

Euphorbia Section *Triacanthium* JACOBSEN (Part 4)

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After completion of the series of articles about this very interesting group of euphorbias the number of species has increased by at least three species. This is in no way a surprise to the attentive reader as the author has indicated several times that this was to be expected; even now it is my opinion that the number of described species does not cover the situation in nature entirely, as there are still many more to be discovered and several species are not fully understood.

Euphorbia patentispina S.Carter

In 2001 Susan Carter described *Euphorbia patentispina* in the Nordic Journal of Botany. In the Flora of Somalia (S. Carter, 1993), under the description of the variable species *Euphorbia xylacantha* Pax, she mentioned material (Lavranos & Carter et al. 24849) collected from a very localized habitat in the Bari Region, northern Somalia, as a possibly new species. The more closely spaced spine-shields, the often slightly



Fig. 45: *Euphorbia patentispina* in habitat, picture taken 3 km E of Galgallo (photo S. Carter)

curved spines, the longer prickles (5 mm) and the yellow cyathia were noticed to be different from the more widely distributed *Euphorbia xylacantha*. Recognizing this collection as a separate species could not be made until new material had been collected.

This additional collection was made in 2000 by Thulin, Dahir & Osman at Cal Miskaat, also in the Bari Region in northern Somalia, which served as the type-collection. Carter (2006) could confirm that the earlier collected material, Lavranos & Carter et al. 24849, indeed belonged to this species. It appears that especially the habit of this new plant differs considerably from *E. xylacantha*, as *Euphorbia patentispina* forms round 'cushion-like' mounds 25 cm high and 30 cm in diameter. The branches are more slender than those of *E. xylacantha*, rising from a central thick stem, and are very prolific in branching and rebranching. *Euphorbia myrioclada* is mentioned as a close relative, too, but this species forms a much more loosely branching shrub.

I have no reference of *E. patentispina* being in cultivation and so no hints for its cultivation can be given.

Another point of interest is the fact that Susan Carter mentions, while comparing this new species with *Euphorbia myrioclada*, that the distribution area of the latter extends into Djibouti. This fact was not mentioned in the original description of *Euphorbia myrioclada* and this original description matches *Euphorbia* spec. affinis *triaculeata* AJB D3 quite well. I wonder whether the plants pictured in Figure 4, 5 and 6 in part 1 of this series, treated as *Euphorbia triaculeata*, in fact represent *Euphorbia myrioclada*.

Euphorbia godana BUDDENS., LAWANT & LAVRANOS

One recently described species in this group of related species is *Euphorbia godana*. It was described by two committee members of the International Euphorbia Society, Volker Buddensiek and Piotr Lawant, as well as the well-known field-research expert of succulent plants John Lavranos. He was the one who found it in its natural habitat in the Goda Mountains in Djibouti, together with Leonard Newton in 1976. Living material of one of the two collections has been widely distributed in collections under the name *Euphorbia* species Lavranos 13176, Djibouti, which should be more correctly Lavranos & Newton 13176. *Euphorbia godana* makes a densely branched shrublet in nature, up to 30 cm high and 40 cm across. Its specific habit is the development of lateral, often rebranching branches



Fig. 46: A seedling of *Euphorbia godana* (Lavranos & Newton 13176 clone) clearly showing the stout main stem unlike rooted cuttings do.



Fig. 47: A rooted cutting of *Euphorbia godana* (AJB D10 clone) from Al-Sabieh, Djibouti, showing the lesser rebranching habit of this clone.



Fig. 48: On close inspection of the flowers of *Euphorbia godana* (AJB D10 clone) one can expect fruits to appear soon.

from a central stem; cuttings taken from these branches have never been seen to form the 'head' of a main stem. However, seedlings grown by the writer do show the thick depressed main stem. Its cyathia attract attention by having a golden yellow to orange colour.

In discussions about this new species some notes were also made about two collections made by the chairman of our society, Alan Butler, in Djibouti. *Euphorbia* spec. affinis *triaculeata* AJB D3 in my opinion is not *E. monacantha* but is closer to *E. triaculeata*. *Euphorbia* spec. AJB D10 comes so close to *Euphorbia godana*,

that it most likely also belongs to this species. It flowers freely in my collection with identical golden yellow flowers. Because it is self-fertile I managed to raise a few seedlings of both Lavranos & Newton 13176 and AJB D10. These seedlings are identical to one another, but seedlings of AJB D3 are somewhat different. The only real difference between the two clones of both collection numbers I grow is the more densely sprouting habit of the Lavranos & Newton clone. Regarding *Euphorbia* spec. aff. *triaculeata* AJB D3, collected by Alan Butler, see also the notes under *Euphorbia patentispina*.

Euphorbia godana AJB D10 is collected near the town Al-Sabieh, south of Djibouti-town, which is south of Tadjoura Bay. The Goda Mountains, the type-locality of *Euphorbia godana*, are situated north of the Tadjoura Bay.

Euphorbia greuteri N.KILIAN, KÜRSCHNER & P.HEIN

For the time being the latest species to be described in Section *Triacanthium* is *Euphorbia greuteri*, named in honour of Professor Werner Greuter of the University of Berlin-Dahlem. Despite its recent official publication,

Fig. 49: Habitat of *Euphorbia greuteri* in the foothills of Jabal Urays facing the Gulf of Aden (photo N. Kilian)



Deflers (1895) already mentions the foothills of Jabal Uraiy as a locality where the plant is growing, however it was wrongly identified as *Euphorbia triaculeata*. A considerable amount of time later, in 1964, John Lavranos and Werner Rauh revisited this area during a combined expedition on the Arabian Peninsula. Werner Rauh (1966) even published a picture of this plant in the *Cactus & Succulent Journal of America*. This plant was again wrongly identified as *Euphorbia triaculeata* and the publication of this picture was even mentioned in the discussion of *E. triaculeata* in this series. In 2002 N. Kilian, H. Kürschner & P. Hein came across this *Euphorbia* population again during their studies of xerotropical Palaeozoic African refugees in the southern coastal mountains of Yemen. They did, however, recognize it as a new species, not identical to *Euphorbia triaculeata*. Until then *Euphorbia triaculeata* was the only 'single-spined' species occurring in Arabia.

Furthermore it has to be stated that *Euphorbia greuteri* is strikingly different from *Euphorbia triaculeata* in several aspects. *E. greuteri* is a low growing species, only growing as high as 15 cm and has a well-developed main stem. These features are shared with *Euphorbia actinoclada* and *Euphorbia immersa*. Also the shape of the spine-shields differs in having a much shorter

elongation of the spine-shield below the main spine than in *Euphorbia triaculeata* and other species. This feature is also present on plants found by Frans Noltee in Yemen as can be seen in fig. 7 in the first part of this series. Unfortunately he forgot the exact locality where he found it, but he could well have used the article of Rauh (1966) to pick places to go to on his trip to Yemen, especially as Rauh pointed out the foothills of the Jabal

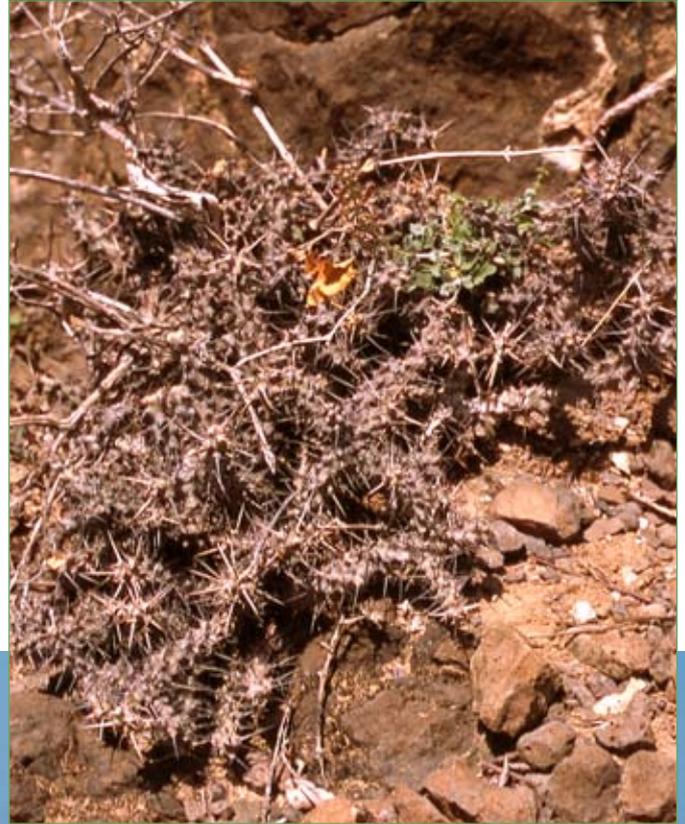


Fig. 50 (above): *Euphorbia greuteri*, habit at type locality (photo P. Hein)



Fig. 51: *Euphorbia greuteri*, a close-up of the stem showing the details of the spine-shields with the short elongation below the main spine (photo M. Meyer)



Fig. 52: A still small plant of *Euphorbia species nova Yabelo*, at least 5 years old



Fig. 53: A two year old seedling, still well under one centimetre in diameter, of the mother plant of figure 26. Note the four-spined spine shields, clearly visible here, when still in the juvenile phase.

Urays as a succulent paradise. It will not be before I can grow seedlings of Noltee's plants, which then should make the well-developed main stem, that can I say for certain that this plant really is *Euphorbia greuteri*.

For now this completes this series about *Euphorbia* section *Triacanthium*. I wish to add a few words of special thanks to Pjotr Lawant, who as all good librarians supplied me with the literature that I required, Volker Buddensiek for advice and support and Norbert Kilian for sharing information and pictures.

Euphorbia species nova, Yabelo

A few years ago I received a few small plants from a friend in Germany, which were offspring of plants bought at the nursery of Ernst and Marita Specks labelled as *Euphorbia species nova Yabelo*, Ethiopia and carried the catalogue number ES 2732. The small plants flowered this summer and produced also the small, entirely yellow cyathia. Even after five years the main stem of these plants is less than four centimetres in diameter. I assume that the pictured sidearm on figure 26 and the plants labelled as *Euphorbia species nova Yabelo*, Ethiopia are the same. Also I think it might indeed represent a new species.

As said before this new species is noted for its small, entirely yellow cyathia, but also for its body colour, carrying a light green and yellowish green pattern. These plants are weakly spined, but the thin and stiff main spine is very sharp, as I noticed to my discomfort!. Also the main stem is well developed, growing quite broad in contrast to *Euphorbia actinoclada* and the top is depressed.

In conclusion I can add that this very slow growing species is a very handsome plant and a valuable addition to a euphorbia collection.

Appendix

Under the species description of *Euphorbia actinoclada* a tip of a flowering branch is displayed in figure 26 of this series of articles on page 21, number 3, volume 2 of *Euphorbia World*. Though it was named here as *Euphorbia actinoclada*, I now believe it is not this species. I have managed to grow a few seedlings from this rooted cutting which were sown in 2005. One of these seedlings is shown here on the accompanying figure 53. These are notable for their very slow growth (which might be a result of the growing conditions in my hothouse) and are, even after two years, still spherical with no side branches at all. This is quite unlike seedlings of *Euphorbia actinoclada*, grown under the same conditions, which already form side arms in their first summer. ♦

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Results of the questionnaire seeking members' opinions

When the Committee of the International Euphorbia Society decided to put a questionnaire to members asking how they would like to see *Euphorbia World* develop, it was done in the hope of learning more about the interests of our members. It was done with the background of the broad scope of topics covered in this journal, ranging from papers with a highly scientific content to articles having their roots in practical experience of cultivating euphorbias or in encounters with these plants during travels in their habitats.

So it was rather surprising to have only 7 members who responded to this questionnaire. Of course this is too small a number to allow any statistics, but it gives us some hints as to what readers very much like to read and what they like less.

We asked you to give marks for each individual contribution to issue 1 of this year (1 is worst, 5 is best). Here are the results, based on the marks given

- Message from the editor: marks ranged from 2 to 4 (members were probably too polite to give other marks ...)
- A new subgeneric classification for *Euphorbia* ... by P. V. Bruyns: marks 2 to 3 (i.e. not very interesting to those who replied)
- *Euphorbia* Section *Triacanthium* by Rikus van Veldhuisen: marks from 2 to 5, predominantly 4, i.e. many seem to like this kind of paper
- PBI project by Paul Berry: marks from 3 to 5, often 4 and 5. This seems to indicate that readers look forward to hear more about the results of the PBI project.
- In *Habitat*: marks from 2 to 5; this is the article that has been selected as best by most of those who replied.
- Neotenic *E. cooperi* by B. Hargreaves: marks 2 to 4, many 3.

- Molecular phylogenetic analyses ... by P. Lawant: marks from 2 to 5, many 4. This paper caused the strongest polarization between those who did not show any interest in such kind of paper and those who enjoyed it or even declared it their favourite one.

In a second part we asked for general wishes. If I sort the options given according to the frequency they have been chosen then this is what members would like most of all:

- more articles on cultivation,
- more articles on ecology,
- articles with a less academic orientation.

At the same time many of those that replied added a private statement that they would like the journal to remain as it is.

Two members also asked why „*Euphorbia* from A-Z“ has stopped. The answer is quite simple: lack of space! Usually being short of pages I tend to include another article instead of a picture gallery. However, you will see that it has now been resumed.

Finally, the lucky winner of the *Euphorbia*-CD-ROM is Karla Halpaap-Wood from Texas, USA! Congratulations!

Closing the subject of this questionnaire does not mean that we are no longer interested in learning about your views and opinions. Whenever you feel like telling us what you like or do not like in *Euphorbia World*, please do not hesitate to inform the editor. Remember that the journal is to a large extent what you want it to be.

Good growing!

Volker Buddensiek
(Editor)