Musings on Mammillaria theresae

Back in the late 1970s, Gordon Rowley put Mammillaria theresae, named for Theresa Bock, who discovered the plant with her husband John, as a variety of M. saboae. Curiously, M. saboae was also named for a lady, Kitty Sabo. I do not think the change was widely accepted, or lasted very long. Today, it stands alone, being quite distinct, growing at least 250 miles from any other variety of M. saboae. It is in the series Longiflorae, for the flowers have quite long tubes, to 4 cm. I do not see the plants at sales all that much, but when they are there, they usually disappear quite quickly. One seller had some plants in 2 in. [5cm] pots. Many times, when plants are in such small pots, they can be overlooked, though when a collector is really searching for the harder to come by plants, they will take their time, look closely and find the gems. Plants for sale are usually single-stemmed and are often cuttings from a larger, sometimes grafted plant, which have been rooted. Seed and seedlings are also available infrequently. Seed can be tricky to germinate, and methods involving the use of acids to weaken the thick seed coat have been suggested. Even though the plant has a good taproot, it still does not want to be in too a deep a pot — one just long big enough to accommodate the root is all that is needed. I am sure that many people have managed to raise the plant to the size of maybe a dozen heads and then decided to give it a larger pot. With a larger diameter usually comes more depth; with more depth comes more soil, which can stay wet too long. The roots rot, and there goes the plant.

I have seldom seen a plant in a show, but when I have, it is quite a small clump, maybe a dozen heads. They are usually in the miniature plant category, and if well grown, will win a prize. It is well suited to this show category, being a true miniature. Often entries

1. Mammillaria theresae flowering in a 15 cm pot.