

Summary

Rob Bregman

Ben Wijffelaars leads things off with his usual column, this time about the increasing danger of high water level in the river Meuse, close to his home. Some months ago, instead of ship horns, he was greeted by a brass band, blowing midwinter horns.

In his ongoing series on the 'Verkade' books from the 1930s, Theo Heijnsdijk pays attention to *Euphorbia inermis*, a 'Medusa head' species from the East Cape of South Africa. It was first described by Ph. Miller in 1768, and probably introduced in Europe by Dutch sailors. One of those plants, in cultivation in the botanic garden of Palermo, Sicily, was described in 1902 by Alwin Berger as *E. viperina*. In 1915 N.E. Brown described *E. huttoniae*, a local form (also considered a variety of *E. inermis*) but lacking the small whitish bracteoles between the anthers. In 1909 R. Marloth described *E. esculenta*, a more or less similar plant but with smaller brownish nectar glands. In the IUCN Red List both *E. inermis* and *E. esculenta* are listed in the category 'least concern'. Cultivation is rather easy; cuttings develop lateral stems only, which become much longer than they are in nature. Consequently, such plants differ considerably from plants in habitat.

In part 132 of his series 'In the spotlight', Bertus Spee deals with four nice plants again. *Gibbaeum nuciforme*, *Ariocarpus retusus*, *Escobaria abdita* and *Mammillaria solisioides* are depicted and detailed.

During one of his trips to Mexico, Wolter ten Hoeve noticed many ants on fruits of *Mammillaria albiflora*. He discusses their ecological significance as to protection of the plants from all kinds of parasites and dispersal of the seeds. Ants are attracted by sweet liquids, present in fruit sap, in nectar glands inside and outside the flower (extrafloral nectaries) and by fatty appendages of the seeds (elaiosomes). Usually, ants do not pollinate flowers. An unpleasant (for us) aspect of ant activity is the 'milking' of aphids and mealy bugs, to make them produce honey dew, a sugar concentrate. This may cause black spots on the plant caused by fungi.

Peter Knippels looks back at the time when his succulent plant hobby started, back in the early Nineties. He cultivated his first plants on the window-sill; he sowed his first seeds in pots on top of his aquarium. Today, his plants (above all bulbs, caudex plants, euphorbias and haworthias) are still on his window-sill, so basically very little has changed!

Jean Bonnefond deals with *Pediocactus winkleri* and related species. He visited the habitat (Utah, USA) a few times. This small globose cactus was found in 1975 by Mrs. Agnes Winkler but these plants had already been collected in the early Sixties. Related species are *P. bradyi* and *P. despainii*. The natural habitat is characterized by a purely mineral, alkaline soil under extremely windy and hot sunny conditions. In recent years, the natural populations are being threatened by 'open ranch' cattle. Cultivation in our country is rather difficult; a very porous and mineral substrate is necessary and water should be given only in early spring and late summer.

Freddy Delabarre brings back memories about cactus societies in the city of Gent, Belgium, during pre-war years (1930s).

Wolter ten Hoeve discusses the most interesting articles in foreign journals on succulent plants.

On the back cover, Tom Twijnstra describes the sad moments he sometimes has when a beloved plant dies.

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