

SUMMARY

Rob Bregman

In his opener, Ben Wijffelaars pays attention to La Palma, one of the Canary Islands which recently hit the newspaper headlines because of the eruption of 'La Bestia' (the animal), the Cumbre Vieja volcano. Among succulent lovers La Palma is of course also known for its beautiful flora of aeoniums, euphorbias, crassulas and many others.

In his series about the 'Verkade' handbooks of the 1930s, Theo Heijnsdijk deals with *Fenestraria rhopalophylla*, a South African member of the Aizoaceae family with white flowers and ultra-succulent leaves. These leaves are provided with a translucent apical surface, since the remainder of the leaf is hidden in the soil. The English popular name is 'baby toes'. The plant was found in 1903 by the German discoverer Leonhard Schultze in the coastal area of SW Namibia. He described it in 1907 as *Mesembrianthemum rhopalophyllum*. In 1925 Kew botanist Nicolas E. Brown transferred it to his new genus *Fenestraria*, an act that was based on differences in seed capsule (fruit) morphology. Two years later Brown introduced the yellow blooming *F. aurantiaca*. Both species differ in flower color only, so they are presently treated as subspecies. The fruits are hydrochastic: they open by moisture, so that rain drops can splash the seeds out of the capsules. Cultivation is not very difficult, but the roots are sensitive to watering at the wrong moment.

Bertus Spee presents part 118 of his series 'in the spotlight'. *Melocactus borhidii* (= *M. harlowii* subsp. *borhidii*), *Gymnocalycium spegazzinii* and *Echeveria setosa* var. *minor* are depicted and briefly discussed.

During his many trips to the habitats of Mexican cacti, Wolter ten Hove realized how 'smart' a cactus must be to survive in a hostile environment. Taking *Strombocactus disciformis*, *Escobaria abdita* and *Mammillaria saboae* as examples, he outlines the various adaptations of these cacti, such as protection against herbivores, seed morphology and dispersal, fruit morphology and the advantage of spreading the fruiting period over time.

From 2003 on, Henk Ruinaard plays the game of which species in his *Echinocereus* collection flowers first. In his top 10 of 2020, *E. davisii* was in first place (April 9), whereas this year the hybrid *E. coccineus* x *E. davisii* won first price (April 16). In nature, the flowering period of *Echinocereus* plants depends strongly on day and night temperatures (besides genetic factors); for instance, the wide-spread *E. engelmannii* flowers earlier in Sonora, Mexico than in Utah, USA.

The contribution of Louis Van de Meutter is about *Edithcolea grandis*, a stapeliad stem succulent from tropical east and north east Africa. In 1895, this species was discovered in Somalia by the British plant collector Edith Cole. It is characterized by creeping, coiled stems and 8-12 cm wide flowers with a yellowish brown-spotted corolla. In 1963 a related species with straight-ribbed stems and shorter and broader corolla lobes was described as *E. grandis* var. *baylissiana*. Cultivation of both plants is difficult; they should be kept at above 10 °C winter temperature. Root rot occurs easily; this can be prevented by grafting on *Stapelia gigantea*. Bright afternoon sun should be avoided.

Peter Knippels went 'back to basis', which means to him the cultivation of his favorite succulents on a sunny window-sill at home. Many succulents other than cacti can be successfully cultivated there but most cacti are doing better in a greenhouse. Peter obtained good results with a.o. euphorbias (*E. subelegans*, *E. torrei*) and *Welwitschia mirabilis*. A continuous problem for him is the damage done by sciara fly larvae.

Wolter ten Hove gives his bimonthly abstract of the most important articles in other journals on succulent plants.

As usual in the December issue, the names of all authors, articles and plant photos published this year are listed in alphabetical order.

At the back page, Tom Twijnstra reports that he was not satisfied with the cactus compost, lava or clay grains he used as substrates for his plants. So, he keeps a shovel and a bucket in his car while looking for fresh molehills, clay, gravel or rough sand mounds.

rob.bregman@icloud.com