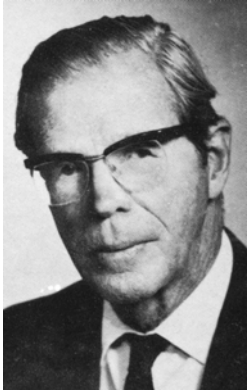


# PETER BALLY BIOGRAPHY

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**Bally, Dr Peter René Oscar (1895–1980)— discoverer, describer and botanical illustrator of many succulent plant species from Africa.**



Born in Schönenwerd, Switzerland on 9 May 1895, Peter Bally became a self-taught taxonomic botanist and botanical illustrator. Peter studied chemistry in his early years that took him to Albania and Bombay in 1923 and 1924 testing an antidote for malaria for the League of Nations. By 1930, working for an oil company as a chemist in Tanzania, he studied medicinal and poisonous plants of the region. His interest in botany took him to study plants (especially succulent plants) in arid areas of eastern Africa and by 1938 became a government botanist at the herbarium of the Coryndon Museum in Nairobi, Kenya. Purchasing a sloping 3½ acres of virgin bushland on the outskirts of Nairobi, Peter cleared the land, built a home and then planted a garden with seedlings and cuttings of plants from tiny herbs to big trees he collected in the wild — all plants indigenous to East Africa. By 1943 he took longer expeditions through Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. On one of these expeditions with Dr Gilbert Westacott Reynolds (1895–1967) they searched for Aloes that Dr Reynolds needed for the preparation of his book 'The Aloes of Tropical Africa'.

In 1957 Peter returned to Europe, working a short time with the Marnier-Lapostolle collection at the Jardin Botanique Lès Cedres botanical garden in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, France, and then for a period of 12 years at the Conservatoire et Jardin Botanique, in Geneva, Switzerland. Back to Nairobi, Kenya in 1969 Peter was able to pursue his many botanical interests at his leisure, visiting the herbarium (now East African Herbarium, Nairobi holding more than 700,000 plant specimens and accompanying field notes) almost daily for the rest of his life.

Of interest to succulent plant enthusiasts is Peter Bally's discovery of a number of species of *Aloe*, *Euphorbia* and a few other species. Species named in his honor are: *Adenia ballyi*, *Aloe ballyi*, *Ceropegia ballyana*, *Euphorbia ballyana*, *E. ballyi*, *E. proballyana*, *Kalanchoe ballyi*, *Sansevieria ballyi* and *Stapeliopsis (Echidnopsis) ballyi*. He described many more species under the generic names *Aloe*, *Caralluma*, *Ceropegia*, *Echidnopsis*, *Euphorbia* (many), *Lithocaulon*, *Monadenium* (many), *Pseudolithos*, *Rhytidocaulon*, *Sansevieria*, *Senecio* and *Stapelia*. He collected succulent plants in little known areas of Kenya, Tanzania, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Madagascar, Ghana and Nigeria. Peter Bally is the author, artist and illustrator of the 1961 book 'The Genus *Monadenium* (A Monographic Study)', the results of 27 years of study after his first discovery of an undescribed *Monadenium* in 1934 (*M. schubei* var *formosum* described by him in 1959). His drawings and water color paintings also appear in *Flowering Plants of Africa*—a botanical magazine/journal (from 1921) published by the South African National Biodiversity Institute in Pretoria, South Africa.

Peter was a leading authority on succulent plants of east and northeast Africa — a specialist in families Euphorbiaceae and Stapeliaceae. He wrote numerous articles for various journals of the world. The journal 'Ballya' was named in his honor, a publication of the East African Natural Historical Society in Nairobi, Kenya. He joined the International Organization for Succulent Plant Study (IOS) in 1953, three years after its inception. He received the prestigious CSSA Fellow award in 1975 for dedicated scholar of African succulents, who worked toward conservation of endangered species and author of a monographic study of the genus *Monadenium*.

Peter received an honorary doctorate degree from the University of Basel, Switzerland in 1973. Dr Peter René Oscar Bally died in Nairobi on 26 July 1980 after a short illness following a heart attack.

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