



# Berkhamsted and District Branch

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Volume 6, Issue 1

March 2014

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## Programme

	May 2014 to August 2014
10 May	John Watmough <i>Succulent Compositae</i>
17 May	Zone 6 Open Day Harrow Branch
07 Jun	Zone 6 Show Pirton Village Hall, near Hitchin
14 Jun	Trevor Wray <i>Life and Death in the Desert</i>
19 Jul	Terry Smale <i>Where do Cape Succulents grow</i>
09 Aug	Branch Mini Show Judge David Kirkbright

Zone 6 Convention

Saturday 22 March  
2014

Rikus van Veldhuisen

Tomas Kulhanek

Sales: Rikus van Veldhuisen, Rene Geissler, Graham Charles, Northampton Branch Philip Barker pots, Keith Larkin

## British Cactus and Succulent Society

### Editor's Comments

Welcome to the March 2014 Branch newsletter. I hope you are looking forward to the spring. Many of our spring bulbs have flowered early this year, due to the exceptionally mild winter we have had. However the downside to the mild winter was a constant stream of storms coming from the mid Atlantic. Our Skyrocket conifer was one of the casualties, its root ball being loosened by the wind.

The Christmas meeting entertainment provided by David Minnion proved to be an enjoyable and amusing interlude. We started the New Year with the AGM. My thanks to those people who brought pictures to entertain us. Due to time constraints the January AGM does not give us long enough to audit the accounts and produce the Income and Expenditure report for the AGM. The committee therefore, proposed moving the AGM to February and this was unanimously agreed **by the Branch at this year's AGM.**

February saw Julian Cooke stepping into the breach with a talk about photographic equipment, together with photographs of some of his plants. A very interesting and thought provok-

ing meeting. The March meeting brought back Alice Vanden Bon who told us about her visit to South Africa in 2010.

Looking forward there is the [Zone 6 Convention](#) on Saturday 22 March at Milton Keynes.

We have no meeting in April, due to the National AGM but return in May when John Watmough makes a welcome return to talk about **Succulent Compositae**. The [Zone Open Day](#) takes place on Saturday 17 May and the [Zone Show](#) on 07 June.

June brings Trevor Wray to talk about **Life and Death in the Desert** and in July Terry Smale will be telling us where **Cape Succulents Grow**. The August meeting will be the annual Mini-Show, to be judged by David Kirkbright (Society Treasurer).

My thanks to Julian for his article on Mammillaria pectinifera. Article for inclusion in the newsletter it will be gratefully received.

David

Hon. Secretary



## My favourite plants #5 - *Mammillaria pectinifera*

By Julian Cooke

A choice *Mammillaria* features in this edition of my favourite plants.

*Mammillaria pectinifera* is in the series *Lasiacanthae*. You may well know it as *Solisa pectinata* but most now agree that it is a *Mammillaria*.

Its distinctive feature is milky sap, not that you would ever want to chop one to find out!

*Mammillaria pectinifera* forms solitary golf ball sized stems plants with ranks of areoles topped with comb like

radial spines only 2-3 mm long. There are no central spines. The areoles are close together so the overall effect is a ball almost covered in combs of white spines. Flowers are quite

readily but generally rather sparingly produced, and have to force themselves past the spines in order to open. For a *Mammillaria* they are reasonably large and up to 2 cm across. Petals are usually blushed pink with deeper pink mid-stripe.



Photo Julian Cooke

The trouble with *Mammillaria pectinifera* is that it is tricky to grow for any length of time. It can be grown from seed which are quite large and black. However it

detests damp so a gentle hand on the watering can is essential. I usually water mine a week or two later in spring than most other ***Mammillaria's*** and only when the weather is warm and sunny. Grow in full sun and it will readily flower. It

flowers during the summer months and if you are lucky you will get a full ring of flowers. However mine often produces rather fewer blooms so a ring is somewhat of a rare occurrence.

Grow in a gritty compost and

keep an eye out for mealy bug that can lurk unnoticed between the tubercles. As with most *Mammillaria* species, red spider can also be an issue.

### More dates for your diary

22 March 2014

12 April 2014

17 May 2014

07 June 2014

11–13 July 2014

02 August 2014

03 August 2014

Zone 6 Convention—Milton Keynes

National AGM—Leicester

Zone 6 Open Day—Harrow Branch

Zone 6 Show—Pirton, near Hitchin (Luton Branch)

National Convention—Leicester

Harrow Branch Show

Oxford Branch—Cathy Darbon Memorial Show

### May Meeting

John Watmough from Oxford Branch will update us on the topic of Succulent Compositae. John is an entertaining speaker with a wide knowledge of our plants.

## Plants we have loved and lost - Haworthia Koelmaniorum By Gill and David Wilson

This article is based on one written for the Haworthia Society Journal.

Our plant of *H. koelmaniorum* was purchased in 2005 from John Henshaw (Croston Cacti) at the Zone 6 Show. It was part of a Haworthia collection that **is housed in a 20' x 6' lean-to** greenhouse attached to the rear of the property, facing in a north-easterly direction. During winter the plants in the lean-to receive good light but with the sun low down there is little strength. In summer, with the sun much higher it is directly on the plants until mid-day, after which the sun passes round to the front of the property, leaving the Haworthias in shade for the rest of the day. The brickwork of the lean-to **absorbs the sun's** heat and radiates it back out as the day progresses.

*H. koelmaniorum*, grew to **fill a 110mm (4.25") dwarf** pot, which resided on the staging near to the house

wall. The planting mixture consisted of about 60% New Horizons peat-free compost (bark based) and about 40% grit (roughly equal



Photo David Wilson

proportions of lime-free coarse grit, grit sand and Cornish grit). The plant, like so many Haworthias, had a tendency to lose its roots if it was over-watered and conversely, if it was under-watered. However, no special consideration was given to *H. koelmaniorum* so it received water along with the other plants in the collection. Water collected in nearby water butts was used, rather than tap water (our local water supply is very hard).

During the period from early October to late March the plant received no water, whereas at the height of summer it was watered about once every week to 10 days, depending on the weather. The plant was always tested with a soil moisture meter prior to watering and was only watered when it was dry. At the beginning and end of the season the fre-

quency of watering tended to be every two to three weeks.

*H. koelmaniorum* was fed regularly during the growing season (every other watering) starting with one dose of Epsom Salts in early April, Phostrogen in spring and early summer, Chempak Cactus Fertiliser or Chempak No 8 into the autumn and finally a no nitrogen fertiliser before going to rest.

Sadly this plant has now gone to the great compost bin in the sky.

### June Meeting

Trevor Wray is a regular speaker at the Branch. He has travelled widely in the USA and will be giving us a different view of Life and Death in the Desert.

### July Meeting

Terry Smale is an expert in South African succulents and makes a welcome return to the Branch.

Photo Gallery

