



## Chairman's View - Robin Arnott

Welcome to our summer edition of our newsletter – still a traditional way of keeping in touch with our members and friends. We have recently re-vamped our website as a means of keeping information updated timeously and on a more regular basis and



*Melocactus nyeri*

Colin has written an article about all the changes that have been made. Thanks are due to him for his work in getting it off the ground and to those who have contributed expertise and articles in making it an excellent vehicle for keeping in touch. Your committee has been busy this year in ensuring the branch functions well and remains relevant to its members. Our main focus was on running our annual show which was held in Leven Parish Church hall on Saturday 20 May and we had an excellent turn-out with exhibitors from Ayr to Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow as well as a strong contingent from Fife branch. Colin Walker was the judge. Thanks are due to the committee members who were all actively engaged on the day – from the Show Secretary's table to stewarding, selling plants and books, providing food and drink, setting-up and taking down, photographing... the show could not have happened without that involvement. A fuller



*Lithops karasmontana* 'Signalberg'

report on the show can be found later in the newsletter.

As well as that, the committee focused on ensuring the governance of the branch was in line with current regulations. We recently adopted the Society's Safeguarding principles and have also concluded that our constitution needs to be updated. The Safeguarding policy can be viewed on the Society's main site and we will advise you about the constitutional changes later in the year. We will also be reviewing the Show Schedule to ensure it is fit for purpose and reflects the plants our members wish to grow and show. It is highly likely that changes will be made and next year's schedule will probably have a different look and feel – again, watch this space. The committee also decided that since our library was never used, the books should be offered for sale at the show. A few books found good homes, some were later sold to Keith's Cactus Books and the remainder donated to BetterWorld Books, a Dunfermline-based charity that supports literacy and educational projects worldwide.



*M. wieslingeri*      *M. crassior* Rep1804      *M. compacticaulis*  
*M. zeyeriana* SB445      *M. hahiana* ssp *udodsii*      *Astro. myriostigma*

I had a real problem in selecting plants for this year's show as the winter was not kind to many of them and more than a few of them succumbed. Some of my outdoor plants, labelled as 'hardy' also fell foul of the weather. The temperature variations during the winter seemed to be highly variable and I suspect that plants cannot handle the sudden fluctuations between very cold one day to warm and sunny the next. Gradual increases or decreases in temperature fall within the normal scope of plant growth but in winter, the wild swings and extreme ranges in temperature change seem to make it difficult for plants to adjust. Climate change does seem to be having an effect.

Because we were not sure how much support our show would receive, some of us took along more plants than we might otherwise have done to ensure benches were not bare. Having a car laden with plants for show, plants and books for sale made it

heavy work. Next year, I might think twice before piling everything in.



*Thelocactus rinconensis v. nidulans*

One or two of my plants did well – *Thelocactus rinconensis v. nidulans*, purchased some years ago from Bill Christie, is now over forty years old and a regular flowerer. Some of my *Mammillarias* also did well, one I was particularly pleased with was a *Mammillaria hahniana* which I had purchased as a single, small head seven or eight years ago and now fills a 21cm pot, still single-headed. In the Fife branch only classes, my *Mammillarias* managed to achieve a 1, 2 & 3 and the *Anna Sinagoga* quaiçh. One *Lithops* did well but I others I thought had a great chance were totally overlooked and although it is the wrong time of year for *Mesembs* to be looking



*Mammillaria hahniana*

their best a *Conophytum jucundum* caught the judge's eye.

June saw me finish the re-potting of all my *Lithops* and those *Conophytums* that were beginning to grow out of their pots. Inadvertently, my *Lithops* collection grew as I dropped a few on the floor and pads fell off. These have all been placed in the seedling bed (grand name for a black seed tray on the floor!) and with any luck will have rooted by the end of the summer. Instead of growing my collection I have been trying to divest myself of seedlings and cuttings and some went to the Fife show, others to a Christian Aid sale and still more to our local horticultural society's summer sale. I can safely walk into the greenhouse now without standing on boxes of plants. What is it about cuttings that you just cannot resist taking them?

Last year I decided to try some seeds again, from the *Mammillaria* Society and the *Mesembs* Study Group. I dug out my propagator and duly sowed the seeds.

My success rate was not high as only about half of the packets germinated and within that probably only 30%-40% of the seeds came through. Those that did survive were transplanted earlier this year and while they look healthy, time will tell. This is when I remembered why I had stopped growing from seed! I had bought an *Opuntia corrugata* about eight or nine years ago and have never managed to get it to flower. In June, we decided to take the caravan north as the weather was so good but when we returned home at the end of the month, to my dismay, the plant had flowered and I missed it! I believe it is a red flower, so will have to wait and hope it flowers next year. They say patience is a virtue.

Our branch meetings resumed earlier this year, on Saturday mornings in our new location in Leven.



*Opuntia corrugata*

Despite information being available through Society Zoom meetings and other on-line sources, we feel that face-to-face meetings have many benefits and we have planned a series of meetings until our show next May. Our first meeting for the 2023-24 session will be on 9th September and we will have Alan Weepers speaking on his plants in the sequence on which they came into flower. Alan is an excellent grower and his



*Conophytum jucundum*

talk promises to be full of interest. Following that on 11th November, I have offered to give a talk on *Lithops* and *Conophytums*. The meetings will start at 10am and as well as a speaker (guaranteed not long talks!), there will be time to chat, ask questions, swap plants and have a coffee. There will be a charge of £2 to cover the cost of the meeting. Details are on the web site. We look forward to seeing you there.

**Happy growing!**

# Plant Identification

**Text and photos by Bryan J Morris**

I always like to have the plants in my collection labelled correctly and therefore I like to try and do as much research as possible to find out and confirm the genus and species of the plant. This usually takes the form of going through some of my BCSS journals and also some of the books I have on the subject. The internet is also an excellent source of information to help identify any plants that still require further investigation.

I purchased a couple of new plants from my local garden centre earlier this year however, like a lot of cacti and succulents for sale in garden centres, none of them had any labels or descriptions on them. Although in some cases, when there is a label or description present, it can be incorrect. In this particular case one of my newly purchased cacti did not seem to match any of the ones featured in my cacti books, or to any pictured on the internet. I therefore had no option but to seek further guidance and ask for help.



One of the benefits of being in the BCSS is the wealth of knowledge and expertise available on our subject, even better is being able to attend branch meetings. That way if you have a plant that you are not quite sure of its species or want some help on its cultivation, then you can always take it along and ask some of the other members to have a look and give you some assistance.

We are very fortunate in our own Fife branch to have many knowledgeable members, and even a couple of BCSS qualified judges who are always delighted to help and give their guidance on the subject.

At our branch meeting in Leven, the plant in question was duly inspected by the assembled members who suggested that the specimen was more than likely to be an *Echinopsis* or a *Lobivia*, however the absence of any flowers or buds on the plant did not make positive identification very easy at this stage. One of the members even suggested trying out his new plant identification app on his phone to see if this would help! This app clearly identified the plant as a cacti!! Oh well! I think artificial intelligence (AI) has a bit to go before we can start replacing our experts with computers. It was then suggested that I should wait until the plant or 'cacti' as identified by (AI) produced a flower or

flowers, as this would further assist in the identification process. I was then advised that if the flower bud has a woolly or hairy stem, then it was more than likely to be an *Echinopsis*, and if the buds were smooth - it would be a *Lobivia*. Armed with all of this new information, I headed home to await the next phase in my cactus' development and hopefully identification



A few weeks later the cactus duly started to produce some flower buds with a wool like covering. On first inspection it looked like the bud may produce a red flower, but no, once fully developed and opened - the most stunningly beautiful buttercup yellow flowers emerged. This now made the identification process much easier, and as was suggested - with a little bit of further research, I managed to positively identify my cacti as an *Echinopsis aurea*. A most wonderful specimen especially when in bloom.



My *Echinopsis aurea* now sits resplendent in a new BEF pot with a clearly identified description on its label. Mission accomplished! That is unless anyone reading this has some other information to the contrary!!



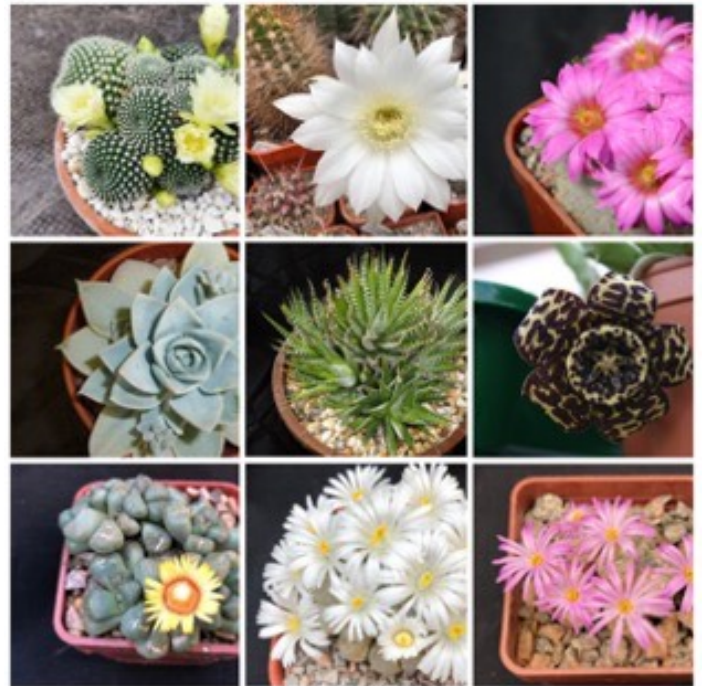
## Fife Branch have a new Website!

In April, Fife Branch launched its new BCSS Branch Website. The template system of the website is supplied by The British Cacti and Succulent Society and enables us to inform members and everyone interested in growing or purchasing cacti and succulents of **Events, Branch Meetings, Newsletters**, a photo **Gallery** of cacti, succulents and mesembs, **Helps with Cultivation, Links** to other organisations including the main **BCSS** website.



On the 20 May we had one of the most successful annual shows in recent years which was held in Leven Parish Church Hall with an increased number of exhibitors and visitors. There were 78 categories and a wonderful range of plants. The plants for sale stall was well supported and teas, coffees and food were served throughout the day

The photo gallery of our new website currently has 4 categories of pictures - Cactus in flower, Succulents in flower, Mesembs in flower and 2023 Fife Annual Show with a very full range of photos for your enjoyment



The new website <https://fife.bcsc.org.uk/> will be updated regularly and will include details of Speakers at our Branch meetings plus forthcoming Zoom meetings on Cacti and Succulents and Mesembs from around the world. We invite all growers and those interested to our Branch meetings. The next meeting is in Leven Parish Church Hall, 7 Durie Street KY8 4HA on Saturday 9 September from 10 am – 12 noon. The speaker and topic will be up on the website shortly.

**Cacti in Flower picture gallery – Photos by Bryan J Morris**

*Echinocereus coccineus*



*Ferocactus glaucescens f nudum*



*Gymnocalycium baldianum*



*Lobivia schieliana*



*Mammillaria spinosissima cv. Un Pico*



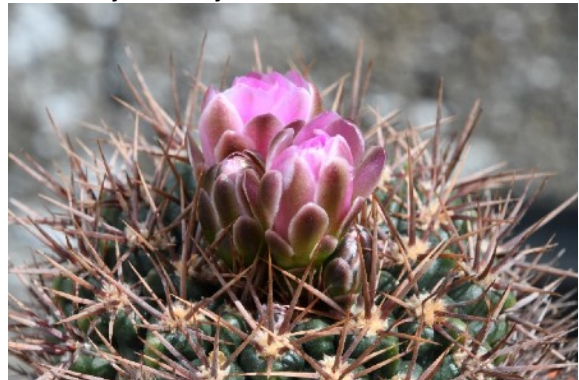
*Sulcorebutia losenickyana BB1204*



*Gymnocalycium baldianum P12*



*Gymnocalycium neuhuberi GN77*



## Mesembs in Pumice

Text and photo by Colin Hay

With recent reports on various Facebook groups on John Innes 2 and the poor quality of various brands and the deletion of Peat in the future, as an experiment I have 17 Mesembs in 100% 3mm Pumice.

One very successful grower and seller on Facebook recommended Maxicrop Seaweed Plant food stimulant at 1/4 strength on a monthly basis during their growing season. I have given them their first feed of Seaweed and noticed a slight difference in growth in a couple of plants. Maxicrop also has something in it that helps to repel bugs too.

While Pumice is more expensive than J1 and grit, it is also reusable after washing when repotting, so that will help the cost over time. Sadly, I can't find a garden centre in Fife that sells it. In 2016 I grew Christmas Cactus in 100% Pumice for two and a half years successfully so am hoping for favourable results.

Regarding sowing, I sowed 8 *Faucaria tuberculosa* seeds and 7 seedlings have appeared in 10 days, around 4 days longer than when sown in J12. Hopefully this will help reduce Mealy Bugs and other nasties.

**I will report again after 6 months and hope the results continue overall.**



Faucaria, Lithops, Cheiridopsis, Stomatium, Titanopsis and Faucaria seedlings now 3 weeks old. The majority of plants were repotted 3 months ago and all seem to be growing well.

---

## More Unusual Lithops - Bryan J Morris

I spotted this pot of mixed Lithops pictured below in one of my local garden centres earlier this year and noticed a couple of unusual anomalies growing within the mix. A tri-lobed Lithops and, a 'quad-lobed' Lithops no less! Having a bit of an interest in these mutant variations and also having written a small article for a previous newsletter on the subject, I duly purchased the pot to take home and see what would happen. Unfortunately within a few weeks, several of the lithops started to rot and die off including the mutant variations which had captured my interest in the first place. So my quest for unusual and rare variations of the species continues.



## Cacti in Flower

*Photos by Bryan J Morris*

### **Parodia sanguiniflora DH137 1573**

*Parodia sanguiniflora* is only a variant of the extremely variable *Parodia microsperma*. Characteristic of this cactus are its carmine to brownish-cinnabar filaments of the stamens (hence the name) and its blood red flowers.

The plant shown in the pictures below - came from a collection originally owned by one of our Fife branch members Mr Bill Christie. This plant is now growing well in my small 6 x 6 greenhouse and the *Parodia* produces the most wonderful vibrant red flowers every year. The flowers are quite long lasting and the transition from closed bud to fully open flower is less than thirty minutes as in the case featured below.



### **Thelocactus bicolor**

*Thelocactus bicolor*, the glory of Texas, is a species of flowering plant in the cactus family, widely distributed in the northern Chihuahuan Desert of the USA and Mexico. Plants are usually solitary, but may form clumps. Growing to 50 cm tall, it is a perennial with spiny, ribbed, succulent stems.

One of my favorite flowering plants in my collection. It produces a single solitary flower with almost silk like petals and the most strange but brightly coloured stigma and stamens. This particular plant was repotted earlier this year and has started to produce new growth with its bicoloured spines and seems to be enjoying its new location in the greenhouse having been in the conservatory for many years.



# Branch Show 2023 - Jim Gibbs

It was with a sense of relief when we opened Leven Church Hall early on the Saturday morning to watch the trickle of exhibitors who had taken the trouble to prepare and transport their plants to the hall. Although last years limited and cut-down Show had shown promise it was with some concern the committee decided to attempt a fully credited Show this year. As the exhibitors increased and we recognised friends, many of whom we hadn't seen for three



years we were able to relax a bit. As the benches filled up and some new faces arrived with plants we realised that not only was the Show going to be a success but the quality and quantity of plants was going to exceed not only pre-lockdown levels but would better the memory of almost all present. Some of the classes were going to challenge the judge, Colin Walker.



While at basis the Show has had a competitive element, Fife has always tried to ensure that the social side is at least as important and provides catering and places to sit and meet old and new friends over coffee, cake and food.



Some of the more popular classes were

*Opuntia group*



*Two Mammillaria Group*



*Rebutia group*



*Gymnocalycium group*



*Gymnocalycium group*



*Euphorbia group*



The plants judged to be the best in show were as follow:

## Prizewinners



Best Cactus - *Eriosyce ceratistes*



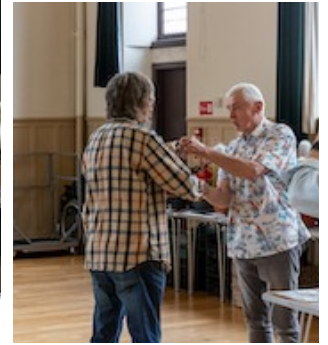
Best Succulent - *Agave victoriae-reginae*



Runner Up to Best Cactus - *Astrophytum ornatum*



Runner to Best Succulent - *Fockea edulis*



**The final numbers from what was considered an extremely successful and enjoyable Show were:**

Exhibitors: 16 (included 2 novices)  
Entries: 440  
Plants: 532

Our thanks go to all who supported this record show.

More photographs from the Show are available at <https://fife.bcsc.org.uk/2023-fife-annual-show/>

# NEWS

The British Cactus and Succulent Society - Fife Branch

The next Branch Meeting  
is on Saturday 9 September  
from 10 am - 12 noon

The speaker will be Alan Weepers  
presenting:  
*"The Full Flowering Season in My Collection"*

*'Enjoy a photographic journey of the  
flowers in my collection beginning with  
the first flowers of the season'.*

Venue: Leven Parish Church Hall, 7 Durie Street Leven, KY8 4HA

We are a friendly group with many years of experience and  
welcome members and those interested in Cacti and  
Succulents.

If you have questions about your collection or a particular  
plant, please come along on the 9th September.

An entry fee of £2.00 is charged to help cover hall rental costs  
and will include Coffee/Tea and biscuits.

---

## Future Meetings

November 11th

Robin Arnott - "Lithops and Conophytum"

February 10th

AGM and National Show (Succulents)

April 20th

Seed Sowing, Workshops and Plant Q&A

May 25th

Annual Show

Each meeting will have time for discussion and  
general queries about your plants.