

## *Agave parrasana* flowering in a UK garden

Rob Stevenson in Lincolnshire planted out a 6in (15cm) diameter *Agave parrasana* in 2008. A hint that it was going to flower first appeared in August 2015 when the plant was 20in (51cm) diameter. It finally flowered a year later and Rob has photographically documented this event over a 14-month period (Figs. 1–11).

He acquired the plant from a Grimsby Branch Member together with a plant of *Agave parryi*, and right from the start he had it in mind to plant it outside. *Agave parrasana* is found at high altitudes between 1400–2480m (4500–8000ft) in remote limestone mountains in central and southern Coahuila, Mexico. In habitat it is recorded as being able to withstand temperatures down to  $-12^{\circ}\text{C}$ . It is one of the few species where the inflorescence (flower stalk) begins to emerge and shoot up in the autumn, stops for the winter and then resumes growth with the spring warmth, finally flowering in the summer months.

The bed where it is planted has sandy soil with a little extra grit worked in, and is against a south-facing wall so benefits from that protection. The lowest temperature since it was planted out was  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$  in December 2010, but the last couple of winters have not been so cold, though they nearly always get a few nights each winter down to



$-7$  or  $-8^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The winter when the flower spike was dormant was particularly mild with only a few light frosts. Up to last winter (2015) it was covered by a piece of old secondary double glazing on either side of it. Rob's wife, Alison, built a frame for it with a hinged side to allow the addition of

**Fig. 1** 26 August 2015 – the first sign that an inflorescence is on the way

**Fig. 2** 11 September 2015 – definitely something going on!

**Fig. 3** 3 October 2015 – reaching out and upwards!

**Fig. 4** 25 November 2015 – glass panels on either side





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fleece if necessary, but this was never needed (Fig. 5). At the time of writing (November 2016) it is uncovered and they are hoping it will survive another winter to allow some seed to ripen.

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Fig. 5 19 December 2015 – custom-built frame for protection

Fig. 6 14 June 2016 – resuming growth

Fig. 7 23 June 2016 – first buds

Fig. 8 30 July 2016 – in full bud

Fig. 9 6 August 2016 – finally in bloom

Fig. 10 6 August 2016 – close-up of the flowers

Fig. 11 13 October 2016 – the bees did well!

## New *Lithops* cultivar registrations

Readers may be interested to learn of the *Lithops* N.E.Br. cultivar epithets below, that were added to the official Cultivar Register during the latter part of 2015 and in 2016.

### 'Chocolate Sprinkles'

*Lithops terricolor* 'Chocolate Sprinkles' by Bernd Schlösser in: *Lithops terricolor* 'Chocolate Sprinkles'. *Mesemb Study Group Bulletin* 31(1): 15. 2016. A stabilised cultivar with distinctly brown windows and sides (Fig. 12).

### 'Ironstone'

*Lithops karasmontana* subsp. *bella* 'Ironstone' by Tony Irons in: *Ironstone Lithops*. *Mesemb Study Group Bulletin* 30(2): 48. 2015. A stabilised cultivar with wide open brown windows and orange-brown margins (Fig. 13).

### 'Noemie's Kiwi'

*Lithops bromfieldii* var. *bromfieldii* 'Noemie's Kiwi' by Ronny Feng in: 'Noemie's Kiwi'; A new *Lithops* cultivar. *Mesemb Study Group Bulletin* 31(4): 98. 2016. A stabilised green-bodied aberration (Fig. 14).

### 'Steamy Windows'

*Lithops terricolor* 'Steamy Windows' by Bernd Schlösser in: *Lithops terricolor* 'Steamy Windows'. *Mesemb Study Group Bulletin* 31(2): 33. 2016. A white flowering cultivar with few or absent mini-windows (Fig. 15).

### 'White Rabbit'

*Lithops* 'White Rabbit' by Eric Collins in: *Lithops* 'White Rabbit'. *Cactus and Succulent Journal* (The Cactus and Succulent Society of New South Wales) 30(6): 105–107. 2016. Image example: Photograph of plants accompanying the protologue, taken by Eric Collins of Snowtown, South Australia. A stabilised hybrid of unknown origin with a lightly marked, convex top and white flowers (Fig. 16).



Fig. 14 *Lithops bromfieldii* var. *bromfieldii* 'Noemie's Kiwi' (Photo: Ronny Feng)



Fig. 12 *Lithops terricolor* 'Chocolate Sprinkles' (Photo: Bernd Schlösser)



Fig. 15 *Lithops terricolor* 'Steamy Windows' (Photo: Bernd Schlösser)



Fig. 13 *Lithops karasmontana* subsp. *bella* 'Ironstone' (Photo: Tony Irons)



Fig. 16 *Lithops* 'White Rabbit' (Photo: Eric Collins)

'White Susan'

*Lithops hookeri* var. *susannae* 'White Susan' by Francois Hoes in; 'White Susan' A new *Lithops* cultivar. *Mesemb Study Group Bulletin* 31(4): 98. 2016. Image example: Photograph of plants accompanying the protologue, taken by Francois Hoes of Belgium. A stabilised aberration that has white flowers with a yellow centre (Fig. 17).

A full up-to-date list of *Lithops* cultivars can be found at [www.scrapbooklithops.com/cultivars.html](http://www.scrapbooklithops.com/cultivars.html)

Keith Green



Fig. 17 *Lithops hookeri* var. *susannae* 'White Susan' (Photo: Francois Hoes)

## Long-lived cacti

I am a new Member of the BCSS having had a small collection of cacti and succulents for over 60 years. It all started when I was a boy with an uncle who had a greenhouse full. He gave me a few bits and pieces to start me off, most of which I still have to this day including one plant which has flowered only once in all that time in spite of me giving it a good talking to, well Prince Charles does it so I thought that I would give it a try but perhaps it does not like my Norfolk accent!

To begin with I kept my collection in a large garden frame. Then when I got married my wife bought me a greenhouse as a present and it is still going strong. I am not an expert cactus grower nevertheless I am rewarded with some wonderful flowers each year so I must be doing something right (Fig. 18). My uncle's advice was that you can kill them



Fig. 18 *Rebutia flavistyla* flowering (Photo: Jim Baldwin)

with kindness but even so I put a little fertiliser in the water when I plunge them during the summer.

My grandson has developed an interest now and he has a small collection (which granddad looks after) and he is so pleased when one of his plants flowers.

Jim Baldwin  
Fakenham, Norfolk.

## *Sulcorebutia canigueralii*

Stephen Scarr from Exeter tells me that he had never been able to grow *Sulcorebutia* successfully using his method for growing *Rebutia*, which was to overwinter in a cold frame, flower on a windowsill and then grow outside during the summer. However all his sulcos have grown and flowered well when grown in his outdoor sand bed. The bed has a slight slope to the south and is in full sun. He covers the bed with a sheet of glass resting on four bricks, one at each corner, between 15 September and 1 March.

(Note: *Sulcorebutia canigueralii* is regarded as *Rebutia canigueralii* in the *New Cactus Lexicon*)

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Fig. 19 *Sulcorebutia canigueralii* planted in June 2011 and flowering at the end of May 2016

## Cactus shop

The December 2016 journal had a piece on London's new cactus shop 'Prick' with the comment, "undoubtedly the UK's first cactus shop". A number of readers have commented on this and Roger Kidd from Wolverhampton says, "I recall in the late 1950s and/or early 1960s there was a cactus shop in Baker Street in London, not far from Madam Tussauds. I remember looking in the window and thinking everything was quite expensive. Maybe other members have a clearer memory of it."

A number of posters on the BCSS Forum have commented as above. Another comment on the forum by Keith L states that there used to be one in Hastings in 1963.

If anyone has any further recollection or even a photo of any cactus shops in the UK or elsewhere, your editor would be pleased to know. If it was a florist that sold quantities of cacti and succulents, then that does not really count. It had to have been a shop that sold just cacti and succulents and perhaps also pots, composts and books.