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SHORT NOTE
A “thornless” *Aloe hereroensis*

by
W. J. Jankowitz
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It is a well-known fact that in some cases the thorns or teeth on Aloe leaves are absent. This feature is, however, quite rare since only the three Aloe species *A. karasbergensis*, *A. striata* and *A. reynoldsii* of all the Southern Africa species display this characteristic.

Thornless plants were, however, recently “discovered” in South West Africa. Upon closer investigation these plants proved to be *A. hereroensis*, but with the one difference that there were no signs of any thorns at the leaf edges. When cutting off the leaves very near the base, however, small rudimentary signs of the original thorns were found.

When first seen by the author the plant was flowering in a garden and it displayed the typical branched inflorescence of *A. hereroensis*. The possibility of cross-breeding was, however, not excluded and it was necessary to find the species in its natural habitat. Such a specimen was found, as well as an intermediate one. The latter species differed from both the ordinary as well as the “thornless” species in that most of its leaves had thorns along its entire length, although some of the leaves only had thorns near the base while the distal part was completely thornless.

The possibility of cross-breeding was ruled out since the only other species found in that vicinity was the well-known *A. littoralis*, the leaves of which are thoroughly armed with thorns.

Plate 1. Note the difference between the three leaves. Photo W. Jankowitz.
This then was definitely no new species but an interesting natural mutation in the species *A. hereroensis* as shown by the intermediate specimen.

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REFERENCES

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