

San Gabriel Valley Cactus and Succulent Society

Cacti of the Month August 2001 – *Cacti of Brazil*

Brazil is an enormous country, with habitats that range from the Amazon to dry scrub lands, to the Atlantic Montane forest, to mountains. Cacti are found everywhere, all finding a unique niche in which to thrive.

Brazil is ancestral home of all cacti. The most primitive genus of cacti, *Pereskia* comes from the warm humid tropics of Brazil. This genus includes plants that are barely succulent, with flowers more like roses than many better known cacti. It's growth habit is more like a shrub, and in Brazil, it is often used as a street tree or hedge.

Moving slightly up the tree of complexity is *Quiabentia*, closer to an *Opuntia*, but still with the leafy, shrubby appearance of a primitive member of the cactus family. Also in the *Opuntia* sub-family are many cylindrical leafed and flat pad species, many rarely seen in collections. *Opuntia salmiana* is a cylindrical stemmed species, only a bit away from *Quiabentia*. Others (*O. palmadora*, *O. inamoena*) become more and more in appearance to the *Opuntias* we are used to seeing.

Brazil is home to a wealth of ceroid forms, and is particularly rich in the genus *Pilosocereus*. *P. aureispinus* is densely spined with short yellow spines. It is a robust and quick grower, generally only getting a few feet tall before braching from the base. *P. magnificus* is a beautiful light blue with gold spined edges. A spectacular plant, particularly when lit by early morning or late afternoon sun.

The most collectable of the Brazilian cacti are the globular cacti. The most spectacular of these are *Melocactus*, mostly from the state of Bahia, and *Uebelmannia*, mostly from the state of Minas Gerais. *Melocactus* grow for about 8 to 15 years, before reaching maturity and starting a cephalium, containing all the flowers and fruits. Many of the species have cephalia that are a brilliant red or orange color, often on a blue body. The best

known and easiest grown of the *Uebelmannia* is *U. pectinifera*. All of these are difficult, and all require protection from cold and wet to avoid scarring.



Micranthocereus aureus

Other Brazilian genera include *Micrathocereus*, *Notocactus*, *Parodia*, and *Frailea*, all closely related, and all sometimes incorporated into *Parodia*. These three genera have a number of fascinating species, worthy of any collection. The partial list on the next page contains a selection of the more popular and interesting Brazilian cacti.

References:

Cullman, Gotz and Groner, **The Encyclopedia of Cacti**

Haustein, E. **The Cactus Handbook**

Zappi, D. **Pilosocereus**

Micranthocereus aureus Photo by T. Nomer

Plant grown by T. Glavich

Tom Glavich July 2001

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Austrocephalocereus

dybowskii
purpurea

Buiningia

aurea
brevicylindrica
purpurea

Cereus

azureus
jamacaru

Coleocephalocereus

aureispinus
estevesii
fluminensis
goebelianus
luetzelburgii

Discocactus

bahiensis
boomianus
heptacanthus
horstii
insignis
magmimammus
placentiformis
tricornis

Echinopsis

eyriesii
multiplex
oxygona

Frailea

asteroides
horstii
pygmaea

Gymnocalycium

buenekeri
denudatum
horstii
tudae

Hatiora

salicornioides

Melocactus

azureus
bahiensis
concinus
estevesii
warasii
zehntneri

Micranthocereus

auri-azureus
densiflorus
streckeri

Notocactus

caespitosus
concinus
fuscus
crassigibbus
erinaceus
fuscus
graessneri
haselbergii
herteri
horstii
leinghausii
magnificus
ottonis
scopa
uebelmannianus
warasii

Opuntia

estevesii
inamoena
palmadora
salmiana
saxatilis

Pereskia

aculeata
bahiensis

Pilosocereus

albisummus
aurilanus
barbadensis
braunii
cristalinensis
flexibilispinus
glaucochrous
superfloccosus
werdermannianus

Pseudopilocereus

fulvilanatus
glaucescens

Quiabentia

zehntneri

Rhipsalis

capilliformis
crispata
cereuscula
grandiflora
mesembryanthemoides
pentaptera

Schlumbergia

gaertneri
opuntiioides
truncata

Tacinga

braunii
funalis

Uebelmannia

buiningii
gummifera
meninensis
pectinifera