

A PRICKLY PASSION



Dear Gardeners, thank you for all the feedback from you all after last month's article, we had quite a few emails asking about joining the society, and met many of you at the RCHS Spring Show, we hear you enjoyed all the teas and cakes... and of course the displays!

One of the larger sections at the RCHS shows is the Cacti section. This month we have asked Zi, who is a member of the RCHS to tell us all about her passion for Cacti, so it's over to Zi...



Within the Ruislip Central Horticultural Society there is a thriving Cactus and Succulent Society. If you are member of the RCHS then you are automatically a member of the Cacti and Succulent Society and can attend their meetings. (For more details on the meetings see the end of this article). For the wider public they might see the society when they attend the RCHS three shows. There is always an impressive and diverse range of cacti and succulents on display and for sale. There is a fascination around these plants that seem so different from the normal plants.

I've been growing and collecting cacti and succulents for over 30 years and at the moment I have over 200 plants. My love of the plants started when we moved to a house that had an east facing conservatory; consequently, house plants didn't do well and I had to think of what would succeed. A trip to what was then Milton Hutchings, and also meeting the cactus buyer there, who became a firm friend. She convinced

me to start growing cacti. This friend accompanied me to many shows and conventions until her sad death last year.

For those who do not know the difference as a general rule, cacti store water in their bodies, whereas succulents store them in their leaves. I love them all, but I do like succulents slightly more. My favourites change from week-to-week, but I love Aloes, for their ability to grow new leaves and outgrow any marks, whereas cacti when marked stay marked but, in their defence, they do have beautiful flowers.

If you want to start your own collection, then you can buy cacti and succulents at the RCHS shows and talk to the members who have actually grown these specimens. If the next show is too far ahead and you want to start now, then a visit to your local garden centre will provide you with the plants. Buy what you like the look of, if you need to repot, a mix of John Innes No. 2 and plenty of grit is a basic requirement, but don't overpot. If you want cacti to flower well, keep them dry and above freezing in winter and in a sunny spot in summer.

Perhaps before you venture in to this new world you might like to attend a meeting of the Cacti and Succulent Section. It will allow you to meet like-minded folk, and enjoy speakers' visits at the monthly meetings.

The talks for the Cacti and Succulents take place at the Manor Farm Hall (Community Hall) in the St Martin's Approach Car Park, Ruislip. The meetings are on June 20th, August 15th, September 19th, October 17th and November 21st. All visitors £2 and all meetings start at 7.30pm.

Next month... We will be featuring an article on the 'Pelargonium' and the mail bag. Please email your horticultural questions into the RCHS at rchstalks@gmail.com.

See you next month.

Warren

Speaker, Joy Craig from Avoncourt Fuchsias, will be joining us on Tuesday 17th May, 7.30pm at St Lawrence Church Hall, Bridle Road, Pinner. All welcome!

Joy says that the inspiration to create Avoncourt Fuchsias first originated from our interest in the local Annual Horticultural Shows some thirty years ago. From exhibiting Fuchsias as a novice and to the present day. Joy Craig is a British Fuchsia Society National Judge and an active member of 5 Fuchsia Societies. She judges at Chelsea, Hampton Court and many horticultural shows.

See the website for details. <http://ruisliphorticultural.org.uk/>