

HANS HERRE BIOGRAPHY

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Herre, Adolph [Adolar] Gottlieb Julius [Hans] (1895–1979)—discoverer of many Mesembs (in Afrikaans called Vygies)—became known as the 'Father of Mesembrianthemaceae'.



Born in Dessau, Germany on 7 April 1895 Hans Herre became a horticulturalist, an intrepid explorer and a succulent plant specialist on the Aizoaceae family that is over 90% endemic to northwestern South Africa into Namibia. After attending the Fridericianum in Dessau, Hans worked at the Dessau-Wörlitz and the Hamburg gardens in Germany and in Brugge, Belgium prior to World War I. During the war he was seriously wounded in the leg in July 1916 and after recovery began studies on horticulture in Dahlem, Germany under the professorships of Dr Heinrich Gustav Adolf Engler (1844–1930) and Dr Friedrich Ludwig Emil Diels (1874–1944). After completing the course, with jobs difficult to find, he received an offer to lay out the botanical garden for the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa in 1925, working under the leadership of Dr Gert Cornelius Nel (1885–1950) who was Professor of Botany and botanist for the garden. Hans was the curator of the botanical garden until retirement in 1960.

Since the botanical garden was fairly small, it was decided to concentrate on succulent plants. Under the advice of Dr Hermann Wilhelm Rudolf Marloth (1855–1931), Hans learned much about South African plants—especially succulent plants. In 1929 he was accompanied by the Reverend Louis Gottlieb Meyer (1867–1958) on some of the collecting trips while staying at the Meyer home. During his time with the university he collected many, many succulent plants—at first walking, then by mule and wagon and last by touring vehicle. The story is that before his first expedition by motor vehicle, a new 1930 6-cylinder Chevrolet, he had to learn how to drive it before getting a drivers license. The first expedition in his new Chevy was a collecting trip into the Little Karroo, a small area near the southern tip of South Africa, in 1930 to collect specimen succulent plants. Further collecting trips in 1931, 1933, 1939, 1949, 1954, 1955 and 1956 were to the Richtersveld, Kommaggas and Bushmanland areas in the Namaqualand region of South Africa and Namibia. However, his largest collections during any one expedition was made by mule and wagon—much more space to bring back his many specimen plants to the university (as you can see in Images).

On many of Hans' expedition trips Dr Harriet Margaret Louisa Bolus (1877–1970), curator at the Bolus Herbarium at University of Cape Town, with an artist met him to help in identification of the ample material (many Mesembs) he collected—many described by Louisa Bolus, some named in his honor. Succulent plants were sent to other specialists for identification also: Dr Marloth in Cape Town; Dr Selmar Schonland (1860–1940) in Grahamstown; Dr Robert Allen Dyer (1900–1987) in Pretoria; Dr Nicholas Edward Brown (1849–1934) at Kew, England; Dr Martin Heinrich Gustav Schwantes (1881–1960), Dr Joseph Karl Leopold Arndt von Poellnitz (1896–1945), Dr Arthur Tischer (1895–2000), Dr Herbert Karl Straka (1920–2009), Dr Hans-Dieter Ihlenfeldt (1932–), and Dr Hans Christian Friedrich (1925–1992) from Germany; Alain Campbell White (1880–1951) and Boyd Lincoln Sloane (1885–1955) in California, USA; and many others.

During his many succulent plant hunting trips, Hans took many black and white photographs of plants he discovered—later in color. Two succulent plant genera were named in his honor: *Herrea* (later *Conicosia*) and *Herreanthus* (later *Conophytum*) by Dr Martin Heinrich Gustav Schwantes (1881–1960) in 1928. Hans described three genera: *Amphilbolia*, *Arenifera* and *Jensenobotrya*. Many species were named in his honor: *Anacampseros* (*Avonia*), *Astridia*, *Brunsvigia*, *Cephalophyllum*, *Cheiridopsis*, *Conophytums*, *Crassula*, *Cryptostephanus* (*Cyrtanthus*), *Haworthia*, *Hereroa*, *Huernia*, *Hymenocyclus* (*Malephora*), *Micropterum*, *Ruschia*, *Sarcocaulon* (*Monsonia*), *Schwantesia* and *Senecio*. His discoveries of succulent plants were many.

In 1938 he wrote a book 'Mesembryanthemaceae' with Dr Hermann Johannes Heinrich Jacobsen (1898–1978) and Dr Otto Heinrich Volk (1902–2000). The culmination of his life was in the 1971 book 'The Genera of the Mesembryanthemaceae' with 316 pages that included 124 graphic color plates and illustrations mostly by Beatrice Orchard Carter (1889–1939) and Mary Maud Page (1867–1925). Hans wrote many articles for various publication on the succulent plants of southern Africa.

Hans was one of the first to grow *Welwitschia mirabilis* from seed to seed after 22 years. The March-April 1970 issue of the CSSA Journal was dedicated to Hans in honor of his 75th birthday with articles about him from various people of the hobby. The cover plate showed Hans with a very old *Welwitschia mirabilis* plant north of Walvis Bay, South West Africa.

He became a member of the International Organization for Succulent Plant Study (IOS) in 1953. He received the prestigious CSSA Fellow Award at the 11th Biennial CSSA Convention in Phoenix-Tucson, Arizona on 3 May 1965 for discoverer of many new

species during his plant expeditions in Africa and author of important works. The 'Hans Herre Award for scientific field work and building of scientific collections' was established by the Succulent Society of South Africa as an honor to Hans Herre for future recipients of the award.

During his lifetime Hans collected over 300 species of plants new to science. Hans Herre died in Pretoria, South Africa on 16 January 1979.

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