Mexico has quite an array of interesting and unusual smaller cacti, many of them highly popular with collectors. Most of these are found in genera with only a small number of species, and some are monotypic (that is, having only one species). This multiplicity of micro-genera has caused many of them to miss being covered by books of their own, such as those covering larger genera like Mammillaria or Echinocereus. The obvious solution is to sweep all these fascinating plants together in one book, and this is what John Pilbeam and Bill Weightman have done in this new contribution to the cactus literature.

One difficulty in writing a book such as this is what to use for a title. Ariocarpus, with its uniqueness and great appeal to cactophiles, seemed a good point of reference, so the authors settled on Ariocarpus et cetera. The next question was which plants to include, and here the attempt was to rope in as many of the stray mini-genera as possible, while avoiding larger-growing plants as well as epiphytic or scrambling cacti. In the end, 17 genera were included, ranging from superstars like Ariocarpus and Astrophytum to minor players such as Acharagma and Cumariina.

The nomenclature for the most part follows the lead of Ted Anderson’s work The Cactus Family and the recently-published New Cactus Lexicon. This may take a little getting used to for many collectors, especially with respect to Neolloydia (down to two species after having many former members moved into Turbinicarpus), Gymnocalycium (now eliminated, with most of the plants going into Turbinicarpus), and Turbinicarpus (newly bloated after having absorbed most of Gymnocalycium and a good deal of Neolloydia as well). The 17 included genera are Acharagma, Ariocarpus, Astrophytum, Aztekium, Cumariina, Epithelantha, Geohintonia, Leuchtenbergia, Lophophora, Neolloydia, Obregonia, Ortegocactus, Plecyphora, Stenocactus, Strombocactus, Toumeya, and Turbinicarpus. With the exception of Toumeya, included because of its uniqueness and extravagant spination, the distributions of these genera are all largely or wholly within Mexico.

This book is geared toward the hobbyist and is not, therefore, overly technical. However, the area of occurrence for each species, while stated, is not backed up with distribution maps (presumably to protect rare plants from pilfering). Nevertheless, the writing is clear and informative, and the photographs are well-chosen, making this volume a delight to consult and a valuable asset to the literature on cacti.

**Book Review**

**Ariocarpus et cetera, The special, smaller genera of Mexican cacti** by John Pilbeam and Bill Weightman. 2006. Published by the British Cactus and Succulent Society. 140 pp in full color, 27.5 x 21 cm. Hardbound with dust jacket. ISBN 0–902099–78–7. $84.95.

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