Cristini, Marco
The genus Aeonium

Published by AIAS (Associazione Italiana Amatori delle Plante Succulente) Rome, Italy. 2022.
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Price: €50 (c.£44) including packaging and postage. Available at a discounted price of €30 (c.£26.50) for subscribers to AIAS. Full information on ordering and payment options, including bank transfer and PayPal, is provided at www.aias.info/the-genus-aeonium. The book is also available in an Italian edition: Il genre Aeonium.

225 pages, 268 colour photos, 23 coloured maps and figures, 5 half tone figures, 3 tables. 24×17cm. Soft, laminated, illustrated covers.

Aeonium is a small but highly diverse genus that is generally of reasonably easy culture if a few basic rules are followed, making it very popular and highly desirable with collectors. The genus has been well treated in recent literature with works in English ranging from the monograph by Liu (1989) to the handbook by Schulz (2007) and a synopsis by Nyffeler (2003). It is a complex genus that appears to be in a process of rapid evolution, making its taxonomy challenging, in a state of flux and often controversial. This latest book admirably spans the range from monograph to handbook of the genus.

The introductory matter occupies roughly a quarter of the book and deals with the following topics: general features; literature on the genus; habitat; taxonomy and evolution; hybrids and cultivars; cultivation, care and health; main threats and protected species. Here, although the genus is described, the features that distinguish Aeonium from its closest relatives Aichryson, Monanthes and Sempervivum are not outlined. The survey of the literature is exceptionally comprehensive although I did note that the work of Eric Sventenius specifically on the genus and on the Canarian Island Crassulaceae more generally was omitted, even though two of his works are listed in the Bibliography. Coverage of Aeonium in most 15th, 16th and 17th century herbals, such as those of Gerard and Parkinson, could also have been included. Under the heading ‘Taxonomy’ the accepted species are split into eight established sections but the distinguishing features of each of these are not detailed. The now widely accepted rank of Section for the former genus Greenovia, first proposed in 1995, is adopted. The diversity of the genus is emphasised, notably in the treatment of naturally occurring interspecific hybrids (nothospecies), 67 of which are tabulated and listed. The section on cultivation is brief but concise, giving due emphasis to the important factor that aeoniums are winter-growing plants in habitat and that their successful cultivation should take cognisance of this.

The bulk of the book covers the species as they are found in habitat. Here the classification by sections is not used and the species are arranged by the countries where they occur naturally with each Canary Island being treated separately. For the Atlantic Islands and Morocco, lists of species of Crassulaceae occurring there are provided with an indication of which are endemic. In total the author recognises 34 species and 9 subspecies of Aeonium. This compares with 34 species accepted by Schulz (2007) but not the same 34 species and 36 species by Nyffeler (2003). The following taxonomic reassessments and novelties are published: Aeonium canariense subsp. longithyrsum (Burchard) Cristini, A. dodrantale subsp. millennium (Arango) Cristini, A. haworthii subsp. volkeri (E. Hernández & Bañaeres) Cristini, A. ×mascenaense Bramwell (formerly a species), A. ×rochae (Arango) Cristini and A. ×wildpretii nothosubsp. jinamense Cristini. For each recognised taxon the following topics are covered: synonyms, etymology, description, flowering, distribution, hybrids, cultivation, notes and bibliography. Each taxon is illustrated in several colour photos showing the plants usually growing in habitat with named localities but sometimes also in cultivation; many photos show flowering specimens. Most of the photos were taken by the author in habitat and are of a high standard. The treatment of species on a geographical rather than a taxonomic basis means that closely related taxa, such as the subspecies within a species (five for A. canariense for example), are not dealt with together but are separated throughout the book. Apart from geographical separation, therefore, it is not always clear how subspecies relate to one another. Additionally, there is some detailed discussion of a few especially controversial taxa such as A. mascenense and A. volkeri which are no longer treated as species. Several maps are included but...
there are no distribution maps of the recognised taxa.

The book ends with an exceptionally thorough bibliography (far more extensive than in any previous book on the genus) and a good index.

Overall, this latest treatment is a thorough survey of *Aeonium* as it occurs in the wild. It would however be difficult to identify an unnamed cultivated *Aeonium* using this book, partly because no key is provided but also the wild origin of a given plant is often required for a firm identification to be made. There are also many artificially produced hybrids in cultivation in addition to the generally well characterised natural hybrids. The layout of the species geographically should, though, facilitate identification if one is looking at a specific plant on, say, a particular Canary Island. How then does this book compare with Liu (1989) and Schulz (2007)? The former is somewhat dated since the taxonomy of the genus has changed significantly, especially now that it includes *Greenovia* and it was very poorly illustrated, whereas the photos in Cristini’s book are mostly of high quality. Schulz in contrast deals more extensively with cultivation and illustrates many named cultivars which are only briefly covered here. The book is generally free from errors but I did notice Steam which should be Stearn on p.161 and *ajagal* should be *ajgal* on p.204. Also, some of the entries in the ‘Bibliography’ are not in strict alphabetical or chronological order.

My final point is that the soft cover binding is not very robust for a reference book that I will undoubtedly dip into on a regular basis, so I would have preferred the option of a hard bound edition. Setting aside these and earlier points, this is an excellent, up to date and accurate coverage of a popular genus of succulents in habitat and I thoroughly recommend it.

Colin C Walker

**Marx, Gerhard**

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40 pages (+ 4 for covers), 112 colour photos. 29.5×21cm. Soft-cover with card covers.

The Haworthia Society’s latest Special Edition celebrates the work of one of the finest growers and hybridisers of *Haworthia* plants in the world, Gerhard Marx.

Gerhard lives in the Western Cape province in South Africa and has been involved with growing these plants for many years. As well as being a superb grower, he is also an internationally renowned botanical artist, and his work has been used in several books, journal articles and on stamps. The cover painting on this book illustrates his amazing ability.

Gerhard started experimenting with hybridisation in the early 2000s and, as can be seen from this book, he has achieved some outstanding results since then. Inside he describes some of his techniques for seed production and the selection of the resulting plants to obtain the most attractive (from his personal artistic viewpoint). For each of the one hundred hybrids selected he describes the intricate history behind them.

Although his hybrids are mostly focused on (and indeed restricted to) a limited group of retusoid types, which are the ones with chunky recurved leaves with ‘windows’ at the upper part, some of the patterns and colours that he has achieved have to be seen to be believed. All 100 hybrids are illustrated, some with more than one photo, and the quality of the pictures is excellent, as is the production of the book itself.

I would recommend this book highly to any lover of succulent plants and of course if you have any interest at all in haworthias, it is a must. Considering that it is full of ‘jewels’ and ‘gems’, it is very attractively priced.

Blum, Wolfgang; Oldach, Traute; Goris, René & Berresford, Peter

**Der Echinocereus enneacanthus-Komplex**

*Genus ECHINOCEREUS, Subgenus Echinocereus, Sectio Costati*

This new publication from the AG Echinocereus presents a historical overview of the Echinocereus enneacanthus-occidentalis-stramineus group from 1848 to the present day, including all synonyms and the revisions by various historical authors, and also includes a redescription in this group.

This book is very similar in style and layout to previous ones that have been issued over the years, and have often been covered here too. The text is primarily in German but there are original descriptions in both English and Spanish and other descriptive passages are reproduced in their original language, which is mainly English. Anyhow, they offer their foreign-language friends a text PDF that helps to make the contents of their publications accessible by using an online translator, and this can be requested by email either at the time of ordering or once purchased.

It is interesting to note that one of the contributing authors is none other than our own Peter Berresford, well-known around the country as a popular speaker, particularly on the genus *Echinocereus*, which he has studied for many years.

The book, just as its predecessors, is very well produced, on quality glossy paper. The photographs are excellent and illustrate the diversity of the plants in habitat. If you have any interest at all in the genus *Echinocereus* then you will want to add this to your collection both for enjoyment and reference.

**Dubielecka, Bożena**

**Ferocactus**

PTMK, Chorzów, 2022. 
Świat Kaktusów Vol 56 (Numer specjalny 1/2022).
Price: €25.00 (includes P&P).
Orders can be sent to: grzegorz@kaktusymeksyku.pl

78 pages, 61 colour photos, 5 maps. 16×22.5cm, soft-cover.
Text: Polish, English and German.

This special edition published by the Polish Cactus Society (PTMK) is dedicated to the genus *Ferocactus*, and covers all the species and subspecies recognised by Hunt in 2016. After short introductory sections on the genus (taxonomy, distribution, characteristics and cultivation), photographs of 50 taxa (species and subspecies) are presented. The first half contains the text in all three languages, and this is followed by images of the plants, which are shown in alphabetical order. The photographs are a mix of plants in habitat and cultivation and are of excellent quality. There are useful distribution maps for the 44 species covered.

**Piccione, Guiseppe M**

**Lithops inside the plant**

Published by Lulu.com. 2022.
ISBN: 978 1 471617 68 3

196 pages, 8 photographs, 218 colour microphotographs and 5 computer drawings.
English language. 25.5×17.6cm. Soft-cover with illustrated card covers.

This well-illustrated book looks at and describes the anatomic structures that allow a *Lithops* plant to survive in arid environments. It also looks at how the genus is a product of natural selection, and it goes into the subterranean strategy looking at how the plants pull themselves down into the substrate and continue to grow almost buried in nature.

This is not a book for the average hobbyist but if you are interested in *Lithops* and wish to delve a little deeper into how the plant grows, its internal workings, and what ‘makes it tick’, then this book will explain everything in detail. Although technical, it is easy to read and the explanations are clear and succinct. There are tips for growers interspersed with the more technical text. For example, in the chapter entitled ‘Water storage and Movement’ the author advises to “wet the plants at the beginning of the growing season with recurring morning sprays, and then water the plants heavily only two or three times during the growing season, and only on sunny days”. It goes on to explain why this regime works best in order to avoid fungal attack.

The book is certainly essential for botanists and biologists, but is also useful for anyone interested in xerophytic plants and who wants to know about the internal structure and processes of a *Lithops*. 