

Notes on African plants

VARIOUS AUTHORS

CACTACEAE

RHIPSALIS BACCIFERA SUBSP. *MAURITIANA*: THE CORRECT NAME FOR THE INDIGENOUS SOUTHERN AFRICAN CACTUS

Apart from about 20 naturalized species of Cactaceae, most of which are noxious weeds, e.g. *Opuntia ficus-indica* (L.) Mill., southern Africa has only a single indigenous cactus species. The species, *Rhipsalis baccifera* (J.S.Mill.) Stearn (Figure 1), occurs in the subtropical eastern parts of the subcontinent (Figure 2) and is, according to Obermeyer (1976), plentiful in the northeastern Cape (Eastern Cape Province), Zululand and southern Natal (KwaZulu-Natal). The genus *Rhipsalis* Gaertn. comprises 33 species (Barthlott & Taylor 1995) and occurs over much of the New World tropics. *R. baccifera*, the only Old World representative of the genus, and indeed of the family, was treated for the *Flora of southern Africa* by Obermeyer (1976) who interpreted the species as a single variable entity. Barthlott (1987), on the other hand, split *R. baccifera* into three subspecies, including the typical subspecies. This taxonomic refinement resulted in the species, as it is known in southern Africa, being included in *R. baccifera* subsp. *mauritiana* (DC.) Barthlott. In a recent note, precursor to a monographic treatment of the tribe Rhipsalideae of the Cactaceae, Barthlott & Taylor (1995) divided *R. baccifera* into six subspecies, but prudently added that their treatment should be regarded as provisional only, as this complex species required further investigation. Since this further refinement will have no effect on the correct name of the southern African representatives of the species, the treatment of Barthlott (1987) will be incorporated into PRECIS, the comprehensive southern African plant taxonomic database. Following the treatment of Barthlott (1987), the nomenclature of the indigenous southern African cactus



FIGURE 1.—Flowers of *Rhipsalis baccifera* subsp. *mauritiana*, G. F. Smith 110 (PUC). Material collected near KwaMabeyana on the Ozwatini Plateau in central KwaZulu-Natal. Scale bar: 10 mm.

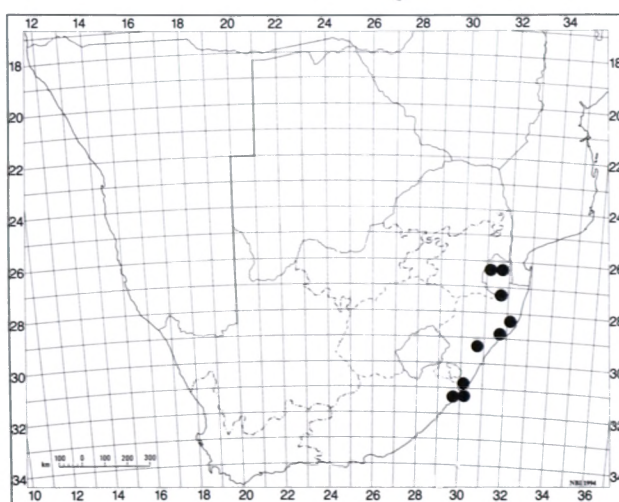


FIGURE 2.—Distribution map of *Rhipsalis baccifera* subsp. *mauritiana* in southern Africa.

is as follows:

5416000-2[†] ***Rhipsalis baccifera* (J.S.Mill.) Stearn subsp. *mauritiana* (DC.) Barthlott: 100 (1987); Barthlott & Taylor: 64 (1995).** Type: lectotype designated by Barthlott & Taylor (1995): Mauritius, Le Pouche, Sieber [fl. maur. 2:] 259 (G-IDC microfiche; L, lectopara.).

R. cassytha (var.) *mauritiana* DC.: 476 (1828).

A distribution map of *Rhipsalis* in southern Africa was not included in Obermeyer (1976), and is given here for the sake of completeness (Figure 2). The palaeotropical distribution of *Rhipsalis* was depicted by Barthlott (1983: fig. 2).

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† See Germishuizen (1997: *Bothalia* 27: 146).