

# San Gabriel Valley Cactus and Succulent Society

## Succulent of the Month November 2002 - *Retuse Haworthia*

*Haworthia*, along with *Aloe* and *Gasteria* are part of the *Asphodelaceae* family. The retuse *Haworthia* come exclusively from South Africa, and most from a Mediterranean environment not that different from Southern California. Most are easily grown, preferring some shade and growing mostly in the early autumn and spring through early summer.



***Haworthia emelyae***

The genus *Haworthia* is divided into three subgenera, and these into several sections. One section, with some of the most collectable *Haworthias* is Section *Retusae*. This section is further divided into two subsections, In subsection *Retusae*, (home to the most collected of all) are: *H. comptoniana*, *H. emelyae*, *H. heidelbergensis*, *H. magnifica*, *H. mirabilis*, *H. mutica*, *H. pygmaea*, *H. retusa*, and *H. springbokvlakensis*. In Subsection *Turgidae* are *H. turgida*, *H. archeri*, *H. herbacea*, *H. maculata*, *H. nortieri*, *H. pubescens*, *H. reticulata*, *H. rycroftiana*, and *H. serrata*. There are collectors with hundreds of different plants, all from this Section.

*Haworthia* are notable for their variety of forms. Almost all of the species above have varieties, forms, cultivars, and plants propagated from

selected locations that are collected individually. Bruce Bayer's **Haworthia Revisited** is the best guide to forms, and intergrades between species. As always, with very variable plants, there are lots of other species that have been described as a variety of *Haworthia retusa*, only to be moved to another species, raised to a species themselves, or lost and forgotten.

The best place to go to appreciate the variability and beauty of retuse *Haworthia* is the Conservatory at the Huntington Library. You will learn more looking at their collection than you ever will by reading the many books on *Haworthia*.

*Haworthia* in general are tolerant of varying potting mixes, and success has been reported with everything from straight pumice to potting soil - pumice or perlite mixes, to plain potting soil, and even garden soil. They like light fertilization when growing, any balanced fertilizer will do. *Haworthia* can be naturalized as a ground cover, placed under shrub cover in shadier parts of California gardens.



***Haworthia magnifica* v. *splendens* cv. "Pretty Face"**

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Most of the plants in this genus offset easily, and propagation is easy from offsets. Offsets without roots will put out roots in just a few weeks. Seed is sometimes available, and easily germinated in cool weather, with best results coming in October, November and December.

All of the species in this section are worth growing.



*Haworthia mirabilis* v. *beukmannii* in Tim Jackson's collection

Remarkable Retusoids:

*Haworthia comptoniana* is a large, smooth topped plant that offsets slowly. The leaves are triangular, and flat topped, covered with a pattern of lines that occasionally break down into patterns of fine white dots. Each clone has a different pattern.

*Haworthia emelyae* has smooth flat topped triangular leaves with small white tubercles (dots) that converge into lines running to the point. The edges of the leaves near the center of the plant are almost blood red in winter.

*Haworthia pygmaea* has sharp pointed gray-green triangular leaves. The tubercles are

extremely fine, giving the tops an almost felt like appearance. To the touch, they feel the same as a very fine sandpaper. The sides of the leaves are perfectly smooth.



*Haworthia retusa* v. *acuminata*

*Haworthia retusa* v. *acuminata* has long sharply pointed leaves, decorated with white lines and teeth on the edge that are not visible, but can be easily felt. The leaves are smooth near the center, and just slightly rough at the edge.

### References

M. B. Bayer, **Haworthia Revisited**

J. Pilbeam, **Haworthia and Astroloba A Collectors Guide**

A. Sajeva and M. Costanzo, **Succulents, The Illustrated Dictionary**

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