

## EUPHORBIA GROENEWALDII

By Sue Haffner



This is one of the tuberous rooted euphorbias, similar to *E. tortirama*, but less robust. It was discovered in 1936 on stony hillsides near Pietersburg (now called Polokwane) in what was the northern part of the Transvaal (now Limpopo Province). The discoverer, Dr. F. van der Merwe, named it for his friend B.H. Groenewald, who had written a number of papers on the genus *Aloe*.

The species is known only from this small area, which is now rapidly changing as the city expands and suburbs spring up near it. It is rare enough that it has no common name among the indigenous people. In fact, it was “lost” for years, being absent from South African and other collections. A local conservation group is now working to protect the remaining plants in habitat. *E. groenewaldii* has a large swollen tuberous

underground body which is composed of both root and stem tissue which rarely divides except in case of damage. In habitat the plants appear as five or six above-ground branches, spirally twisted and with prominent tubercles. Specimens rarely reach more than 10 cm. tall. (In cultivation it can grow taller.) It is very slow growing. Despite its rarity in habitat, the plant is readily available from commercial sources. Culture is the same as that for the other tuberous euphorbias, such as *stellata* or *decidua*. Care must be taken with watering and drainage. Propagation is by cuttings.

(Illus: by Cynthia Letty from “The succulent Euphorbieae (Southern Africa)”, by A. White, R.A. Dyer & B.L. Sloane, 1941.)