

June 6, 2006 – Endemic Flowers of Ethiopia

ALOE SPECIES

Members of the genus *Aloe* are easily recognized by their rosettes of large, thick, succulent leaves, which are sometimes spotted. The rosettes are situated on the ground or on trunks. The leaf margin is almost always armed with sharp teeth. The inflorescence is usually branched, occasionally simple. Flower coloration is most often red, orange or yellow, rarely white. The fruit is capsular. The seeds are irregularly 3-sided to flattened, narrowly to broadly winged.

The genus, which includes about 360 species, has its main distribution in Africa south of the Sahara, including Madagascar and the Arabian Peninsula. One of the most economically used *Aloe Vera* was introduced by man to the Mediterranean region and the West Indies a long time ago.

In Ethiopia about 40 species of *Aloe* are known so far. Of these two are presented in the present account.

***Aloe Schelpei* Reynolds**

The specific 'epithet *schelpei*' is given in honor of one of the collectors, Dr, E.A. Schelpe, from the University of Cape Town, whose collection was designated as the type. The species was described in 1954.

Description of the species: *Aloe Schelpei* is a succulent shrub, stems decumbent or pendent, 0.5-1 m long, 5-6 cm thick. Leaves crowded, 45-50 cm long and 8-12 cm wide, spreading to recurved, shallowly canaliculate, glaucous-grey to blue-green with pinkish margin, sometimes spotted above and below towards base. Marginal spines 3-4 mm long, pinkish. Inflorescence with 1-3 racemes. Pedicels 10-20 mm long. Perianth cylindrical, 27-30 mm long 5-7 mm wide when pressed, orange to orange-red, outer segments free for (8-) 12-15 mm.

Ecology: The species grows in more open areas within evergreen bush-land on steep slopes and cliffs of basalt between 1700 and 2470 m in northern Shewa.

Distribution: It is so far not known only from northern Shewa.

Flowering period: The main flowering period is from October to March.

***Aloe bertemanae* Sebsebe & Dioli**

The specific epithet "*bertemariae*" is given honour of Ms Berte Maria Ulvester, who gave support for a botanical expedition in Ogaden. The species was described in 2000.

The species belongs to a small group of Ethiopian aloes with pubescent and papillate flowers.

Description of the species: *Aloe bertemariae* is a succulent plant with stemless rosettes. Leaves erect to slightly incurved, strongly inrolled, becoming tabular in dry condition. 50-65 cm long and 8-9 cm wide; longitudinally striped and with profuse whitish green blotches. Marginal teeth 1-2 mm long, lower surface of most leaves bearing 3-5 spines. Inflorescence 1-2 m long, with simple raceme; Pedicel 4-7 mm long to slightly incurved, strongly inrolled, becoming tabular in dry condition. 50-65 cm long and 8-9 cm wide, longitudinally striped and with profuse whitish green blotches. Marginal teeth 1-2 mm long, lower surface of most leaves bearing 3-5 spines. Inflorescence 1-2 m long, with simple raceme; Pedicel 4-7 mm long. Perianth dark-coral red, 20-23 mm long, ca 2.5 mm wide when pressed, minutely pubescent.

Ecology: It grows in *Acacia* woodland on sandy soil between 300 and 400 m.

Distribution: The species is so far known only from the Ogaden.

Flowering period: The main flowering period is from November to December.

Chlorophytum Species

There are about 23 Chlorophytum species known from Ethiopia, one of these will be presented below.

Chlorophytum Neghellense Cufodontis

The species epithet refers to Negelle Borena township, from where the species was described in 1939. It can be recognized from other species by its completely prostrate life form, the leaves, flowers and fruits lying flat on the ground.

Description of the species: Chlorophytum Neghellense is a small prostrate plant with thin roots that carry small tubers. Leaves 6-20 cm long and 1.5-2.5 cm wide. Peduncle 2-3 (-5) cm long prostrate. Inflorescence unbranched, or rarely with one basal branch 4-12 cm long flat on the ground, Flowers 2-4 at each node. Pedicels ca. 10 mm long. Flowers white, ca 8 mm long. Stamens shorter than the tepals. Infructescence more or less hidden under the leaves, capsules trigonous, slightly ridged, 6-8 mm long, seeds irregularly folded, 2 mm across.

Ecology: The species belongs in Acacia Commiphora dominated woodland to degraded bushland, often heavily grazed, on red (rarely black) sandy soils between 1050 and 1700 m.

Distribution: It only occurs in Sidamo and Bale Floristic Regions, not known anywhere else.

Flowering period: The main flowering period is two-peaked, like other south Ethiopian geophytes. March to April and October to November.

Source

1. Edwards, S., Sebsebe Demmisew & Hedberg, I. (eds). 1997. Flora of Ethiopia and Eritrea Vol.6 The National Herbarium, Addis Ababa & Uppsala.
2. Sebsebe Demmisew & Dioli, M. 2000. A new Aloe (Aloaceae) Species from Ogaden (Southeastern Ethiopia.) Kew.Bull, 55(3): 679-682.