

Gaultonia

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British Cactus and Succulent Society

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The exploding cactus

Paul Henson thought his prized cactus would enjoy the sunlight blazing down on his conservatory. But things proved a little too hot for the ten-inch Chilean plant, which burst into flames and set the room alight.

Mr Henson was counting his blessings yesterday after firemen managed to prevent the blaze from spreading to the rest of his house in Peterborough.

Experts said cacti were known to explode in their desert habitat. But this was the first time anyone could remember it happening in Britain. Mr Henson, 28, said: 'The first thing I knew something was amiss was when I smelt burning.

'I thought the kids had been fooling around with matches which is bad enough. But when I saw what had actually happened I was speechless.'

THE GENUS REBUTIA PART 3

By Peter Bint

We come now to the third part of this interesting, easily grown and wonderfully rewarding genus. One thing is sure, you will never be without flowers in spring especially with this group of plants. The subsection *Rebutia* has some of the longest known of the whole group. All the plants in this section will, in cultivation, make wide panfuls. They all form flat, globular bodies with depressed crowns and all, with the exception of *R. fabrisii*, are about 2 inches across and about 1 inch high. They are all very easy and fun to grow. They do not have to become large plants as it is very easy to take off offsets which will root up quickly if done in the height of spring. They could easily be given as plants for summer fetes, school summer fairs and other such like worthy causes.

The group has been sized down in as far as the number of names that are used. The usually recognised names are as follows:

fabrisii, *kariusiana*, *krainziana*, *marsoneri*, *minuscula*, *padcayensis*, *senilis*, *violaciflora*, *wessneriana* and *xanthocarpa*.

Rebutia fabrisii is the one plant that differs from the norm in so far as the bodies are less than half the size of the rest. It clusters heavily easily forming 100 plus heads. The flowers are red.

v. ***aureiflora*** is very similar but with smaller yellow flowers. One form has stems that elongate into sausage shaped bodies that sprawl around untidily.

v. ***nana*** as the name suggests is consistently smaller than the main species.

Rebutia kariusiana was originally a single plant in a batch of *R. marsoneri* but with a gentle pink coloured flower rather than the normal yellow. Selective breeding has perpetuated the name. Although it will be found as a good species it clearly should rest as a form of *marsoneri*.

Rebutia krainziana, if it is correctly named, should have tiny white spines arising from prominent, white woolled areoles. I have seen many plants of this name that do not match up to the original description. Viewed from above they display the wonderful spiralling pattern distinctly. Flowers are a deep shining red (although there has been a recent report, unconfirmed, of a population in Jujuy, Argentina with red, orange and yellow flowers growing together).

Rebutia marsoneri is a well known, early flowering species. One of the few yellow flowered types it is purple brown in the bud stage. You may well come across "varieties" *brevispina* and *vatteri* to describe plants with short and long spines respectively. The petals are normally pointed but one of my first plants grown from seed in the mid 60's was v. *spatulata* with lovely spoon shaped petals.

Rebutia minuscula is the type species for the genus. It has not been collected in the wild for over 40 years and virtually all plants of this name have come home bred plants (with all the problems of possible hybrid infiltration). Amazingly comparison with these home bred plants and the newly collected material compares favourably. Flowers are a deep pinky red.

v. grandiflora is a minor variation with long tubed carmine flowers.

Rebutia padcayensis has been slow to come into cultivation even though it has been known for nigh on 30 years. It is synonymous with *singularis* and *margarethae* and the latter name seems to have taken precedence over the earlier name of *padcayensis*. Flowers are usually yellow though reds and oranges have been reported.

Rebutia senilis a species, undoubtedly most popular, widely grown, floriferous and extremely variable, has attracted a number of names beneath specific rank to define variations in flower colour and spination. Amongst these are *lilacinorosea*, *kesselringiana*, *elegans*, *iseliniana*, *sieperdaiana* and *stuemeri* to name but a few. As the name suggests spines are plentiful and white giving an appearance of 'age'. *Senilis* is normally red flowered but *kesselringiana* is yellow flowered and *lilacinorosea* has lilac pink blooms. There are white flowered variants also.

Rebutia violaciflora has consistently retained its name even though it was reduced in rank beneath *minuscula* over a quarter of a century ago. It is a well known, popular species grown for its vibrant pink violet flowers

Rebutia wessneriana is a highly variable species which has attracted many superfluous names. Three such often seen names are; *v. berylloides*, *v. calliantha* and *v. krainziana*. The flowers are a brilliant blood red, sometimes violet at the tips.

Rebutia xanthocarpa can be smaller bodied but the really noticeable feature is the much smaller flowers. Colour variation in the blossoms has attracted dubious names which are generally disregarded nowadays. Perhaps just one might be considered and that is *v. salmonea* which has beautiful salmon pink flowers which are very different from the norm.

One last word before completing this series is a caution. The large clumps that do form in cultivation, which is very different from the pattern in habitat, can suddenly collapse without explanation. The usual way is for the centre to dry up, usually during winter, and become detached from the roots. As the bodies remain outwardly green you suspect nothing. Caught early enough offsets can be saved and rooted but there is no hope for the whole clump. The other method is wet rot. The bodies become dull, darker green and progressively softer. As before offsets can be saved provided the red brown threads indicating the presence of the rot have not penetrated deep into the heart of the plant. Again this tends to happen through the winter months.

I hope this series has inspired you to grow a few or helped you to look at those you do grow through a new perspective.

Brookside Cactus and Succulent Nursery

We should like to inform all our friends and customers that the nursery has now moved to:

Little Acre, Boston Road, New York, Lincs. LN4 4YP.

Our new telephone number is:

As we are still settling in, we are not really open to visitors, but please feel free to call. We hope to resume our mail order business shortly.

Best wishes

Alan Butler

ALSTERWORTHIA INTERNATIONAL SPECIAL ISSUE No. 1 HAWORTHIA SPECIES CONCEPT UPDATE by INGO BREUER

is about to be printed. This special issue has been produced to facilitate the comparison of the different classification systems used by four current authorities, Bayer and Esterhuizen in South Africa, Breuer in Germany and Dr. Hayashi in Japan and that of Scott, South Africa, who died last year.

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