

B. erumpens occurs on exposed hillocks topped with quartz rubble at an altitude of about 700 meters, and keeps distinguished dicot company; mesembs include *Lithops geyeri*, *Cheiridopsis cf herrei*, an undescribed white- or pink-flowered *Monilaria*, and *Conophytum hammeri*, which is far more widespread than its debut suggested (Matt Opel, pers. comm. 2001). The *Bulbine* seems to be confined to Klipbok, and I've not seen it on subsequent visits to the area. It is, however, quite inconspicuous when out of flower and is leafless for half the year. The largest organ of the plant, the peduncle, must be blown away by summer.

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at, and transport to, Klipbok. A generous grant from the CSSA research fund enabled me to cross the Atlantic and, moreover, to return. Graham Duncan is thanked for the lachenalian identification; *L. giessii* is otherwise known from southern Namibia (Rosh Pinah). The Klipbok form mentioned above is even smaller than the *Bulbine*! My Latin-lover, Nancy Lawrence of Albuquerque, New Mexico, greatly enhanced the description. ❖

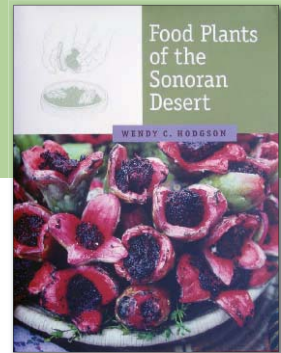
References

- 1 WILLIAMSON G. 1997. A new *Bulbine* species (Asphodelaceae) from the Springbok area of northern Namaqualand. *Aloe* 34 (3&4): 70–73.
- 2 WILLIAMSON G, BALNATH H. 1999. A new species of *Bulbine* Wolf (Asphodelaceae) from the southwest Richtersveld. *Aloe* 36 (2&3): 28–30.

BOOK REVIEW

by Root Gorelick

Food Plants of the Sonoran Desert by Wendy C Hodgson. 2001. University of Arizona Press, Tucson. ISBN 0 8165 2060 7. 313 pages, 140 halftones, 27 line illustrations, 8.5 × 11", clothbound. \$75.



The culmination of most graduate educations is a thesis that gathers dust on the shelf of a single library or is parsed into small papers that get published in specialist journals, where they remain largely inaccessible to hobbyists. Not Wendy Hodgson's thesis. She continued building it over another two decades into the mature book *Food Plants of the Sonoran Desert*.

Hodgson's credentials and training were ideal for writing this book. She is a superb plant taxonomist and has expertise regarding people's interactions with plants garnered from thirty years of work at the Desert Botanic Garden in Phoenix, Arizona. She was trained by and has worked with some of the finest plant taxonomists and ethnobotanists in the Sonoran Desert: Don Pinkava, Howard Gentry, Gary Nabhan, Ted Anderson, Amadeo Rea and Richard Felger. Yet this book is purely hers. Hodgson's writing lacks the soaring euphonious soliloquies that make Nabhan's books so charming. But she includes the many details and references that are frustratingly lacking from Nabhan's volumes. Hodgson's book is encyclopedic, extraordinarily thorough, and focused on a single theme: the use of plants for food by native people in the Sonoran Desert.

Food Plants of the Sonoran Desert is comprised of an introduction outlining the book's scope, a wonderful 'catalogue' of uses of plants as native foods, which constitutes 85% of the book and four appendices. Since much of this book is compiled from widely-scattered and often cryptic primary literature, the references and index are extremely

important, and happen to be superbly done.

The catalogue is broken down by plant family, with the largest number of pages devoted to Cactaceae (47 pp) and Agavaceae (39 pp). The only other extensively covered family is Fabaceae (beans; 27 pp). Other succulent families included are Aizoaceae, Burseraceae, Crassulaceae, Euphorbiaceae, Fouquieriaceae, Orobanchaceae, and Portulacaceae (up to 2 pages each). The different species within a genus may or may not be discussed separately and may not receive equal emphasis—compare Hodgson's extensive treatment of *Cylindropuntia* with her minimal treatment of *Mammillaria*. However, her coverage seems proportional to the importance of the plants to the diets of native peoples.

This book is not for the field. It is physically large and intentionally lacks any plant descriptions, distribution maps or illustrations of most taxa. You have to know the common or scientific names of plants for her book to be useful. But such information is readily available. In conjunction with taxonomic works and/or field guides, Wendy Hodgson's *Food Plants of the Sonoran Desert* becomes a remarkable reference work that should grace anyone's shelf who is interested in sustainability, agriculture, ethnobotany, or merely wishes to have the pleasure of safely grazing for food as they hike or camp through the Sonoran Desert. ❖