

# San Gabriel Valley Cactus and Succulent Society

## Cacti of the Month April 2002 – *Rebutia* and *Sulcorebutia*

*Rebutia* and *Sulcorebutia* are both genera from the highlands of Bolivia and Northern Argentina. They are similar in appearance, in habitat and culture. Coming from high altitudes, they are both tolerant of cold, and if dry, can be left out in all weather. The populations of *Sulcorebutia* and *Rebutia* overlap, but they do not naturally hybridize.

There has been debate from the start on whether or not *Sulcorebutia* and *Rebutia* are the same genus. Some would combine the two under *Rebutia*, others would rather split *Rebutia* into several genera. The issue will ultimately be settled by genetic studies. For the present they are treated as separate genera, and they appear this way in almost all references, catalogs and show schedules. Both genera cover large altitude ranges, and many species are so variable that collections from nearby populations, or even the same population at different times have been given different names. There are far more names than species. The books by John Pilbeam help make sense of the species and varieties.

Both genera are easily grown. They are dormant in winter, and start to grow in late March or April. They flower from April through June, with the peak flowering period varying from year to year depending on the weather. Two flowering cycles are common in cultivation in California. The flowers are almost always numerous, and vary in color from purple and red through orange to yellow. They do well in normal compost, and grow best with steady

fertilization, when in active growth. They are both attractive to spider mites. Damage can be prevented by frequent inspection, and a weekly, forceful wash down with water.

Propagation from offsets is easy. The offsets should be cut off, left to dry for a few days, and then replanted. Very small offsets can be successfully rooted. Seed is easy to germinate, but is short lived.

### Remarkable Rebutias

*Rebutia heliosa* is an orange flowered form. It clumps rapidly in cultivation with a dark green body, small brown areoles and short whitish spines in a spiral pattern.

*Rebutia steinmanni* 'christinae', also found as *R. christinae* is from Salta Argentina, and is one of 7 species included in *R. steinmanni*. It has dense off white spines and wonderful red flowers with a yellow center.



*Rebutia marsoneri*

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*Rebutia marsoneri* from Jujuy, Argentina is noted for its spectacular golden yellow flowers.

*Rebutia pygmaea* comes in at least 20 varieties, many of which were originally described as species. Flower color varies over the full range for the genus. It's a challenge to keep some of the varieties small. Easy to grow.

*Rebutia ritteri* is now listed as *R. atrovirens* 'ritteri' has a gray green body, with the areoles and spines in neat rows. The orange red flowers seem to glow in late afternoon.

### Sultry Sulcos

*Sulcorebutia candiae* was the Holiday Contest plant several years ago. Those who kept them alive (not that hard) are enjoying the yellow spines and the yellow-orange flowers.

*Sulcorebutia MK2994* has dense spirals of white spines almost hiding a dark green body. The spines are in combs that interleave on the upper body, and separate lower down, exposing the body. Slow growing, but impressive.



*Sulcorebutia rauschii* entered in the 2001 Intercity Show by David and Eileen Tufenkian  
Photo T. Nomer

*Sulcorebutia rauschii* is known in several forms. The most common is a dark purple bodied form. Second most common is a green bodied form, and the third is a golden spined form. Other forms are also available, but rarely seen. All are slow and beautiful, and harder than most others to keep looking good. All are worth the effort.

### References

John Pilbeam, **Rebutia**

John Pilbeam,

**Sulcorebutia and Weingartia**

John Pilbeam, **Cacti for the Connoisseur**

Cullman, Gotz and Groner,

**The Encyclopedia of Cacti**