



Weingartia neumanniana MN57



Weingartia neumanniana GC173.09

Weingartia neumanniana

Here is a small species which grows slowly but easily and doesn't mind a cold winter. It is the most southern species of the genus *Weingartia*, the only one to grow in Argentina, the bulk of the genus being from Bolivia.

The first attempt to describe this species was by Backeberg in the obscure journal 'Der Kakteen-Freund' in 1933. He called it *Echinocactus Neumannianus*, an illegitimate name because it had already been used by Cels ex Labouret for a Chilean cactus.

The first valid description was made by Werdermann in *Kakteenkunde* (1937) at the same time as he created the genus *Weingartia*. This genus has subsequently been included in *Gymnocalycium* and *Rebutia* but neither of these placements is supported by DNA studies so I still call it *Weingartia neumanniana*.

On the 8th December 1995, I awoke to a beautiful morning in Humahuaca, Salta, Argentina. The town is at 2950m but I was fortunate that I had no ill effects from the high altitude. Our objective for the day was to find *Weingartia neumanniana* near its type locality and most-southerly habitat high above the town.

We drove as near to the hill as we could get and parked the car near a wide almost-dry river bed. The walk was quite strenuous and took a few hours, although we stopped to enjoy the plants on the way up. We had seen eight cactus species on the way up but not the *Weingartia*.



Backeberg's picture from *Der Kakteen-Freund* 1933

The top of the hill at 3340m was reasonably flat and, in part, comprised outcrops of rock with vertical strata. I was a novice at habitat exploration then but now I know that this sort of rock is a favoured place for some cacti, and so it proved for *Weingartia neumanniana*. The small solitary heads were crammed in the rock gaps. It is certainly more rewarding to find a plant when you have had to make a long walk!

GC

References

Backeberg, C. (1933) *Echinocactus Neumannianus* Bckbg. n.sp. *Der Kakteen-Freund*(2)8:90-91

Werdermann, E. (1937) *Weingartia* *Werd. Kakteenkunde*(2):20-21

*Originally published in The Cactus Explorer (on-line Journal) 2012 N°3 (p.21)
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