

## AGAVE ALBOPILOSA

By Sue Haffner



This intriguing little agave burst onto public notice a few years ago. It is found in the Huasteca Canyon, Monterrey, Mexico—the exact location being kept secret by the Mexican authorities (although you can find a number of photos on the Internet, so it's obvious that some plant hunters have found it.) Its habitat is chiefly on vertical cliffs in very rugged country.

The tip of each leaf is capped by a fringe of white 'hairs'. Actually, each new leaf is tipped with a hard cuticle around the terminal spine, looking somewhat like a pencil tip, which then opens like a mesemb capsule allowing the white fibers to puff out. Botanists speculate that the fibers serve as water condensers and collectors.

Dr Jorge Armando Verduzco, of the University of Monterrey, who has studied the flora of this region and is an expert in Agave hybrids, believes *albopilosa* is a hybrid between *A. Victoria-reginae* and another agave which may have disappeared. Other agaves in the vicinity are *bracetosa*, *lechuguilla*, *striata* and *tenuifolia*.

The plant has not yet been validly published, nor has a herbarium specimen been deposited. But, of course, we plant lovers are dying to have one. As it reproduces well from seed, it would be nice if the Mexican authorities would start propagating and distributing it (or someone else is going to start doing it ... )