



Reg. Charity in England and Wales No. 290786

Macclesfield & East Cheshire Branch Newsletter



Mammillaria plumosa

At Chester Zoo

December 2017

CHAIRPERSON'S THOUGHTS No 16

December at last and the weather has turned increasingly cold. I ask myself if we are going to get a very cold winter, such as we have not seen since 2010/11. If we are, are we prepared for it? I have had to bring in a couple of the more delicate plants from the greenhouse as temperatures have sunk to -2C outside and not much warmer in the so-called heated greenhouse. As a result I have turned the heat up and last night still had a minimum of 3.7C, not very warm at all. I will be keeping a very careful eye on the temperatures from now on and may turn up the heat again. I don't want a repeat of those afore-mentioned years when I lost a lot of plants, possibly through them not being quite dry. This year, what is meant to be dry really is and those that can be watered are damp and no more than that. The winter bulbs are looking in good shape and I am hopeful of flowers in the early months of the year, as days lengthen. I have still put a number of plants under my patio table, plus a few have been left outside in a sheltered spot, so far they are looking OK. A first, for me, is Sedum palmeri, which are tucked away in a sunny corner outside of the house and are in bud.

I also have a number of small Opuntias, last year I put most them in a coldframe and that was very successful as they came through winter with no problem. They have gone back in there again this year, which has given me more space in the greenhouse, and I am hoping for more flowers this next year, too. My porch is full of all sorts, as usual, at this time of year. One of my Rhipsalis has flowered, which was a surprise to me, then I have seen that others have had them flower, now as well, so seemingly a normal thing. I put the Rhipsalis outside in semi-shade this year and kept them well-watered and brought them back once it cooled down, I wonder if this is what made one flower? Maybe, or maybe it was of an age to flower. Enough of my ramblings, I hope all your succulents and cacti are prepared for winter and are looking good, too, as many are before winter sets in. It leaves me just to wish you a happy Christmas and a successful year for your plants, next year.

Elizabeth

A visit to the Chester Zoo greenhouses.

On a memorable Saturday on 4th November the branch made a visit to the Chester Zoo greenhouses to see the Succulents and Cacti there. Jo Adderley has been in charge for about four years she told us and has found plenty to keep her busy and has made a huge difference since her arrival. I remember going there a few years ago and going in the only available bit of greenhouse I could visit, the overwhelming feeling was, 'Too Hot'. Since then Jo has organised the plants and greenhouse and made the conditions better for us and a lot better for the plants, it was a comfortable 20°C in there. They look healthy and happy and a long way from the dried up specimens I saw before. There are enough plants there to make your mouth water and get another greenhouse. Some beautiful cacti and some very choice ones, notably Melocactus in fruit, some very choice Copiapos, Turbinicarpus, Ariocarpus one in flower, plus Mammillarias, Gymnocalyciums, Opuntias and some Blossfeldia that were just perfection.

The succulents were well represented too, notably several huge, perfect specimens of Pachypodium lameri, ancient Pachyphytum oviferum and Graptopetalum paraguayense, some exquisite Piaranthus barrydalensis in flower, a mass of Orbea variegata with perfect flowers and Cotyledon tomentosa also in flower. A couple of huge Dioscorea and a lovely Rhipsalis in flower added to the delights of the day.



It is a well-kept collection that must still have plants from when it was first started, as there are some quite large plants there, with a sprinkling of new seedlings and donated plants. Jo was anxious to stress that they cannot accept donated plants

constraints that we have, particularly space. There are some plants that provide problems, as we all experience, for instance the dreaded mealy-bug and western flower thrips. These are dealt with by exposing them to the best means of control available and sometimes a combination of controls. There are plants that are doing exceptionally well, such as the Copiapoas, Blossfeldias and Melocactus, I think these are some of the finest I have seen for size and condition.

We also looked in on the tropical house and saw a very large number of Bromeliads and Pitcher plants, the latter which were extraordinary and I don't think I realised how many varieties there are or the variation in size, plus other exotics too many to mention.

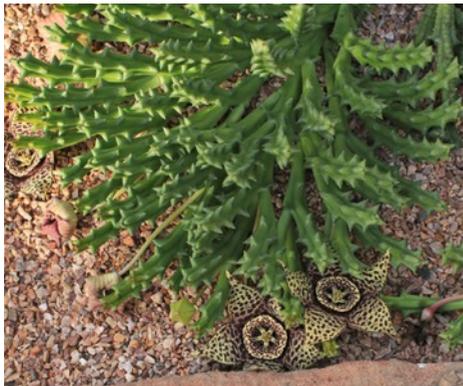
We came away knowing we had had a real treat and a determination to go back some time, obviously the main flowering season would be a good time to go. It would be great for other members of the branch to go, you would love it and I really hope we can do this again sometime in the near future.



Copiapoa hypogea



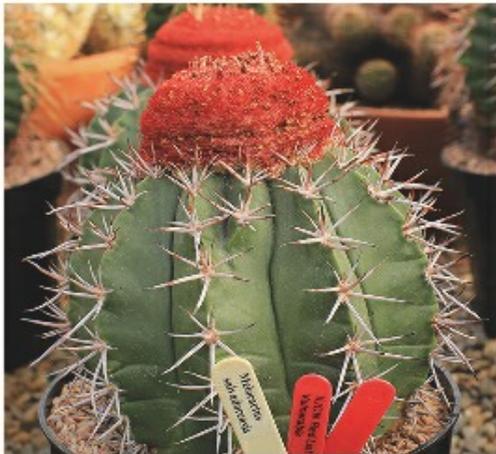
Copiapoa



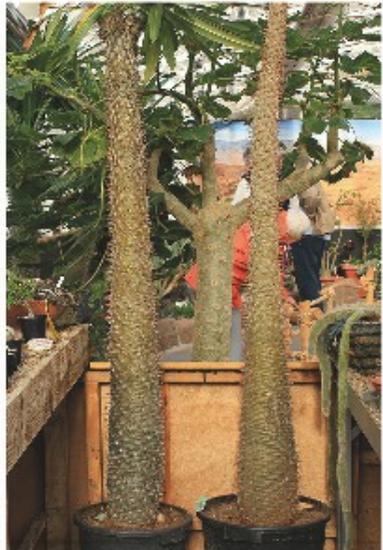
Orbea variegata



Gymnocalycium mostii



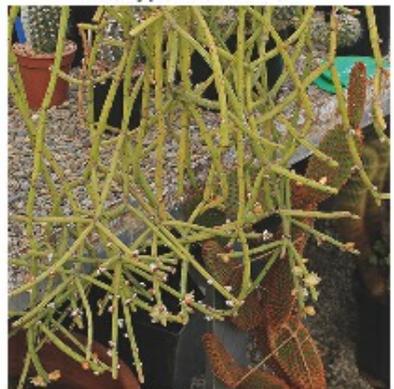
Melocactus salvadorensis



Pachypodium lameri



Extraordinary Mammillaria



Rhipsalis



Piaranthus barrydalensis

Blossfeldia liliputana



Forthcoming attractions

January

Traditionally the branch does not go far afield for speakers in the winter months and this month is no exception. We are featuring local talent in the form of Mike Ashworth who although he does not manage to very many meetings has been a member of our branch for a good many years. Mike has been across the Atlantic on a number of occasions, often on business, but for whatever reason he goes he always remembers to take his camera. This month he will share with us something of the sunshine and succulent plant life of California.

February

The month that brings the AGM, a thought that might make some people shudder but we do try to keep it as brief as possible to allow something else to happen in the course of the meeting, After a year without we are having a Plant Bring and Buy Auction again and you are invited to donate to the event, if you can, two plants of reasonable quality. Past successful auctions have been founded on members being kind enough to bring plants that they themselves would be happy to bid for if someone else had brought them. Please keep up the tradition. Thank you in anticipation.

March

Although it's March, and possibly springtime, we are still having a fairly local speaker. I think that it will be the first talk we have had from Andy Young from Chester. Andy is one of the leading experts in Mesembs, particularly Conophytums. However, there will be much more than Cono to see and hear about as our speaker presents "A visit to Steve Hammer's collection". Steve, a prolific writer with a unique style, lives in Vista, California and is an amazing character with I understand an amazing and important collection.

Plant of the month

Classes for over 9cm (3½") pots and under 3½"

January	Mammillaria Gp	Caralluma Sub Gp
February	Matucana Gp	Sedum Sub Gp
March	Gymnocalycium Gp	Conophytum Sub Gp

Please don't forget

Every month there are also classes for a Cactus or a Succulent
in flower - Pot Unlimited