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My first flowering of *Aloe reynoldsii*

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In preparation for our book on *Aloe* (Carter *et al.*, 2011) I researched the work of Gilbert Reynolds, the doyen of *Aloe* students, and published a full list of all his publications on aloes (Walker, 2010). Reynolds had described and published 83 new species, of which 77 are still accepted, these numbers being more

than any other aloe collector. His two books, published in 1950 and 1966, together comprise a monograph on *Aloe* which will be a lasting reference work on the genus for many decades to come. In my tribute to Reynolds I noted that a few species had been named in his honour, including the eponymous *Aloe reynoldsii*.



Aloe reynoldsii

However, what I omitted to do at the time was to include an illustration of his namesake aloe, and this article now rectifies my omission.

I obtained my plant three years ago and it flowered for the first time in June 2017. The plant has a very short stem that is covered by the remains of dead leaves. The plant is growing in an 18cm diameter terracotta pot and the rosette is about 40cm across. The leaves are an attractive pale glaucous blue-green with numerous H-shaped dull white markings (described usually as 'spots') and fine longitudinal lines (striae). The leaf margin is very pronounced, being cartilaginous and pinkish, bearing small pale pink teeth. In my plant all of the leaves apart from the five youngest ones have dried back at the tip. I do not believe that it is a fault in my cultivation, but that this is a natural occurrence, as with many aloes. However, it does give the plant a slightly unkempt appearance! Glen & Hardy (2000) record that "*Aloe reynoldsii* occurs in a region of much higher rainfall than other members of this section" [Paniculatae]. Its humid habitat and thin leaves may account for the leaf tip die back that I have encountered, and perhaps in the future I will aim to provide the plant with more water than it has previously received. Apart from this problem of leaf tip die back, the plant has presented me with no other problems in cultivation.

Plants are reported to branch into small groups (Glen & Hardy, 2000), but to date my plant has shown no signs of branching and remains a solitary rosette.

The flower spike is about 25cm tall, reasonably well branched with flowers loosely arranged. Individual flowers are up to 3cm long, bright yellow with orange-green tips and pronounced basal swelling.

I'm delighted to report that my plant received an award (third prize) in the *Aloe* class at the recent Glasgow Branch Show at The Kibble Palace, Glasgow Botanic Gardens, held on

Saturday June 3rd of this year, when the plant was just coming into the peak of its flowering. I assume that the flowering was what impressed the judge and that without flowers it would not have had a look in on the prize front!

Carter *et al.* (2011) observe that "*A. reynoldsii* is closely related to *A. striata* and *A. karasbergensis*, but differs by its rather thin leaves, which often have waxy margins, and by its weakly branched yellow-flowered inflorescences".

In terms of its habitat and conservation status, Van Wyk & Smith (2014) record that "*Aloe reynoldsii* occurs on cliffs in a humid eastern part of the Eastern Cape Province. It is restricted to a relatively small area along the Bashee River and grows at altitudes of 150 to 1,000m (500 to 3,300 feet) ... [It] is included in the vulnerable conservation category. Fortunately, this cliff dweller often grows in rather inaccessible areas." Since this species is restricted to cliff habitats, it is another example of an obligate cremnophyte, similar to *Aloe jacksonii*, as I reported in the June 2017 issue of *Haworthiad*. However, my plant has as yet shown no tendency to flop over the side of the pot to simulate its cliff-dwelling mode of growth, but instead its stem has remained erect.

I am very pleased to have been able to flower and report on such an attractive species named for the all-time leading expert on aloes.

References

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