

# Two Miniature Crassulas

Two of my favorite crassulas are *C. columella* and *C. hemisphaerica*. The first is unusual in that it is covered with a fine coating of hair and has a feel much like velvet. The stems are compact and the leaves have a yellowish coloration under all but full shade. The growing points become reddish during spring and unlike most crassulas, this species has not flowered under my growing conditions. *C. columella* has a restricted distribution in the northwestern Cape Province of South Africa where it is found in crevices in quartzite outcrops, usually with a southwestern aspect.

*C. hemisphaerica* is so named because when cut in half its shape is spherical. The drawing clearly shows this characteristic and also shows the beginnings of the spring flower shoot which erupts from the center of the growing point. This shoot quickly enlarges in a matter of three weeks until it is the size of the one illustrated. The flowers, like those of most crassulas, are small and white and I personally wish it did not flower every year as it is upsetting for me to see such a perfect shape ruined by the flower spike. The plain green leaves of *C. hemisphaerica* are adorned with fine stiff cilia and are plain green in color.

Anyone can grow these two species well. Their main growth is made from autumn through spring and during the heat of summer they can be set in a shady place and only given an occasional watering. *C. hemisphaerica* should be allowed to flower without cutting off the spike as doing so will only cause another to be produced. Once the flowers are finished the spike can be removed and this is the sign that the plant is ready for its summer dormancy. *C. columella* is more of a year round grower but also appreciates shade during summer.



Fig. 1  
*Crassula columella*

Propagation of these two species is mostly by offsets. Stems of *C. columella* root quickly and without problems if kept in a semi-shaded location. The stems can be left lying exposed until the first roots are seen from the stem end and then potted up into a damp, open mix. *C. hemisphaerica* produces only a few side rosettes annually and these are best removed in winter. They also root easily. My form of *C. hemisphaerica* is, unlike most crassulas, self-fertile and if allowed to flower will shed seed which germinates in the autumn. By spring the seedlings can be pricked out and transplanted.



Fig. 2  
*Crassula hemisphaerica*

Fig. 3 (below)  
*Crassula hemisphaerica*  
in habitat

