

Wanted!!! *Euphorbia prona* S.Carter

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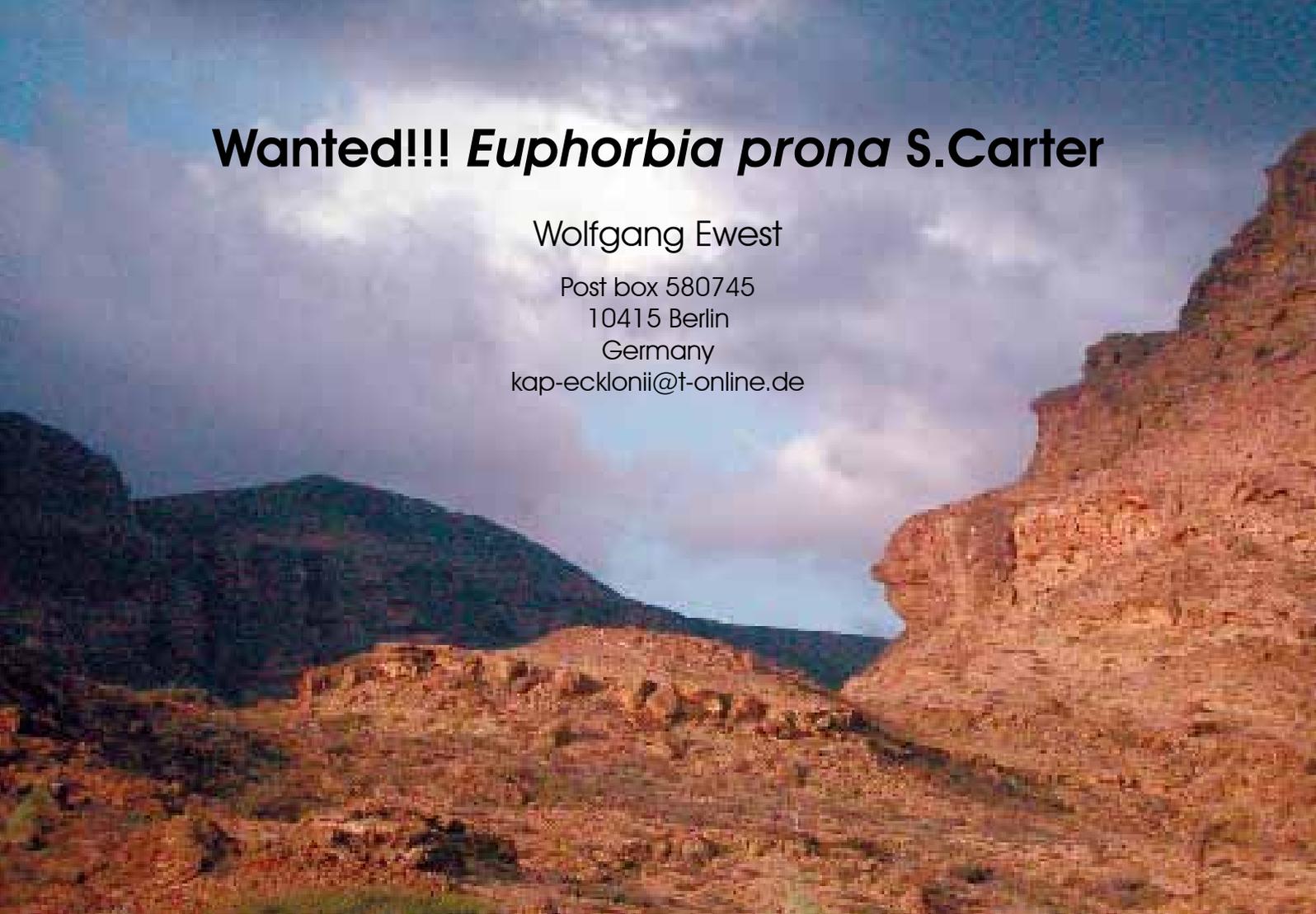


Fig. 1: View on the habitat of *Euphorbia prona* 8 km W of Bargal (photo: Susan Carter)

For many years I have kept a plant labelled *Euphorbia* spec. "Cape Gardafui" in my collection. Thus its origin is the outermost point of the Horn of Africa, Cape Guardafui (sometimes also spelled Cape Gardafui). According to John Lavranos (pers. comm.) he collected this *Euphorbia* there together with Renato Bavazzano in 1970 and probably it was collected again later by Beckett.

The species is not of easy culture. What I have not yet understood is especially its natural growth rhythm. My plant may not show any sign of growth at all for several years when all of a sudden it starts growing. "Woken up" it produces side branches (Figs. 3, 5) – and from time to time it even flowers with brown cyathial glands (Fig. 4). From other collectors I have heard similar observations of such a growth pattern.

In cultivation older, branched specimens tend to grow prostrate, just as it is found in habitat (Lavranos, pers. comm.) Despite artificial pollination I never managed to get any seed formation. Maybe plants in collections are all of the same clone. However, grafted

cuttings are available occasionally in the trade and the species is not all that rare in cultivation.

As the plant has been known long since and its origin is clear, the question of its identity is inevitable. When I asked Susan Carter a few years ago I received an answer that it is *Euphorbia prona* S.Carter. As Cape Guardafui is not far (about 65 km) from Bargal, the type locality of *E. prona*, I was intrigued and visited the Kew Herbarium to see the holotype of *E. prona* (Fig. 6). I do not want to discuss the status of *Euphorbia* spec. "Cape Gardafui" here, but I think there are some differences with *Euphorbia prona*.

For me, the most important question is: Is there anybody who has the true *Euphorbia prona* from Bargal in cultivation? Up to now all enquiries I made of collectors have not yielded any positive result. Maybe there are no living plants in collections anymore, which would be bad news as the type locality itself in Somalia is rather inaccessible due to political disturbances in that region. So, what I am looking for are plants (cuttings or raised from seed) of *Euphorbia prona* from Bargal (Bari region, Somalia). ♦



Fig. 2: *Euphorbia prona* 8 km W of Bargal (photo: Susan Carter)



Fig. 3: Branch of *Euphorbia* spec. "Cape Gardafui" in the collection of the author



Fig. 4: *E.* spec. "Cape Gardafui" flowering and setting fruit in the collection of Jaap Keijzer 2008



Fig. 5: A branch of *Euphorbia* spec. "Cape Gardafui" in the collection of the author



Fig. 6: Holotype of *Euphorbia prona* in the Kew Herbarium



Fig. 7: View on Cape Guardafui; *Euphorbia* spec. "Cape Gardafui" grows on the most eastern part of the cape (reproduced with kind permission of Google Earth).



Fig. 8: Sun rise at the Cape Guardafui with it's lighthouse on the right (Figs. 8 to 11 photos: John Lavranos)



Fig. 9: View from Cape Guardafui towards Ra's Shenagef; *E. spec.* "Cape Gardafui" grows amongst the limestone in the foreground



Fig. 10: The lighthouse at Cape Guardafui with its wardens and John Lavranos



Fig. 11: *Euphorbia spec.* "Cape Gardafui" at Cape Guardafui, 500 m west of the lighthouse

Cape Guardafui

According to Griffiths & Hemming (1963) Cape Guardafui only receives some erratic rainfall. The authors give an annual sums of 182 mm (1937), 29 mm (1938), 62 mm (1939), 53 mm (1954), 121 mm (1957), und 92 mm (1958). More recent data are available from the Somalia Water and Land Information Management System SWALIM (<http://geonetwork.faoswalim.org:8080/geonetwork>, downloaded August 9th, 2008). SWALIM gives a mean annual rainfall of 64 mm, with 1 mm of rain between May and September, rising with the north-east monsoon to 32 mm in November and then declining again to 10 mm and less for the months of December to April thus making this place a winter rainfall area. The average temperature varies between 23.3 °C in February and 27.1 °C in June; the average humidity is given with 70 to 75 %. ♦

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References

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