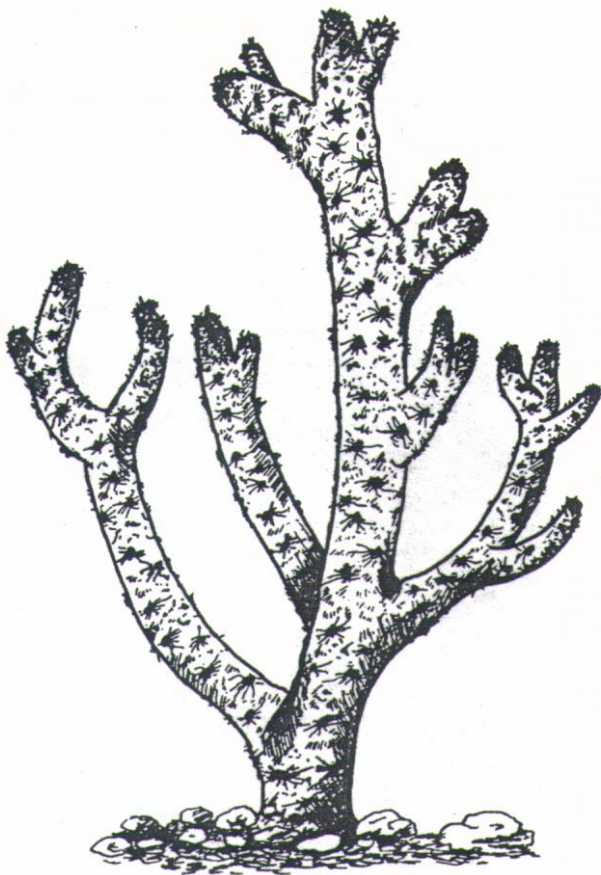


Tylecodon buchholtziana

Succulent collectors are often accused by lovers of pretty plants of being weird and somewhat bent because we grow things that look like dead sticks. *Tylecodon buchholtziana* is such a plant; only a true succulent collector could love it. Plants in Australia are erect growing and vary somewhat depending on the clone but all have grey-brown stems which are essentially leafless except for a brief period during autumn when a few thin leaves are produced at the tips of some of the branches. I have three different cutting grown clones and they vary in their number of stem markings, color of stem, and density of side branching. One clone of mine is very densely branching and lacks the shiny stems of other local forms. This plant was imported from South Africa within the last decade. The only plants I have seen in habitat (northwestern Cape Province, SA) were growing in almost complete shade on a southeast exposure on a very steep slope. The habitat lies within the fog belt and moisture in this form



T. buchholtziana, actual size (P. Turcsak)

undoubtedly makes up a large percentage of the plants water requirements. Try misting your plant with a fine hand sprayer and watch how the tiny droplets attach themselves to the stem, coalesce, then run down the stem to the roots. This fog moisture would keep the plant roots moist during the long dry summer. Habitat plants were decumbent with branches hanging down the rocky slopes. So different were the plants from my own that I had to take a few minutes to examine them before I was sure of their identification. I collected some seed but only three seedlings grew and while these are still very small it appears that the growth form is erect. *T. buchholtziana* is one of the winter growing succulents which normally begins growing in autumn and becomes dormant in late spring as the weather warms up. I have found that I can keep plants growing throughout the whole year if they are kept cool and moist but this would be difficult for collectors in the warmer states. Having seen the plants in habitat growing in shade has led me to revise my growing of this plant and I now also keep them shaded during the warmer months but I have seen very healthy and nicely grown ones in Victoria which were grown in sunny positions. I recommend light summer waterings to avoid loss of roots but this may be inadvisable for those living in the monsoonal regions of Australia. Autumn and winter watering can be quite heavy once the plant sends out its few leaves but keep *T. buchholtziana* in a small pot to reduce the risk of long periods of saturated root conditions. Since the plant is essentially leafless it does not lose much water through leaves and therefore does not need much water for growth. This can lead to problems if it is grown with other Tylecodons which slurp up the water once they are in leaf. Grow *T. buchholtziana* away from the water hungry winter growers and place it with your Conophytums or other low water requirement succulents.

Propagation is done by stem cuttings which are best taken in early autumn although I have taken them in late spring without any failures. Keep them shaded and dry for three to four weeks then begin watering.