



# Berkhamsted and District Branch

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Volume 6, Issue 2

August 2014

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- My favourite plants #6 - *Thelocactus conothelos* var *aurantiacus*
- Zone 6 Show

## **Programme**

### **Sep 2014 to Mar 2015**

- 13 Sep Awaiting Details  
**TBA**
- 11 Oct Ray Stephenson  
**Fireplace of Endemism (SW Bulgaria)**
- 08 Nov Rodney Sims  
**Off-the-Beaten-Track—Part 2**
- 13 Dec Christmas Get-Together
- 10 Jan Derek Tribble  
**Better Plant Photography**
- 14 Feb Annual General Meeting  
and Members' Slides
- Mar 14 Rodney Sims  
**Off-the-Beaten-Track—Part 3**

## November Newsletter

Perspectives on the Society's International Convention (two reports).

A review of the Oxford Branch Memorial Show.

The 2014 Branch Mini-Show.

## *British Cactus and Succulent Society*

### **Editor's Comments**

Welcome to the August 2014 Branch newsletter. I started to prepare this newsletter during the hottest period in 2014. Since the March newsletter was published the three annual Zone 6 events have come and gone: Convention in March, Open Day in May and the Show at the beginning of June. Coincidentally, all took place in the southern half of the Zone: Milton Keynes, Harrow and Pirton, near Hitchin, respectively.

Branch meetings have provided a variety of topics in recent months, including John Watmough in May (Succulent Compositae), Trevor Wray in June (Life and Death in the Desert) and Terry Smale in July (Where do Cape Succulents grow).

Our August meeting (in the large hall) was the Branch Mini-Show, judged by David Kirkbright (the Society Treasurer), who also lead a discussion about the plants after the judging (a report will be in the November Newsletter).

The September speaker, Maurice Williams, has been forced to cancel his talks to the Harrow and Berkhamsted

Branches in September, due to a heart attack. We wish him a speedy recovery. The October meeting remains unchanged when Ray Stephenson will be introducing us to the 'Fireplace of Endemism (SW Bulgaria)'

My thanks to Julian for his article on *Thelocactus conothelos* var *aurantiacus*.

If anyone else is willing to provide an article for inclusion in the newsletter it will be gratefully received.

Attendances at meetings continue to hold up (average 10), despite recent meetings only having eight/nine members attending.

Sadly it is noticeable that the days are starting to get shorter and before too long we will be into the autumn period, yet there is still so much to do.

Happy growing.

David

Hon. Secretary



## Zone 6 Open Day, hosted by Harrow Branch by David Wilson

Saturday 19 May dawned bright and dry as Gill and I got into the car and headed for the M25 to take us to our first port of call: Elizabeth Pendleton's. The collection is mostly cacti, housed in two greenhouses, with many Echinopsis hybrids.



Photo David Wilson

After an enjoyable lunch we headed on to Martin Edward's in Eastcote, near Pinner. Martin has a general collection of interesting cacti and succulents housed in a brand new 24' x 12' greenhouse that includes a hot section measuring 6' x 12' at one



Photo David Wilson

headed on to Derek Tribble's greenhouse at Arkely Manor Farm. Derek rents the greenhouse which houses his extensive collection of Adromischus & Tylecodons, with some Cotyledons & Crassulas, in a 24'x10' green-



Photo David Wilson

Sadly, we were a little bit too early, as the Echinopsis had not come into flower. The cactophiles among us appreciated the range of plants to be viewed. Elizabeth and her husband also have a wonderful garden



Photo David Wilson

end. Martin aims to keep the hot section at a minimum temperature of 60°C all year round. Feature plants included Ariocarpus (a fine collection), Euphorbias and Madagascan



Photo David Wilson

which was well worth the visit.

We took our leave of Elizabeth and

house, with a legacy collection of mature cacti. It is a phenomenal collection and the Adromischus and Tylecodons are worthy of national recognition.

Derek's was the last port of call before we headed off to find somewhere for lunch, ending up at 'The Fishery' in Elstree.



Photo David Wilson

succulents. Martin also has a fine garden that is well worth seeing.

**Stop Press... Stop Press... Stop Press...**

**Derek Tribble and David Minnion received well deserved Robert Holt Meritorious Awards at the Society's 2014 International Convention.**

**Maurice Williams is unable to talk at the September meeting due to ill health. A replacement is being sought.**

**Stop Press... Stop Press... Stop Press...**

## My favourite plants #6 - *Thelocactus conothelos* var *aurantiacus*

By Julian Cooke

In this article I will highlight a cactus with one of the best yellow flowers anywhere in the cactus kingdom.

That plant is *Thelocactus conothelos* var *aurantiacus*.

*Thelocactus conothelos* is well known and readily available. It forms single headed plants that can reach substantial proportions in the wild and even in cultivation will eventually reach 20-30 cms in diameter. The round body is well armed with white and brownish spines and the plant will readily produce its pink to magenta flowers from the crown in early summer. The variety *argenteus* has glassy white spines but again purple flowers.



Photo Julian Cooke

However the variety I will focus on is variety *aurantiacus*. Smaller growing than the species it has a deep green body and numerous glassy white radial spines. The central spines tend to be pale brownish. The flowers emerge in summer from the woolly crown

and open to the deepest butter yellow. If you are looking for a yellow flowered cactus this is among the best. The flowers are not that large, up to about 2.5

cms across when fully open but they are a beautiful yellow colour. The accompanying picture maybe does not do them justice as it was taken on a very wet afternoon!

Cultivation is easy. They like plenty of light but not top shelf treatment so a little light shade during the heat of the day. Water freely in summer and feed. They grow relatively slowly but will flower when only 6-8 cms in diameter so you can expect seed grown plants to flower in maybe 5 to 8 years. If you buy one then ideally get it when in flower as when not flowering they are indistinguishable from the standard *conothelos* so you will only know for certain when it flowers. I have bought at least one that then flowered pink!

## Forthcoming Meetings in 2014

### September

A replacement speaker is being arranged.

### October

A new speaker this autumn, Ray Stephenson will be dazzling us with his talk on 'The Fireplace of Endemism (SW Bulgaria)'. Ray will be talking to Harrow Branch the previous Friday evening (10th) about 'Succulent Survival Strategies'.

### November

Our November speaker will be our own Branch Chairman, Rodney Sims, who will be taking us 'Of-the-Beaten-Track—Part 2'. Part 3 of the 'Off-the-Beaten-Track' trilogy will be the talk for the March 2015 meeting.

## Zone 6 Show, hosted by Luton Branch by David Wilson



Photo David Wilson

Friday 6th June saw Gill and I traipsing up and down the garden, bringing indoors the plants we wanted to get ready for the Zone 6 Show the following day. Thereafter we spent the day preparing the plants: removing old leaves and flowers and wiping the pots with a damp cloth. This was quite an onerous task, especially as this was the first show we were attending in 2014.

Late Friday evening we packed the plants into the car and got everything else together and into the car. After an early alarm call on Saturday morning we climbed into the car and headed for the village of Pirton, near Hitchin. At least we knew where we were going as we had been to the hall the previous year for Luton's annual show. We made good time on the journey and had plenty of time to unload the car. The trouble was that the weather wanted to join in the fun, as we suffered a brief but intensive downpour. Still, we persevered and soon the plants were settled on the show benches.

A steady stream of exhibitors arrived and added their plants to those already placed on the benches. There were some excellent plants on display and in total over 400 class entries were made. This was especially pleasing as the previous year's show (2013 at Leicester) had to be cancelled due to lack of support. Luton branch are to be congratulated on their hard work and for putting on a successful show.



Photo David Wilson



Photo David Wilson



Photo David Wilson



Photo David Wilson



Photo David Wilson



Photo David Wilson