of you to bring a gift. These gifts are put into a common pool and are drawn for in turn.

The Christmas draw will also be drawn for during this evening.

PARODIA NIVOSA - Photograph by H. Kennewell.

The illustration shows a plant of the above growing in a 3" pot. It will be noticed that the spines are of an intense white. As with all the Parodias it is quite easy to grow from seed. The colour of the flowers can be variable, from a deep fiery scarlet to a lovely shade of red.

This species revels in the full sun so keep as near the glass as possible.

I cannot understand why this genera is not grown more by the members for they are ideal for a small greenhouse and with a few exceptions (such as *P. Maasii*) throw their comparatively large flowers up each year. Other species worth collecting are: *P. microsperma*; *P. aurispina*; *P. sanguiflora* and its variety *violacea*, *P. rubrispina*; and the delightful *P. chrysacanthion*.

(We again thank Mr. Kennewell for this very helpful gesture) H. KENNEWELL, F.N.C.S.S.

Preliminary Announcements for 1964.....

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23rd: Annual General Meeting and election of Branch Officers.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28th 1964: Mr. Clive Innes, of Fulborough, grower of Epiphyllums. Talk and Slides. Mr. Innes is a specialist on this subject.

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FRIDAY, APRIL 24th 1961. Mr. K.V. Mortimer, Chairman of Leeds Branch. Talk & Slides. "Propagation of Rarities". Mr. Mortimer is the author of the article which follows, on 'Dwarf Euphorbias', which is a reprint from the June issue of the Bradford Branch bulletin.

DWARF EUPHORBIAS..... K.V. Mortimer

When we have been collecting for a couple of years, we nearly all come to the conclusion that either the greenhouse must be extended or we must confine our collection to smaller and rarer plants or certain genera.

A few years ago I decided to specialise in the 'dwarf' Euphorbias and other unusual dwarf succulent plants. I excluded from this collection all the 'tree' Euphorbias and the tall growing branching types. This still leaves a very extensive group of plants which can be mainly grown in 4" pots or smaller, even when mature fully grown plants can be obtained.

The first plant which comes to mind is *E. obesa*, which is a relatively easy plant to grow from seed. It is so well known as not to require description, but I find that it grows best in a 'long tom' pot with a rich open compost. It likes plenty of water in the summer months and does not like low temperatures. Larger plants tend to develop brown woody marks on the ribs which is probably a result of ageing.

A plant very similar in appearance and requirements to *E. obesa* is *E. symmetrica*. It is not at all easy to differentiate between these two plants, the specimens of *E. symmetrica*, which I have or have seen, collected from the type habitat appear to differ from *E. obesa* in the following ways:-

- (1) Larger plants of *E. symmetrica* tend to be broader and lower growing than *E. obesa*;
- (2) The small holes left on the ribs at base of the old flower stalks are oval on *E. symmetrica* and round on *E. obesa*;
- (3) The flower stems of *E. symmetrica* are branched whereas those of *E. obesa* are single.

Whether these differences justify two species, I would leave to a botanist to decide.

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E. meloformis and *E. valida* also have similar requirements to the preceding plants, but they grow rather more quickly and reach a larger size. I had a specimen of *E. valida* 8" across and 10" high for a number of years until it lost its roots and gradually succumbed. These plants are not very easy to differentiate and doubt has been cast on whether they are distinct species. I personally have noted the following differences between imported plants reputed to be from the type habitats:-

- (1) *E. meloformis* has a single tap root, *E. valida* has several thinner roots.
- (2) The flower stems are more woody and persistent on *E. valida*.
- (3) *E. meloformis* tends to cluster much more readily than *E. valida*.

A much less common plant from this group is *Euphorbia suzannae*. This plant is similar in shape to *E. meloformis* but much smaller and with a shark-toothed appearance down the ribs. The dead flower stems do not persist. It tends to cluster with age and is a most attractive species. It is not too easy to root and requires a very open compost. In my experience it prefers a minimum of 50°F. in the winter and is not a plant for beginners.

I have several other uncommon plants from this group of Euphorbias, including *E. juglans*. This plant appears to be intermediate in appearance between *E. meloformis* and *E. suzannae* but as I have only one plant of this species I am not certain that it is true to type.

E. bupleurifolia is another unusual plant, it is brown in colour and tends to become cylindrical with age. It is covered with small projections or knobs which represent the base of leaves. This plant during its growing season (our spring and summer), produces clusters of leaves and flowers from the growing tip. These are gradually shed and are lost more quickly if the plant is allowed to become dry. This plant is almost always single, although I have a two-headed specimen and one plant which is clustering. It is not difficult to grow and is becoming easier to obtain these days. I have also two plants of *E. pubiglans* which is very similar in appearance to *E. bupleurifolia* but is green in colour. This is a quite rare plant at present although occasionally plants are available.

Another group of Euphorbias which can be classed as dwarf are *E. ernestii*, *E. gorgonis*, *E. pugniformis* and *E. Woodii*. I have

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several of each of these, they are all similar in appearance, with a thick stem or caudex which is green above ground and from which radiate a number of thin arms. These are all quite easy and attractive plants.

Looking through the other small Euphorbias, two further species are of very considerable interest. They are somewhat similar in appearance but are not closely related. *E. tuberosa* with a thick woody subterranean stem from which leaves appear and *E. stellata* with a somewhat similar stem but with typical *Euphorbia procumbent* branches appearing above the ground.

In this short article it has only been possible to mention a few of the dwarf euphorbias. In my collection there are over 80 different dwarf species including most of the uncommon ones. These are all grown in a rich, fairly open compost with gravel or sand around the neck of the plant to prevent stagnation of water in this area, since this is the area where rotting tends to occur.

In a future article I will describe some of the other unusual Euphorbias which I have, and I hope that these few lines may encourage others to specialise in this fascinating group.

Incidentally, all the plants described have been bought for 7/6d or less and none of them is in a pot larger than 4" diameter.

The following article is by one of our lady members, Mrs. Gowan, and was the subject of a short talk on our recent ladies' night. We feel that it is well worthwhile repeating:-

HOW I STARTED MY WINDOW-SILL COLLECTION.... Mrs. Gowan

The very first cacti I ever had were given to me by a little boy who used to call for me to go to school with him when I was 5 years old. He always brought me a bunch of dead flowers from the rubbish heap. When he grew up and went to University he asked me if I would have his two cacti. I took them home and put them in my father's greenhouse and was delighted when, the following spring, each produced two beautiful white flowers. I was so fascinated by them that I bought a beginner's book on Cacti & Other Succulents, and was able to identify them as *Echinopsis*. A short while later I went with my father to the house of a man who sold tomato plants. He had a huge greenhouse and while my father was purchasing tomato

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plants I noticed a Chamaecereus pushed away in a corner. The man asked if I would like it because it didn't grow fast enough for his liking. He also had a large Aloe variegata with many offsets, and gave me one of these. The next year these plants flowered and I became so interested that I begged or bought any cacti I could lay my hands on. Gradually my collection grew to about 100 and although they were overhung by a grape vine and surrounded by tomatoes and chrysanthemum plants they still did very well.

When I got married I had to leave my plants in my father's (unheated) greenhouse. I covered them with newspaper but the roof leaked and most of them were reduced to a slimy mess. I was so disappointed to lose so many that I decided I wouldn't bother with cacti any more, but the next time I saw one for sale I just had to buy it. I borrowed books on cacti from the library and in the back of one I found the address of the N.C. & S.S. and decided to join. Since then my collection has grown again.

Three years ago I decided to try seed-raising. The first year I sowed mixed seed and they were just growing their spines when my little girl tipped them up. Only two Opuntias survived. Last year I made 3 attempts. I made a propagator and sowed NCSS seed in it; they came up very well but soon became drawn and died. Only a few remain. Next I sowed a packet of tall-growing Cerei with almost 100% germination. I was so pleased that I sent for some more seeds. They arrived on the day before our holidays so I put some vermiculite in an old glass casserole, sowed them, put them in the back of the car, well shaded with newspaper. They sprang up well during the hot sunny fortnight in Devon, and are now very nice seedlings. I left the tall-growing Cerei in the care of my mother but unfortunately she held them under the tap and watered them from overhead one day as she was in a hurry. Those which hadn't got washed down the plug hole she proceeded to put through a sieve to try and find! There were no survivors.

This year I sowed some NCSS seed plus some from a nursery and some given to me, and have hundreds of healthy little seedlings. I delayed sowing until the end of May and then put them outside in the hot sun, with some shading, bringing them in at night.

We are now in the middle of erecting an aluminium greenhouse, so it won't be a windowsill collection much longer.

IN CONCLUSION, we hope we have included something of interest for all and trust that this lengthy newsletter will encourage members to submit articles of interest for our future newsletters.

Yours sincerely,

H. KENNEWELL, Chairman; J.P. FARRANCE, Secretary.