

San Gabriel Valley Cactus and Succulent Society

Succulents of the Month - February 2002 - *Adromischus*, *Anacampseros* and *Avonia*

Besides beginning with the letter 'A', this month's succulents are all winter growing South African miniatures. Most are very easy to grow, and a great addition to any collection.



Adromischus cristatus v. *zeyheri*

The genus *Adromischus* is a member of the *Crassulaceae* family, closely related to *Cotyledon* and *Kalanchoe*, and restricted in natural habitat to South Africa and Namibia.

They are easily grown, (in fact difficult to kill) preferring some shade during the hottest months of the year, and occasional watering during the entire year. All of the species are dwarf plants, although in cultivation, some can grow reasonably large and even become weedy. The main growth period is the spring and early summer, but slow growth continues for most of the year.

Adromischus are among the easiest plants to propagate. Leaves or stems, when separated from a plant quickly set roots, even if left on a potting bench. When placed on fresh soil, they will root and start growing new plants within a few weeks. *Adromischus* can also be propagated from seed. The seed is dust like and best started in late fall.

Adromischus look best when kept tight and compact. This requires very bright light. At the same time, attention must be paid to soil moisture. If the soil remains too dry for very long, the lower leaves start to drop, and the upper ones wilt. Once lower leaves start to fall, most *Adromischus* lose their charm, and are best restarted from cuttings.

Admirable *Adromischus*:

Adromischus alveolatus has short gray-brown stems, with a base and branches rarely more than an inch or an inch and a half long. From this clumps of one inch long egg shaped green leaves form in clusters.

Adromischus cooperi has cylindrical leaves with flattened tips that almost look like they were caught in a door. The leaves are smooth and green, with attractive maroon mottling.

Adromischus cristatus has branching stems that grow to about four inches long. The stems are thickly covered with short brown aerial roots. The leaves are dark green, flattened, about an inch and a half long, with wavy ends. It is one of the commonest grown, and very tolerant of abuse.

Adromischus herrei is seen in several forms, with leaves that can vary from smooth brown spheres to red and purple wrinkled leaves resembling drying plums. This is the most collectable of all the species, with almost all the forms worth collecting.

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Adromischus mammillaris has smooth green waxy leaves that grow to an inch to an inch and a half in length. The leaves are cylindrical, and pointed at both ends.

Adromischus marianae is another of the classic species. It is very variable, and some of the other species in this list are often classified as varieties of this. The leaves are cylindrical, and pointed at the ends. A deep channel that appears gouged out of the top, with the edge of the gouge a bright white. The leaves range to three inches long, and are a gray-green heavily mottled with maroon. A dense cluster is a wonderful sight.

Anacampseros and *Avonia* are both members of the *Portulacaceae* family. They are closely related genera, and many species have been described under both genera. In general, *Anacampseros* have leaves as we commonly think of them, while *Avonia* have leaves that resemble scales.

As with *Adromischus*, these are tough plants, easy to grow, and easy to propagate either through stem cuttings or seed. Care is identical to *Adromischus*. Some species of *Anacampseros* tend to become scraggly. These should be pruned hard, and restarted as needed from cuttings. Many of these species have tubers a caudex or fleshy roots. These can be shown to good advantage. All of the species look best when grown in a potting mix with almost no organic matter, and very little nutrients.

And the Analogic *Anacampseros*:

Anacampseros telephiastrum has a caudex, if grown hard in very bright light, in very poor soil. In poor light, and overfed it is a scraggly species, with attractive fat leaves.

Anacampseros arachnoides has gray green leaves with white hair growing from the stem, between the leaves.

Anacampseros lanceolata forms a rosette of long green leaves. It will also form a caudex with time.

Anacampseros comptonii forms a small caudex, and is distinguished by having lots of hair and single flowers.

Avonia quinaria has a caudex that can grow to four inches or more across. It is very slow.

Avonia papyracea is the most common of the paper scale covered species. These species rely on the scales both from protection from the sun, and protection from predators. To human eyes at least, they resemble bird droppings more than plants.

References:

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Photos, T. Nomer from the SGVC&SS 2001
Winter Show

Tom Glavich January 2002