

Periodic near-invisibility is typical for these summer-snoozing deciduants.

We were disappointed not to see the new *Bulbine* in its habitat, but meanwhile my cultivated seedlings have allowed me to witness the species' unusually rapid maturation. It is highly precocious. Under bright-winter conditions, seedlings from a November sowing will flower in late March, even quicker than *Bulbine alveolata*. In both species the adult leaf-shape and position are acquired very early; the full complement of 12–16 leaves is achieved in the second year. (Some of the other “haworthioid” species—for instance, *B. haworthioides*—take years to achieve adult proportions and are capable of further alteration after sexual maturity, if there is such a thing.) The precocity and remarkable beauty of Lavranos 31140 suggested its name, by analogy with Nabokov's Dolores “Lolita” Haze.

I have thrice seen a species akin to *B. lolita*, growing just east and southeast of Bitterfontein, ca. 25 kilometers north and northeast of Moedverloor (my 1264, 2120 and 2577). The plants, which H. Baijnath initially likened to *B. orchiioides* (pers comm 1991) produce leaves far larger and more upright than those of *B. lolita*, uniformly and nonblushingly ghost-green, with

a fine metallic glint. Their mildly corkscrewed inflorescence resembles that of *B. lolita*, greatly enlarged. Meanwhile the identity of *B. orchiioides* has been beautifully clarified¹; it is now synonymized under the familiar but multivariant *B. mesembryanthoides*. This keeps the Bitterfontein plants in an identity lurch—but I can say that they have too few leaves for *B. lolita* (4–6), too many for *B. mesembryanthoides* s.l., which snuggles in pairs or trios, and are inappropriately shaped for either species. Another possible player in this nexus is *B. wiesei*, a miniature with thin, abundant, spindle-shaped incurving leaves and a straight peduncle. The resemblance of *B. lolita* to *Haworthia turgida* is wonderfully strong, but so is a pineapple's to an artichoke*. ❖

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John Lavranos, for his deep and long-sustained interest in the common ground of science and horticulture; Lisabel Hall, for information about Moedverloor and various *Bulbine* spp—she has sent me a drawing of a species she saw on the Komkams road near Paddagat, resembling *B. lolita* entangled with *B. louwii*; Pauline Perry and Himansu “Snowy” Baijnath, for the productive and genial trip which yielded SH 1264 and several other oddities.

REFERENCE

1 Williamson G. (1999). Notes on *B. mesembryanthoides* Haw. *Aloe* 36 (1):14–15.

* Or a hand grenade, for that matter. I should note that some forms of *B. mesembryanthoides* ssp *namaquensis* also have funny peduncles, e.g., M. Opel 124 from Breekriet near Anenous Pass.

Opuntia basilaris



1 *Opuntia basilaris* flower. 2 *O. basilaris* fruit. 3 Stems in the background are typical for *Opuntia basilaris*. In the foreground is a single cylindrical stem of a putative hybrid between *Cylindropuntia leptocaulis* and *C. fulgida*.

O *Opuntia basilaris* is a Mohave Desert native commonly known as the Beaver Tail Cactus. It hybridizes with other species such as *O. fragilis*. Plants can therefore be intermediate in appearance between species, and sometimes even single clones can be quite variable. I am not entirely certain that the clone shown here is the true species or a hybrid. Nonetheless, it has typical *O. basilaris*, vibrant, pinkish-magenta flowers and dried fruits. Some of the stems are typical of *O. basilaris*—without spines and with numerous red glochids. Other stems on the same clone have an atypically large number of spines and fewer glochids. This is nonetheless one of the most spectacular cacti when in flower.

—Root Gorelick