

In memoriam Joop van Keppel

For many of us it will have been a great shock to hear that Joop passed away on Sunday 13 February. After he had a heart attack in the spring of 1982, he was not the same anymore. Yet it was still unexpected when he had to be admitted again in January of this year. His life finally ended after an operation in the Leiden Academic Hospital. For his wife, children, family members and friends it is an irreparable loss.

Joop's love of succulents began with a rock cactus, which stood at his mother's. He was about 15 years old at the time. More and more plants were added and of course, when he married, these plants were housed on the windowsills of his house on the Jonkerlaan in Wassenaar. However, another solution had to be found for housing the hobby, because several plants regularly got stuck in the curtains. Of course, he became a member of Succulenta in 1951 and has remained so ever since.

A greenhouse was built in the garden in the early 1950s. The well-known greenhouse, where we visited him so often and from which no one ever left empty-handed. Initially it was a very varied collection. Gradually, however, more and more plants had to make way for that plant genus, through which he eventually gained international fame, namely Echeveria and related genera (Crassulaceae). He was generally recognized as an authority for this genus and his name was mentioned in the same breath as that of people such as Prof. Charles H. Uhl, Dr. Reid Moran, both from America, Gordon Rowley from England, Dr. Jorge Meyran from Mexico and I could go on for a long time. People with whom he also maintained close contact, exchanged data, swapped plants. I did not count them, but if I only looked at the list of foreign contacts, there were an estimated 70, spread over 17 countries. Indeed a respectable number - and the correspondence was exclusively about the Echeverias.

A large number of Echeverias from the culture, the background of which is unknown and which were in circulation under all sorts of fancy names, he was able to bring home. Often by recrossing the supposed parents himself, which also often caused him surprises, because plants arose that had been known for a long time, but for which other parents had been given. He described and recorded new species, guided by his connections, in our magazine and various foreign magazines. He developed new hybrids, which were tested on their merits via the I.V.T. in Wageningen in collaboration with Dr. B.K. Boom for possible inclusion in the national trade assortment. And this completely selflessly. He found it much too much fun to bring something into circulation that people outside the association could also enjoy.

And whether the time he had available was of infinite elasticity, he also translated two books from German, one by Prof. Werner Rauh, the well-known booklet *Cactussen en Succulents* and one by R. Subik, *Bloeiende Cactussen en andere Succulents*. He edited the book by H. Herold: *Het verzorging en kweek van cacti*. He wrote, together with journalist W. Koesen, the: *Groot Cactus- en Succulentboek*. He wrote all the chapters on succulents in the loose-leaf work *Fleur*. In addition, he edited or translated a number of books on gardening. He worked on the editorial board of our monthly magazine for a long time. He was honorary chairman of The Cactus and Succulent Society of Great Britain. A highlight in his life was his trip to the United States a few years ago with his wife, during which he was able to visit various locations of Echeverias himself.

If we let all this pass us by, we would almost forget that Joop's actual work was not his succulent hobby, but a good gardening company, which made all this possible for him. But this was also done

as a hobby. I believe we can say that, because when you see what mountains of work, and not only literally, he has done and with what dedication and love, certainly worthy of a hobby!

Some positions he held that were related to his profession: In the 60s vice-chairman of Wassenaar of the Royal Society for Horticulture and Botany. In the 50s, 60s and 70s board member of Floralia. For 22 years he regularly wrote articles in the trade journal for Floriculture, where he of course also benefited from his knowledge from the succulent hobby. We have lost a lovable person for both friend and customer. Such people are already so rare these days. But if at some point this life comes to an end for a reason unknown to us, we can do nothing but accept it and still be grateful for what he has done in his life and from time to time refer to the enormous oeuvre of articles that he has recorded for us. As a personal friend, I will miss him very much.

Ben Schomper, Scheveningsebos 10, Zoetermeer