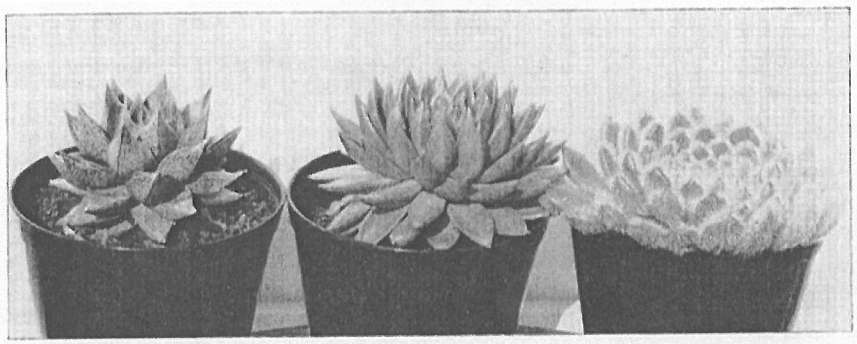
ECHEVERIA X SETORUM 'Victor'

the story of an old Echeveria hybrid

by J. C. van Keppel



From Left to Right: E. PURPUSORUM, E. X SETORUM 'Victor', E. SETOSA.

The number of *Echeveria* species in cultivation continues to increase as a result of contacts made by *Echeveria* fanciers throughout the world. The Echeveria Robin of our Society, started in 1966, has done much to spread both plants and knowledge of the genus. Unfortunately, many hybrids and plants of unknown origin persist in collections, distributed under the names of true species, without names, or with names never validly described (*nomina nuda*). One would not wish to ban hybrids from our collections—many have better properties for the trade than true species: more profuse flowering, easier propagation and resistance against pests.

Examples are "Perle von Nurnberg", *E.* x *derosa*, *E.* x *graessneri*, hybrids of *E. fulgens*, etc., which are raised by commercial growers in large quantities. On the other hand, hybrids with little or no value for the trade persist in collections, e.g. *E.* x *mutabilis*, *E.* x *scaphylla*, *E.* x *stolonifera* and others of unknown origin. Periodically new hybrids appear on the market, but often, unfortunately, without having been described, which increases the chaos in nomenclature. To reduce such problems is the reason why I write these articles, and both new and old hybrids will come under discussion. I wish to acknowledge the help and advice on nomenclature matters by Mr. Gordon D. Rowley.

Now I will tell the story of a hybrid that has existed for a long time in collections and has become distributed recently in England. At the beginning of the 1920's the late Mr. Victor Ploem, a Dutch *Echeveria* fancier, crossed *E. setosa* x *purpusorum*—the latter then being commonly known as *Urbinia purpusii*. Among plants identical to the female parent (caused by self-fertilisation) he found one hybrid intermediate between the parents. He distributed seedlings of this hybrid and they survive up to now in some older collections. I obtained my specimens from an 80-year-old fancier who propagated them by leaf-cuttings from original plants coming from Mr. Ploem. One specimen of this cross was sent to the late Mr. van den Houten during his editorship of *Succulenta*, journal of the Dutch succulent society, and once a prominent author on succulents. He published a letter from Mr. Ploem in an article with data and a photograph of the hybrid with its parents.

Mr. Ploem wrote: "In 1920 I had already made experimental crosses with the above-mentioned plants [*E. setosa* and *Urbinia purpusii*] but they did not succeed, possibly because the very delicate seeds were not viable. In 1921 I was more lucky. I harvested from both plants which I had crossed, a lot of seeds, which were sown in the spring of 1922. After six days the first plants appeared and after a couple of months I could clearly see that no seedling resembled the parents. Later I noticed among those with *Urbinia* as the mother-plant a true *U. purpusii*, and among those with *E. setosa* as mother-plant two seedlings, one of which was a true *setosa*, the other also, but less hairy. Later still some more plants came up which differed from the hybrid. In 1922 I again crossed *U. purpusii* with *E. setosa* reciprocally and harvested seed off both plants. All these seedlings were similar—not one was of the parental type."

Thus far Mr. Ploem. Self-fertilisation, of course, would explain the true descendants of the parents. That some plants were neither the intermediate hybrid nor one of the parent species is interesting and agrees with my own observations in crossing experiments. When I have done more research I will return to this topic.*

Mr. van der Houten named this hybrid *Urbinio-Echeveria*, without specific epithet, as was done by some nursery catalogues. He mentioned three other *Urbino-Echeverias* offered by Haage and Schmidt in Germany, viz. *Urbinio-Echeveria glauca*, *parva* and *weingartii*. Dr. von Poellnitz further mentioned an *Urbinio-Echeveria rubromarginata* as a *nomen nudum*. Finally, Mr. van Laren, another Dutch succulent specialist, briefly described and pictured the cross between *E. setosa* and *E. purpusorum* as *Urbino-Echeveria angustata*. As far as I know, this is the only hybrid of *E. purpusorum* with a valid description. Because *Urbinia* is no longer maintained as a separate genus and is generally recognised as part of *Echeveria*, the name *Urbin(i)o-Echeveria* should also be reduced to *Echeveria*. However, there is a problem here when it comes to transferring the epithet *angustata*. There already exists a validly published *Echeveria angusta* of von Poellnitz (*Fedde Repert., XXXIX:* 247, 1936). It might conceivably be argued that *angustus* (narrow) is a different word from *angustatus* (narrowed), but I think they are best treated as one and the same, otherwise having both as specific epithets in the same genus would merely add to the confusion which I am trying to lessen. Therefore it is necessary to choose a new collective epithet for this hybrid, and I prefer "*setorum*" as derived from the epithets of the two parents.

Graf pictured and described very briefly a plant as *E.* x *weingartii*, but there is no indication that it is the same as the *Urbino-Echeveria weingartii* of old catalogues. Recently I obtained "*Echeveria* x *weingarteriana*", but this has no resemblance either to *E.* x *setorum* or to the *E. weingartii* in *Exotica*. For a long time there has been another *purpusorum* hybrid in cultivation. The foliage resembles *E.* x *setorum* in colour and markings, but the form and size are those of *E. purpusorum*. In contrast to *E. purpusorum*, this hybrid is easily grown from leaf-cuttings, which is possibly why commercial growers sometimes offer this plant as "*E. purpusorum*". Last year this hybrid appeared as a chance seedling in my crossing experiments. When I have found its actual origin by new trials I will return to the subject.

Echeveria x setorum v. Keppel n.nom. = *E. setosa* Rose & Purp. x *purpusorem* Berg. *Urbino-Echeveria angustata* v. Laren in Vetplanten, 1932: 79, fig. 94.

'Victor' n.cv.

ROSETTE acaulescent, single, regular, dense, 10cm diameter.

LEAVES ascending-spreading, oblong, narrowed to the top and tapering into a very thin mucro, 4–8cm long, 1.5cm broad at the widest point, greyish-green; margins, keel and back side (sometimes only on the upper part) spotted with reddish; younger leaves faintly papillate, later glabrous; margins and keel fimbriate, flat above, rounded on back side.

FLORAL STEMS 2–4, 20cm long, greyish-reddish, with a single or bifid raceme.

FLOWERS in May, 7–14, 1.5cm long, 1cm broad at base, on pedicels 1–3cm long, with bracts 1cm long, awl-shaped, spurred, soon withering and falling off, sometimes bigger and longer persistent.

SEPALS green, thick, equal, ascending or appressed to the corolla and one-third to one-quarter of its length.

PETALS red, one-third from the tip yellow and yellow inside, faintly keeled, narrowed towards the tips, more or less rounded at the base and forming a short tube; tips scarcely spreading.

Remarks

The above describes the clone I name "Victor" to honour its originator, the late Mr. Victor Ploem of Kerkrade, Netherlands. From other sources I obtained clones of this hybrid varying in leaf form (shorter and less spotted and papillate) and in flowers (paler and smaller), but the best of all is the cultivar "Victor". This hybrid is sterile. I have tried to fertilise it with its own pollen and from the pollen of other clones, but to no avail. It can be propagated by leaf-cuttings or offshoots from decapitated plants. It flowers easily and more profusely than *E. purpusorum*.

In May 1967 I hand-pollinated *E. setosa* and *E. purpusorum* reciprocally and sowed the seed in 1968. They are growing up now into plants with the same habit as Mr. Ploem's plants. In leaf and rosette form there is almost no difference between the seedlings.

Literature

Van den Houten: *Urbinio-Echeverias* in *Succulenta* 7: 13, 14 with fig. 1925.

Van Laren, A. J.: *Urbino-Echeveria angustata* in *Vetplanten* 1932: 79, fig. 94; English edition as "*Succulents*", U.S.A. 1934.

Graf, A.: *Echeveria* x *weingartii* in *Exotica* 2: 991, fig. 474, 1959.

* A cytological study would also be of interest, since the aberrant plants may be haploids, aneuploids or polyploids of constitution PPS, PSS, PPSS etc., using the initial letters of the parent species to represent gametic chromosome sets.—G.D.R.