

## From the Chair

Welcome to your May 2024 Newsletter,

We appear finally, to be heading for a spell of warmer, sunny weather and can get watering properly under way. Last week saw the first proper lot of watering in my greenhouse, preceded by two sprayings a week or so earlier. I used my pressure washer to spray the whole collection with Bug Clear Ultra 2, to ensure hopefully, that I don't have a repeat invasion of those tiny mealy bugs which are too small to see easily until they get to epidemic levels. The fine spray, coupled with the pressure, enables the spray to reach the parts that other methods cannot reach!

So far, my grow-house has been very successful, and the location seems to be just right, as my seed raising (mainly seed from RHS, along with a couple of lots of succulents) has so far surpassed my expectations and I have lots of fresh plants, mostly perennials, waiting to be transferred outside to harden off.

Congratulations to Manchester Branch for organising the Cactus Mart last Saturday, there was a bumper attendance and when I arrived around 10.30 it was extremely difficult to find a parking space, Mainway had almost completely turned into a giant car park. Inside it was all hustle and bustle in a jam-packed hall with lots of goodies on display. I must admit to being rather surprised by some of the (to my mind) outrageous prices some dealers were charging, but by carefully shopping around some of the local enthusiasts stalls I was able to procure some little bargains as well as something a little more expensive.

Recent events within the Society have highlighted the problem of collected habitat plants and the Society has reacted by imposing a ban on habitat plants in our shows. Whilst I appreciate the need for the BCSS to show support for efforts to curtail and eradicate the trade in illegally collected plants, a ban is not the really the way forward. A ban is completely unenforceable and has obviously created divisions within the Society.

Much work needs to be done to formulate a stance and policy to deal with a complex situation whilst maintaining an up-front, outright opposition to illegal plant collecting. Today we have a different awareness of how our actions impact on the environment. The last two or three centuries have seen a huge increase in stripping the environment of resources without regard to the wider impact of those actions. Plant collecting in the Victorian era was seen as furthering our knowledge of the natural world, and the quantities of plants and seed collected were modest compared to

today where collecting is big business, with millions of pounds changing hand with no regard for the impacts of those actions. Greed is driving these actions; why should we desire to collect or own something from its natural habitat? I appreciate that the issue is complex; we are attempting to impose present-day perceptions and values on an issue that has evolved over a long period of time. Our values and perceptions as a society have changed many times over the years and, retrospectively trying to impose current values is an almost impossible task.

The BCSS needs to be at the forefront of opposition to illegal collecting and profiteering but at the same time recognise that people, me included, have acquired and propagated plant material from many parts of the world under a different set of values and accept that what is done is done and we move on without the disruption that bans can cause. Careful wording of society policy is required to ensure that opposition to illegal habitat collecting is strongly opposed and that confrontational language and bans are not part of the solution.

Regular visits to the main BCSS site will reveal an uncertainty over branch survival and the lack of younger members. The Society is actively addressing these issues and our branch committee has prioritised these concerns.

In particular, the very successful RHS Tatton show sub-committee, is acutely aware of having to rely on a very small group of members. To continue our recent successes (4 consecutive GOLD MEDALS) we will need reinforcements, if only to cover for illness and advancing years of the group. Offers of help from branch members and indeed other local members would be very welcome. At present, given the current situation, it is hard to see us flying the Society flag at Tatton beyond 2024.



Our 2023 Gold Medal display

## Dates for your diary

Elizabeth Maddock is having an open day on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> MAY from around 2pm and Martin Lowry is opening his collection from around noon on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> JUNE with refreshments provided. Both visits are highly recommended and not to be missed; in particular, Martin's collection, weather obliging, is at its most impressive with a huge number of flowers at this time of year.

Our speaker for May 13th is Carl Howard-Morton who is presenting,

“Baja California pt1 (Tijuana to Mulegé)”

May plant of the month groups are Opuntia and Haworthia groups.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible next Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May,

Tony.