

THE LOVE OF BOOKS

Sulcorebutias are very popular, free flowering, small cacti. Graham Charles discusses the genus and reviews the books that have been published about them.

It has been more than 65 years since Backeberg erected the genus *Sulcorebutia* in the GB Journal. Ever since then, there has been discussion as to whether *Sulcorebutia* really belongs to *Rebutia* or not. Some authors, such as Cardenas and Hunt, believed that they are all rebutias which is where they were placed in the *New Cactus Lexicon*. Recent molecular studies show that sulcorebutias are not rebutias but belong in the older genus *Weingartia*.

At the time of its creation, the only species in *Sulcorebutia* was *S. steinbachii*, first described by Werdermann as *Rebutia steinbachii* in 1931. Nobody then had an idea that the genus would expand in the way it has. A reasonable estimate of the number of species today would stand at around 20 with innumerable subspecies, varieties and forms.

During the 1960s, Martin Cardenas, a Bolivian botanist, described many new species (as *Rebutia*). The genus grew further with descriptions from Ritter, Rausch, and others. The publication of new names continues to this day, fuelled by the explorations of enthusiasts for the genus.

The diverse appearance of individuals in a population, as well as the variation one can find from one hill to another, has presented a challenge to their nomenclature. This has resulted in a myriad of names for populations at botanical ranks that are not justified. It plays to the human desire to 'collect' and to 'get the set'. Even within these population names there is astonishing variation in appearance with different flower colours as well as spination density and colour (Gertel & Latin, 2010). This diversity may be due to the plants being in the process of rapid evolution, their short life cycle allowing there to be many generations in a short time.

The appeal of these plants also lies in their ease of cultivation and free flowering when grown in a glasshouse. Their neat appearance, small size, and ability to withstand low temperatures makes them ideal plants to collect and grow. Many clones produce offsets, allowing easy propagation and facilitating the



Figure 1. *Sulcorebutia naunacaensis* VZ205/6 from the type locality, 27km northwest of Mojocoya, Co Naunaca, Bolivia at 2850m (6cm pot).

exchange of material with like-minded people. Serious collectors like having plants with field numbers. These are numbers that are given to plants when they are found in habitat and a particular number usually refers to a single population. For example (Figure 1): *Sulcorebutia naunacaensis* VZ205/6. This number tells us that the plant is from VZ, the acronym for Johan de Vries and is clone 6 from his habitat number 205; 27km northwest of Mojocoya, Co. Naunaca, Bolivia at 2850m, the type locality of *S. naunacaensis*.

One of the benefits of field numbers is that the associated location is a certain fact, even if the identification of the plant is incorrect, so the name can be corrected later. Willi Gertel has put together an extensive list of field numbers and localities for *Sulcorebutia*: *Kompendium der Feldnummern der Gattung Sulcorebutia* - in English or German. This work is now out of print. But you can download it from http://www.sulcopassion.be/pdf/3262_2011.pdf

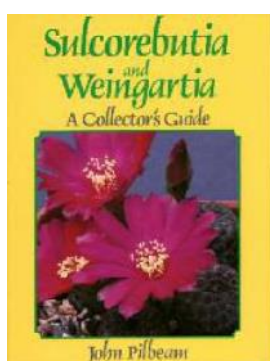
The idea to write this article started with the review in **Cactus Explorer** 22 of John Pilbeam's latest book which included pictures of some of the recently described *Sulcorebutia* species contributed by Johan de Vries. I was inspired to look for more information and

was surprised to discover how many books have been published about these plants, not to mention the many articles in journals.

Here is what I found, in date order of publication. There may be more!

BRINKMAN, K-H. (1976). Die Gattung *Sulcorebutia*. Deutschen Kakteen-Gesellschaft.

The first book about the genus, it is a useful review of the species known at the time. Soft covers, 79 pages with a few B&W pictures, line drawings and maps. German language. Available as a second hand book for about £25.



PILBEAM, J. (1985). *Sulcorebutia* and *Weingartia*. B. T. Batsford Ltd. London.

Illustrated with both colour and B&W pictures, this is the first comprehensive account in English. 144 pages, hardback.

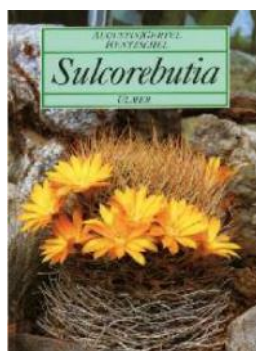
Available as a second hand book for about £20.

AUGUSTIN, K., GERTEL, W. & HENTZSCHEL, G (2000). *Sulcorebutia*. Kakteenzwerge der bolivianischen Anden. Eugen Ulmer.

The first account illustrated with high quality colour pictures (159) integrated into the text. 180 pages, hardback. German language.

Available as a second hand book for about £60 or a free download from

https://www.cactuspro.com/bibli/en:augustin_gertel_hentzschel



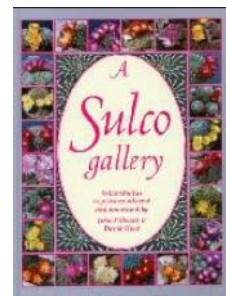
ODEHNAL, J. & SLABA, R. (2001) Rod *Sulcorebutia* – poznámky pod čarou (footnotes). *Kaktusy* 2001 - speciál 2.

32 pages, soft cover. Czech language. Many good quality colour photographs.

PILBEAM, J. & HUNT, D. (2004) A Sulco gallery. DH books.

This a picture book of documented plants with brief notes. 64 pages, hardback.

Still available new for £15.



HORÁČEK, L. (2008). *Sulcorebutia* 2008.

Another comprehensive account with colour pictures and distribution maps. 288 pages, hardback. Czech language with English summaries.

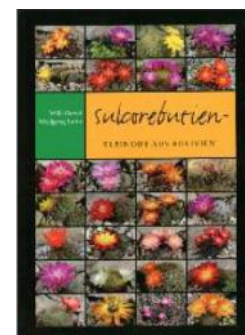
Buy new for £25.



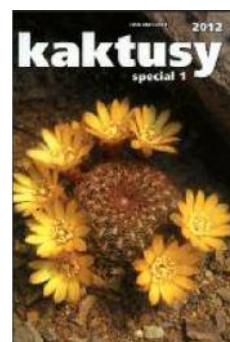
GERTEL, W. & LATIN, W. (2010). Sulcorebutien - Kleinode aus Bolivien. Deutsche Kakteen-Gesellschaft e.V.

Surely the best book to date with an amazing 1358 colour pictures, all of excellent quality. A comprehensive account which illustrates many clones of each taxon, showing the remarkable diversity.

This is one of the books published by the DKG for sale exclusively to its members. It is now out of print. Second hand copies are available but are expensive.



SLABA, R. (2012) Žlutokvěté sulkorebutie. (Yellowish sulcorebutias) *Kaktusy* 2012 - speciál 1.



36 pages, soft cover. Available in Czech or German. Good quality colour pictures of localities and species which can have yellow flowers, including some newer names.

New £6.

GENTILI, A., JUCKER, H., CALESTANI, . & LECHNER, P. (2016). Le sulcorebutie della Cordillera Mandinga. *Piante grasse Speciale* 2016, No.1.

76 pages, soft cover. Text in Italian and English.

This is a really interesting description of searching for plants, illustrated with good quality colour pictures and maps.

Price new is 20€.



References

BACKEBERG, C. (1951). *Sulcorebutia* novem genus Backbg. *The Cactus and Succulent Journal of Great Britain* **13**(4): 96.

HUNT, D., TAYLOR, N. & CHARLES, G. (2006). *The New Cactus Lexicon*. DH Books.

WERDERMANN, E. (1931). Neue Kakteen im Botanischen Garten Berlin-Dahlem. *Rebutia steinbachii* nov. spec. *Notizblätter des Botanischen Gartens und Museums Berlin* **XI** (104): 268–270.

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