

IN THE GLASSHOUSE

Pierrebraunia brauniorum Esteves

Kamiel Neirinck, a well-known specialist in Brazilian cacti, reports on the flowering of this rare plant in his collection, probably the first time it has flowered in Europe. English translation by R. Fonteyne. Photos by the author.



This columnar cactus was discovered by Pierre Braun and his wife Beate on 26 August 1999 and revisited in 2002. The habitat is situated in a very barren and inaccessible area at high altitude in the Serra do Espinhaço in Minas Gerais, Brazil. The plant grows on crystalline rocks together with *Vellozia*, Bromeliads, Orchids, *Arrojadoa*, *Micranthocereus*, *Pilosocereus* and *Rhipsalis*. The description was published in 'Kakteen und andere Sukkulenten' in 1999. The new discovery was named by Eddie Esteves Pereira after Pierre Braun and his wife.

Up till now no plants nor seeds of this species were commercially offered. One could say that it is unjustly over-protected. Nevertheless, after a long search, 3 years ago I could obtain two seedlings in Malta. One was immediately grafted, while the second one is grown on its own roots. Today, a few years later, both plants are equally large (or small); they measure well over 30cm.

From the literature we learn that cultivated plants of *Pierrebraunia brauniorum* do not branch easily, in contrast to plants in the wild. It is recommended to graft seedlings as soon as possible on *Echinocereus jusbertyi*. In Brazil the plants are grafted on *Pilosocereus piauhyensis*, then they flower at a height of 20 to 30cm. Temperature in winter should be 5 to 10°C. The plants do want water until December; hence the temperature in the greenhouse should not be too low. Early in May 2012, I discovered on the plant on its own roots a small thickening on an areole near to the apex. Slowly, a reddish bud, about 3cm long, developed. Since the plant, as most Brazilian species, blooms at night, flowering should be observed carefully. By the end of May 2012 it was finally developed! It took until midnight before the flower fully opened; it was pink with a diameter of less than 1cm.

In nature the upright-growing column does not



exceed 70cm, with a diameter of 7 to 8cm, branching from the base. The epidermis is light-green to yellowish-green but becomes greyish-green with age. Like *Uebelmannia*, the plant has mucilaginous channels. There are 4 or 5 ribs and 5 to 6 acicular spines per areole; the central spine is up to 2.8cm long. A pseudocephalium develops on the areoles. The tubular humming bird pollinated flowers are 3cm long, with a diameter from 1.5 to 2.5cm, and have a naked receptacle, the colour is pink. The fruit is berry-like, fleshy, 3cm thick and reddish pink. The seeds are black.

It should be mentioned that the species *Pierrebraunia bahiensis*, originally described as *Floribunda bahiensis*, grows in Bahia, a neighbouring state of Minas Gerais.

References

Esteves, E. (1999) *Pierrebraunia brauniorum* Esteves spec. nov., eine neue Kakteenart aus Minas Gerais, Brasilien. *Kakteen und andere Sukkulenten* 50(12):311-314.

Braun P. & Esteves E. (2001) *Pierrebraunia brauniorum* Esteves spec. nov., *Kakteen und andere Sukkulenten in Brasilien*, Schumannia Bd.3: 156.

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