

May Meeting - A PRESENTATION 'BACK TO BASICS - CACTI AND SUCCULENTS' by Dr. Richard Rolfe, Chairman of Chelmsford Branch of the British Cactus and Succulent Society.

Richard is obviously a passionate grower of these species and brought along a number that he had either grown from seed or propagated. His slides of colourful cactus and succulent flowers demonstrated to us what can be achieved with the correct cultivation.

Cacti and succulents (with the exception of the 'Christmas Cactus', Schlumbergera), require plenty of sunlight all year and a good airflow around the plants.

They also require excellent drainage, allowing the plant to dry out between watering. They do not need to be permanently moist.

Cacti and succulents need a winter rest in a cool dry space (about 5 degrees) Cease watering from mid September to mid March. They survive better if they are bone dry in the winter.

Richard now uses perlite as his growing medium, thus preventing the introduction of unwanted

fungi spores, seeds and insects. Perlite should be dampened before use to prevent inhalation of dust. Handle the prickly plants using gloves and a tea towel. When repotting or potting on, do not water for a week and then apply a light watering or diluted feed, 'Citrus Focus' (NOT Cactus Focus) is recommended.

Richard ended his talk by listing the multitude of pests that can beset both cacti and succulents together with methods of control.

The evening ended on a topical note by Ollie Scolah giving members some tips on how to manage the many and varied jobs that beset us gardeners in May.

Club members are looking forward to monthly afternoon outings until Wednesday 4th September when Maike Windhorst will be giving a presentation on 'Growing for the Flower Arranger All the Year Round'

New members and visitors very welcome.