

## PORTRAIT OF A SPECIES

Encephalartos Horridus

Most people would agree that *Encephalartos horridus* is one of the most attractive of all cycads. It is one of the species of the Eastern Cape area of South Africa and is found in the Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth areas. It is one of the smaller South African species with stems that usually are under two feet in height. The leaves are a beautiful blue-grey colour and are highly recurved. The leaflets are twisted and their lobes terminate in sharp, stiff spines, hence the name *horridus*. Although this species comes from a summer rainfall area, it presents no problems in cultivation when grown outside in Southern California which is a winter rainfall area.

In August 1982, I had the opportunity to visit the locality where a very interesting dwarf form of this species grows. This was on a hillside a few miles from Uitenhage where the plants grow among dense Karoo scrub in very rocky terrain. I also saw *Haworthia fasciata* and *Euphorbia polygona* and a species of *Agapanthus* growing here. In the summertime you can also see the cape cobra here. *Encephalartos longifolius* did grow here but has been collected out. This dwarf form is the same as the typical form but the leaves, stems and cones are quite a bit smaller. At the time of my visit, I saw several plants but I only recorded one female in cone

*Encephalartos horridus* and *E. longifolius* still grow together at other localities and I have seen some very beautiful hybrids formed by these two species.

Encephalartos altensteinii

*Encephalartos altensteinii* is another of the species of the Eastern Cape area of South Africa. It is found from Alexandria, north east through East London almost to Natal. This is one of the taller species and can get over 20 feet in height. It is one of the most common species and is commonly seen in gardens all over South Africa. Its range overlaps that of *E. villosus*, *E. trispinosus*, *E. latifrons* and *E. arenarius* and *E. altensteinii* forms hybrids with all four of these species. I saw it growing in the area north of East London. Here the plants grow on the banks of rivers that flow through the surrounding grassland. Along the rivers where *E. altensteinii* grows, there are many large trees growing and at first, I had a hard time finding the plants even though I was very close to them.

In the Bushmans River area, a most beautiful form of this species grows. This form is very robust and has leaflets which are armed with large stiff prickles. The differences in this form are probably the result of the influence of *E. trispinosus* which grows in the same area.

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