

## **Gdansk to Birmingham: Introducing myself**

*Andrew Gdaniec\**

*a.gdaniec@kew.org*

My adventure with succulents started with a windowsill collection in Poland when I was four years old, and from the age of 10 I helped in a succulent nursery. After school I studied biology at the University of Gdansk and did the equivalent of an MSc on seed-characters in *Parodia* (Cactaceae). Then I started a PhD on cactus taxonomy, and was given the opportunity to participate in an expedition to Ecuador. Unfortunately I was unable to secure a research grant in order to continue with my PhD work, and took a job with a firm specializing in micropropagation. In 2006 I decided to move to the UK. I got a job in a logistic warehouse, working a shift from 3 pm to midnight and doing voluntary work in the mornings for the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and Glasshouse. Eventually BBGG offered me a place on a one-year studentship. I joined the British Cactus & Succulent Society and I have tried to visit many succulent collections, either in private hands or in botanical gardens. After leaving Poland I had to sell my collection and decided I would not start a new one. But I'm addicted to plants and have started again, growing hardy cacti on the balcony of my apartment.

[\**Current address: 54 Beechwood Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4DE. Andrew is now a student on the diploma course at the School of Horticulture, RBG Kew. — Ed.*]