





## CACTUS OF THE MONTH

### Rebutia

by Phyllis Flechsig

Almost every collector of cacti has grown Rebutias at some time; they are a deservedly popular genus of small plants whose relatively large flowers appear in profusion all through the growing season.

The first named Rebutia, R. minuscula, was described in 1895 by Karl Schumann. He named the genus for a cactus dealer, P. Rebut. Since that time, many more Rebutias have been discovered and named; today, there is such a confusion of species that a good deal of "lumping" is probably in order. The genus Rebutia is now considered to include the very similar genera Aylosterā, Digitorebutia, and Mediolobivia. (The genus Sulcorebutia, in spite of its similar name, is thought to be of a different line of evolutionary descent and therefore not closely related to Rebutia.)

Rebutias are all small, clustering cacti native to the east slope of the Andes in Bolivia and northern Argentina, at altitudes of about 5,000 to 13,000 feet above sea level. Thus they are decidedly not plants of the hot lowland deserts and grow best under cool conditions, with some shade. They are also hardy to light frosts.

Rebutia spination varies tremendously, from the minute, appressed spines of R. heliosa, through the showy white spines of R. muscula, to the quite long bristles of some forms of R. aureiflora.

Flowers are borne on old areoles, near the base of the plant, often forming a ring of blooms about the base. These blooms occur in almost all the cactus colors: white, pink, lilac, red, orange, salmon, and yellow; some species--the R. pygmaea group--even have bicolored flowers.

Among the choicest species are the beautiful Rebutia heliosa, with orange flowers; R. muscula ("little mouse"), covered with white spines, and again with orange flowers; R. marsoneri, with tiny spines and yellow flowers; R. perplexa, with lilac-pink flowers; R. narvaecense, with pink-and-white flowers; and R. kupperiana, with brown spines and brilliant red flowers.

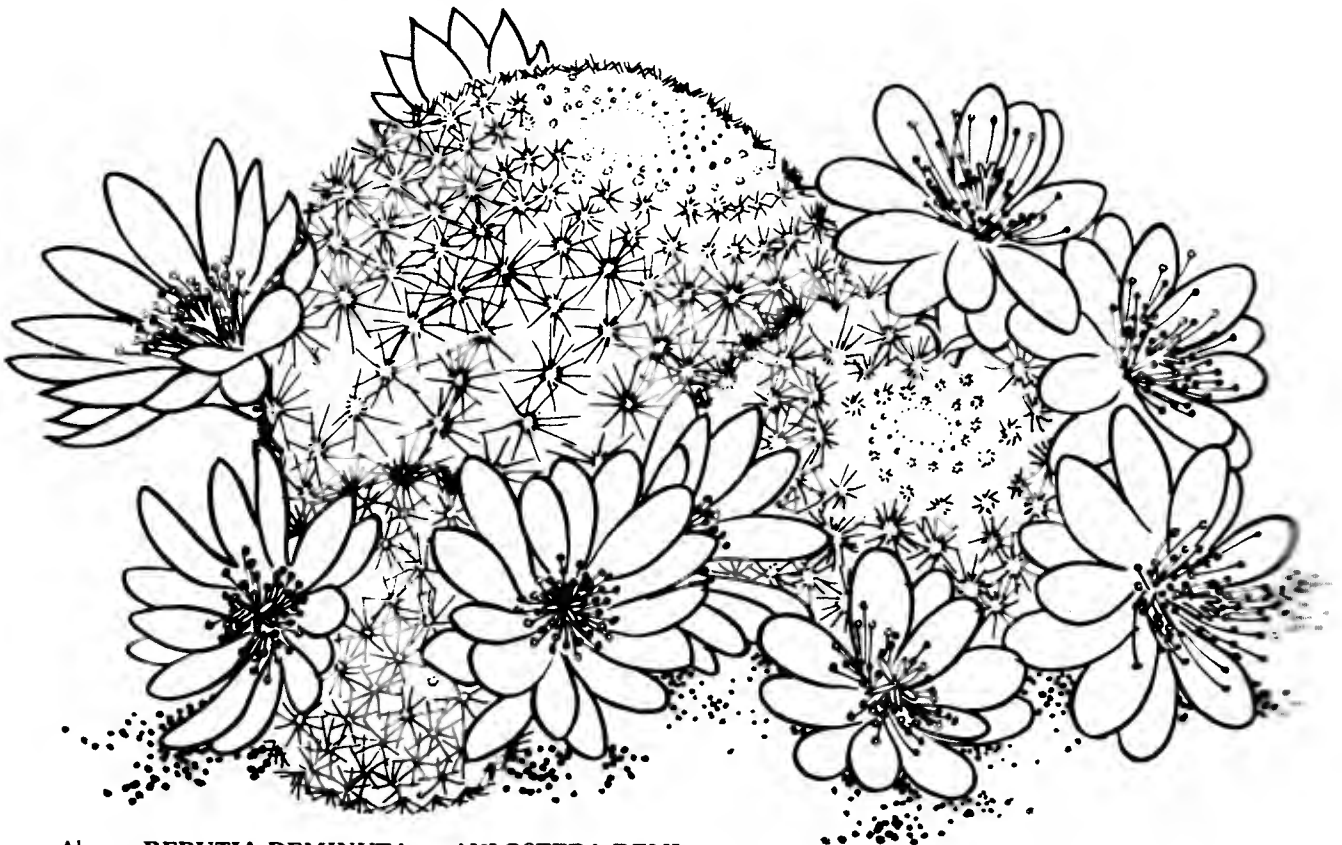
The plants are quite easily grown and will fit into small pots indefinitely. They can be watered frequently from March through October here, with occasional light fertilizing. Some growers withhold water altogether in winter, but I prefer to water them about once a month in winter, if the weather is good. Rebutias

should not be planted in the ground in this climate, and may rot if left out in the rain. Propagation is generally from seed, which must be planted while fresh--it does not keep well--and many species are self-fertile. You may find tiny seedlings sprouting around the base of your old plant. The plants may also be multiplied by cutting off and rooting offsets.

Pests are about the same as for other cacti, the principal problems being mealybugs and red spider mites. Occasional spraying with insecticidal soap will help keep these things away, though mite damage is insidious and may not be noticed before the surface of the plant has become discolored. A soil drench with a systemic insecticide two or three times a year will help to prevent infestation by insects and mites.

Literature consulted:

- Backeberg, C. 1977. Cactus Lexicon (English edition).  
Britton, N.L., and Rose, F.N. 1923. The Cactaceae, vol. III, pp. 45-48.  
Fearn, B., and Percy, L. 1981. The Genus Rebutia 1895-1981.  
Van Ness, M. 1972. Rebutias, the South American gems. CSJA, vol. 44, pp. 38-39.



Above: **REBUTIA DEMINUTA** or **AYLOSTERA DEMINUTA**. (*Crown cactus*). Argentina.

## SUCCULENTS-OF-THE-MONTH

### Oxalis and Peperomia

by Rick Latimer

The main reason that we are covering the genus Oxalis is that we have not done it for over ten years, so we are long past due. Also we need to discover species in this genus that are unjustly obscured by their weedy relatives. The family Oxalidaceae is included in the order Geraniales which includes other families containing succulent species such as Balsaminaceae (Impatiens), Zygophyllaceae (Zygophyllum), and Geraniaceae (Pelargonium & Sarcocaulon). The family Oxalidaceae or "Wood Sorrel" family has some interesting species. The leaves of some species are used in soups and salads as a substitute for Sorrel (Rumex acetosa) wherever they occur. They add a tart but pleasant taste due to their oxalic acid content ("oxalis" derives from the Greek word for "sour", "sharp", and "acid"). One species in this family, Averrhoa carambola is grown for its edible fruits as well as making a nice ornamental tree. The trees are native to India and China, reach up to 30 feet, and has leaves that close when touched at night. The fruits are quince scented, ribbed, and yellowish-brown (see Exotica or Tropica).

There may be as many as 850 different species of the genus Oxalis, but there are probably only about 20 succulent species. All groups in the genus Oxalis exhibit "sleep" movements caused by the loss of water pressure in the leaf cushions at the bases of the leaves whenever photosynthesis stops for the day. At night or in the heavy shade, the leaves close together and the plant appears wilted (if this occurs in sunshine, the plant is wilted!!). The succulent members of the genus are native to Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, and the Galapagos Islands. They live in environments that vary from sea level way up to over 11,000 feet in elevation.

One of the better known succulent species is O. carnososa. It comes from the dry coastal areas of Peru and Chile and even ascending to higher elevations in the Bolivian mountains. The tuberous storage roots and succulent stems enable the plant to survive several months of drought, during the dormant season, when the plants are leafless. In cultivation they may be grown as bonsai specimens and are active in the spring and summer, but prefer dry winters. Perhaps the most outstanding member of this genus is O. gigantea. It comes from Chile, where it has a fairly wide distribution along the coastal desert cliffs. The common name for it is 'churco'. A plant at the UCLA garden was about 6 feet tall. Stems may be as much as 1 inch thick and may be straight and erect or sinuous and drooping. One clone has pubescent leaves. A contrasting species is O. megalorrhiza from both mainland South America and the Galapagos Islands. The succulent stems are pendant and may be hidden by the typical dark green clover-like leaves in the spring, but the foliage falls off in the autumn. The pest of this genus is O. corniculata, which favors areas that it is most unwelcome. O. acetosella is used as the shamrock by those who celebrate St. Patrick's Day and good luck to you!



## JULY PICNIC (POT LUCK)

Time: Saturday, July 14, 1984

Place: FELICITA PARK, ESCONDIDO - Area # 4

What to Bring: Your Family  
Pot Luck Dish

The club will Provide soft drinks

### Directions:

North on I-15 to Lake Hodges -cross the lake  
Take the off Ramp at Via Rancho Parkway and  
go West (over the highway I-15) Approximately  
1½ miles to Felicita Road, Turn RIGHT, Go ½  
mile to entrance of park on the left. For those  
of you going south on I-15, DO NOT cross the  
lake but turn off at Via Rancho Parkway.  
Area #4 will have the San Diego Cactus and  
Succulent sign in View.

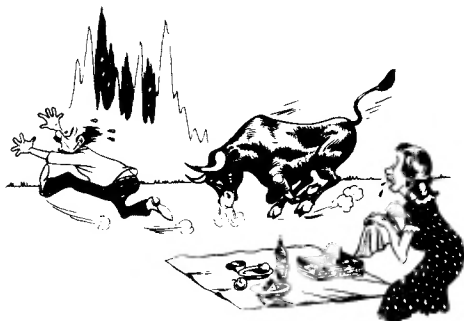
NOTE: There will be 'Door' Prizes and an  
Auction. The Auctioneer will be the ever  
lovable, knowledgable and Funable - LEE PHELPS

(This is Frank's Copy - Not mine)

o o o o o o o o o o

the right was given to  
I don't know which member.  
I know that these  
are delicious.

leaves should be the  
ones just forming.



# Cactus salad for a change

A prickly pear cactus leaf may look inedible, but actually it makes a tasty addition to any menu. To see for yourself, try this recipe for a traditional Mexican salad. You can also serve chilled, cooked cactus strips with an oil and vinegar dressing. Look for fresh cactus leaf at a supermarket produce department that offers specialty foods.



Photographs: Dieter

### CACTUS SALAD

*Cooked and chilled, cactus tastes like Italian-style green beans—*

- 2 prickly pear cactus leaves**
- 2 green onions, sliced**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- ½ teaspoon chili powder**
- Tomato wedges**
- Mexican or farmer's cheese**



Cut out thorns from cactus; do not peel. Cut cactus leaves in 2 x ¼-inch strips. In 3-quart saucepan combine cactus strips and green onion; add enough water to cover. Stir in ½ teaspoon of the salt. Bring to boiling. Reduce heat. Simmer, covered, 15 to 20 minutes or till tender.

Drain cactus and rinse well with cold water; drain again. Combine cactus, chili powder, and the remaining salt; cover and chill. On lettuce-lined plate, arrange cactus with tomato; crumble a little cheese atop. Makes 10 to 12 servings. ■

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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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