
 Book reviews

Gonick, L.; Wheelis, M.: The Cartoon Guide to Genetics. Barnes & Noble Books/Harper & Row: New York 1983. (Translation into German by Th. Graf., Parey-Verlag: Berlin, Hamburg 1985). 244 pp.

This introduction into the history of genetics starts with the ideas of prehistoric man on reproduction and ends with repetitive and recombinant DNA, genetic codes, jumping genes, transposons, gene-technology – the big business. It is not at all written in a dry tone, but is illustrated as a cartoon strip, so that even complicated topics become understandable. It is intended for all people without any previous acquaintance of genetics and who are interested in environmental problems and in the economic and political aspects of gene technology. Geneticists can also enjoy the cartoons in their spare time.

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The text to this figure reads as follows: Mendel was not only a hobby gardener, but also a scientist, who studied his peas very carefully – he called them his children. And which father does experiments with his children?

Cullmann, W.; Götz, E.; Gröner, G.: Kakteen. Kultur, Vermehrung und Pflege. Lexikon der Gattungen und Arten. 5th revised and enlarged edition. Stuttgart: Ulmer 1984. 340 pp., 404 color figs., 50 drawings. DM 98,-.

Cacti as ornamentals and objects of collectors are not really in the horizon of plant breeders. Therefore, it is not surprising that the book to be introduced has only about 3 pages devoted to hybridization and hybrids. Until recently it was fashionable among amateurs devoted to cactus culture, to collect only true botanical species. There was a general feeling against hybridization of their pet plants. Only recently has it been accepted to try to improve certain species by hybridization, e.g. in the genera *Rebutia*, *Lobivia*, *Mammillaria* or *Gymnocalycium*. The authors emphasize the necessity of their intention to improve and to prevent self-pollination. Detailed instructions are given for the storage of pollen when flowering of the partners of the hybridization is different in time. The oldest known Cactus-hybrid is *Nopalxochia*, known among amateurs as "Phyllocactus". Recently the hybrids of *Echinops* from the high mountain areas of the former genus *Pseudilobivia* have attracted special attention.

The monograph in question is a real compendium for cultivation and nursing of all species of Cactus. Detailed instructions are given on morphology and anatomy, on suitable pots and soil mixtures, on growing conditions, special fertilizers, and sowing, on techniques of grafting and the making of cuttings, on diseases and parasites. The taxonomy of cacti receives special attention. There is not only a key for the determination of genera and species, but also a detailed description of more than 750 species, complete with excellent color photographs. The monograph is rounded off by indices of technical terms, authors of Cactus' scientific names, additional literature, names and addresses of organizations and journals devoted to Cacti, sources of supply, subject index, as well as a list of latin names.

The book shows the precious plants with scientific perfection. The text is clearly written, the printing and presentation of the volume fulfills the highest possible standards. Everybody interested in or working with cacti should have this book, the amateur in his library, the professional on the shelf.

A book to read, but better to study and to consult, also to enjoy.

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