

SOME FAMILIAR MESEMBRYANTHEMUMS

The Mesembryanthemaceae of South Africa comprise one of the largest of all the groups of succulent plants. Jacobsen describes about 123 genera and somewhere between 2,000 to 2,500 species; however, some authorities are now attempting to reduce and combine this somewhat unwieldy bulk into something more manageable. The name Mesembryanthemum means "midday flower", and refers to the fact that the flowers of many species do not open until afternoon. They are often also called "flowering stones". Apparently the seed structure (rather than the flower) is the most important factor in determining genera in this particular group of plants, for according to John A. Jump (Cactus and Succulent Journal of America, July-August, 1963): "The intricate construction of the fruit of the family Mesembryanthemaceae has intrigued students of this group of plants for many decades. Its tendency to vary in structure from one genus to another of the family provides an important basis for taxonomic distinctions in this group of succulents in which differences in flower structure are frequently not suitable criteria for identification". Due to the unusual structure of the seed capsule, rainfall, or even heavy dew, is an important factor in seed dispersal and the successful reproduction of many species. It is among this group of plants that we find many of the fantastic and amazing mimicry plants of South Africa, as well as some of the more pronounced "windowed" plants such as Fenestraria and Frithia. Most of them are also noted for the profusion, brilliancy, and silky sheen of their flowers. Some species reportedly contain a poisonous alkaloid.

One of the most familiar and beloved genera of all the Mesembryanthemaceae is undoubtedly Faucaria. This is a genus of about 35 species coming mainly from the Karroo and the eastern parts of the Cape. The name is derived from the Latin faux, meaning "jaws" (Faucaria = "a collection of jaws"); hence, we have F. tigrina ("Tiger's Jaws"), F. lupina ("Wolves' Jaws"), and F. felina ("Cat's Jaws"). These plants consist of small, almost stemless rosettes, branching with age to form a mat. The topmost pair of the densely-crowded fleshy, thick leaves does indeed resemble the gaping jaws of some animal, complete with teeth. Faucarias are among the hardiest of all the Mesembryanthemums, and are easily grown from seed.

Fenestrarias are extremely succulent plants with clavate leaves which are translucent at the tips. They come from the coastal sand dunes of Southwest Africa, where they grow buried to their windowed tips. The name is from the Latin fenestra ("window"), and Fenestraria means simply "a number of windows". You will frequently hear the plant referred to by its common - and not terribly appropriate - name "Baby's Toes". There are only two species - F. aurantiaca, the type species - and F. rhopalophylla, which is considered to be merely a variety by some experts. Fenestrarias resent re-potting, and will rot with great enthusiasm if overwatered. Propagation is generally from seed, although careful division, or even leaf cuttings (??!!) have been advocated by some growers.

Frithia is a monotypic genus consisting of the one species F. pulchra. It was named for its discoverer Fred Frith, a South African succulent collector, and the specific name pulchra means "beautiful". Superficially it resembles Fenestraria (when not in bloom), but is not closely related.

Frithias occur in an area of relatively high summer rainfall; their habitat is cold in winter and heavy frosts are not unusual. They grow wedged in rock crevices, and when not in bloom it is almost impossible to locate them between the quartzite stones of their habitat. The flowers are bright magenta shading to white in the center, and may last for two or three weeks. They are more difficult to grow than Fenestrarias, and propagation is by seed only.

Lapidaria is another monotypic genus, and its single species L. margaritae, is native to the deserts of Great Namaqualand in Southwest Africa, near Warmbad. Its name comes from the Latin lapis ("stone"), and Lapidaria means "a group of stones". It was successively included in the genus Argyroderma and then Dinteranthus. It is a perennial dwarf rosette plant with six to eight leaves of particularly lovely, jewel-like coloration, and yellow flowers. It grows readily from seed, but should be kept relatively dry during the summer months.

Neohenricia is yet another monotypic genus whose one species, N. sibbettii, was named in honor of Dr. M. Henrici who discovered it in 1930. This is a tiny, charming species with a flat, mat-like growth habit, and tiny white nocturnal flowers which open at dusk. It will not tolerate frost. Propagation is by seed or division of the clumps.

The genus Pleiospilos contains about 35 species, all native to the Cape Province, the Great Karroo, or the Orange Free State. The name is derived from the Greek pleios = "full" and spilos = "dots" or "speckles". They are often called "Split Rocks" or "Living Granite", and the type species is P. bolusii. They were previously classified under the genus Punctillaria. They are dwarf stemless succulent perennials with yellow to orange-colored flowers which often have the scent of coconut. They are easily raised from seed.

Titanopsis is a genus of six species. The name comes from the Greek titanos = "chalk" (referring to the calcareous appearance of the leaves) and opsis = "appearance". They come from the southern part of Southwest Africa, and the type species is T. calcarea. In habitat it is very difficult to find these plants between the small limestones where they grow. The presence of raised, calcareous "pustules" on the leaves is a particular characteristic of species in this genus. The flowers are yellow. Titanopsis are easily propagated from seed, which germinates readily, and the majority of plants will flower for the first time in one growing season. Also, plants consisting of more than one rosette can be divided. You will often hear the names Titanopsis, Aloinopsis, and Nananthus used rather interchangeably, since some of the species have been bandied back and forth between all three genera.

The cultivation of these plants is comparatively simple if a few basic ground rules are observed. They require very bright conditions - too much shading will result in etiolation, loss of the lovely glaucous bloom on the epidermis, and few, if any, flowers. Good air circulation is important, and careful watering tailored to their specific growing season, which is usually our fall and winter.

Literature cited: Barkhuizen, B.P. Succulents of Southern Africa
 Cactus and Succulent Journal of America (various issues)
Haselton, Scott: Succulents for the Amateur
Herre, Hans: Genera of the Mesembryanthemaceae
Jacobsen, H. Lexicon of Succulent Plants
Rowley, Gordon: The Illustrated Encyclopedia of
 Succulents

NOTICE OF PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE SDC&SS
BY-LAWS

A suggestion was made and approved by your Board of Directors & Officers to amend the By-Laws, Article IV from:

ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS
Section 1

The officers of the Society shall be: President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Treasurer and six (6) Directors.

Amend to:

ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS
Section 1

The officers of the Society shall be: President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, Treasurer and six (6) Directors.

NOTE: By eliminating the Second Vice President and Corresponding Secretary their previous functions will be appointed by the President. The President has these powers as described in the present SDC&CC By-Laws. We will vote on this at the Nov. meeting.



REMEMBER----- only registered members of our club are invited to the Christmas Party. NO GUESTS FOR THIS MEETING.

Registration for the Christmas Party December 1, 1984 (Please Note Date)

Name of Member _____

Immediate Family Member(s) _____

NOTE: Registration Must be in by the end of the November 10th meeting. Those members registered will receive a gift plant. All others will not receive a gift plant this year. There will be only enough gift plants for registered members. Please return this registration to any officer or board members.

Dear Santa:

Please bring me a new pot and a name tag for Christmas. My old pot is cracked and besides it's too big.

Please don't let your reindeer step on me or nibble on me!

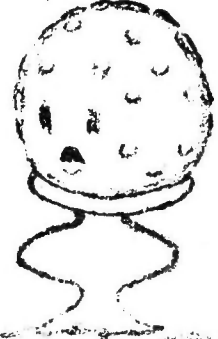
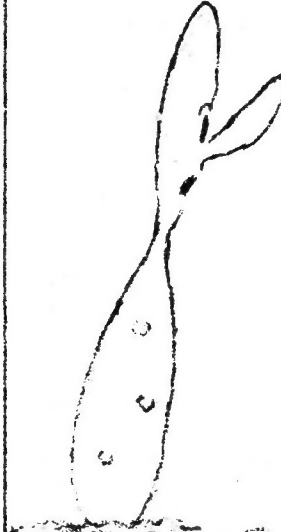
Mopalea Jr.



NOTE TO SANTA

Mam, what kinda pot is that?

It's a 'Scotch pot', it doesn't need much soil; there's no drain hole so it saves on water. My roots grow out of cracks in the bottom and I can root anywhere I like. Now I'm giving much thought to hibernating during the 'off season'.



WRS

SCOTCH POTTING

Walter R Scott

DR. ADOLPHE WISLEZENUS

by frank thrombley

Dr. Adolphe Wislezenus---- who was this romantic scientist? Wislezenus was an M. D. of Zurich, having had to flee his native Germany because of political liberalism. He practised in Paris and New York, then moved to Illinois and then to Missouri. A competent Geologist and a Naturalist of high standing. He had made the Oregon Passage as far as Fort Hall in 1844/45 and wrote a book about that venture. In the spring of 1846 he decided to investigate the Flora and Fossils of the Southwest. He was then to travel with Albert Speyer, a Prussian jew and a well-established trader, who was traveling under the protection of a Prussian passport. Albert Speyer was taking two wagonloads of arms and powder from Independence, Missouri, which the Governor of Chihuahua had had the foresight to order.

One must rem^{em}ber that Mexico claimed all of New Mexico, Arizonia, Colorado, Utah, Nevada and California in 1846. They also did not recognize the Independent Republic of Texas. President Polk, however, in 1846 decided that this territory should belong to the United States. The enevitable was the war between the U. S. A. and Mexico.

We next pick up Dr. Wislezenus in March of 1947, at Chihuahua. He had been held in custody, including some of the traders from Independence. They had been 'held' under guard for six months in the small silver town named Cosihuirachi. The doctor was said to be very bored in this poverty stricken town, he tried to botanize but it was barren country. Colonel Doniphan, leading the First Missouri Volunteers, won a decisive 3 hour battle about 15 miles north of Chihuahua on Feb. 28 and occupied the city on March 1 or 2. During this Battle the traders, including Dr. Wislezenus were freed to fend for themselves. The doctor then went to the city of Chihuahua to meet with the Doniphan's army of poorly dressed and ragged looking First Missourians. He joined up as a surgeon. They stayed there through March and most of April. The army then marched south to the oasis of Parras and on to Saltillo, Monterrey and back to the Rio Grande at what is now Brownsville, Texas. Dr. Wislezenus did botanize during this march and as we know had a number of plants named for him in his honor. He also wrote a book about this venture entitled 'Memoir of a tour of Northern Mexico'.

This narrative does not fully answer the question originally asked but it does give one an insight of a true adventurer.

Source of information: THE YEAR OF DECISION
by Bernardo DeVoto

published by
Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston 1942

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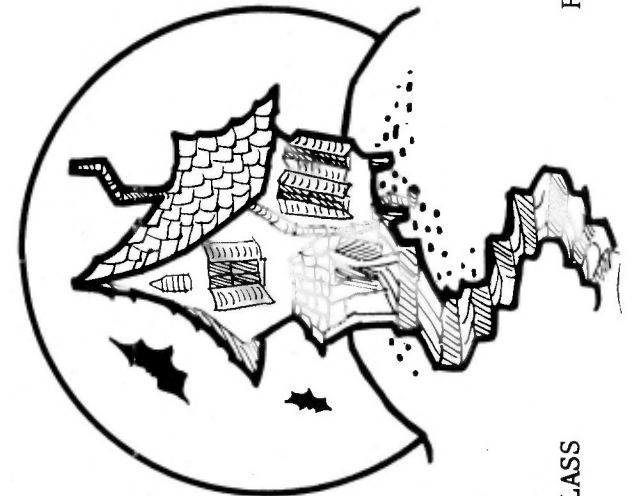
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Orientation:

The San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society is open to all persons interested in growing cacti, other succulents and exotic plants. Meetings are held the second Saturday of each month at 1:30 pm in Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park. Board of Directors meetings are held after the general meetings. Annual dues are \$8.00 per single member per year, \$2.00 for each additional member of a household within a family. Single copies of Espinas y Flores are 60 cents.

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