

## **EUPHORBIA (MONADENIUM) MAFINGENSIS**

**By Sue Haffner**



**Photo from Thomas Muller  
(Bihrmann's Caudiciforms)**

This tuberous rooted species was discovered by Bruce Hargreaves on Dec. 22, 1978 in the Mafinga Hills on the Malawi--Zambia border. Bruce describes the habitat as follows: "The Mafinga Hills are a spectacular block rising 2,000 feet from Chisenga to the top which is just over 7,000 feet. The wall of rock is about 10 miles long and 3 miles wide in the middle. The Zambian side drops down even further and is much more convoluted. The name comes from "kufinga," to squeeze. ("Ma" is a plural prefix.)"

Euphorbia (Monadenium) mafingensis has deciduous, prostrate branches which grow from the crown of the plant at ground level,

reaching up to 5 cm long. Leaves cluster on the ends, and the cyathia (blooming structures) emerge from the branch tips between the leaves.

The species is very attractive when in flower, as the cyathia show bright red due to the color of the glands, which are backed by two oval green bracts. Bruce writes: "It is a beautiful little jewel, and its contrasting red and green are very fitting for its Yuletide blooming. Will it rival the poinsettia?"

Monadenium? Euphorbia? Many of us may be surprised to hear that, due to DNA studies, botanists have moved Monadenium into Euphorbia. Albert Pritchard writes in the preface of his new book, *Monadenium*, "I am sure that many growers will still retain the name Monadenium, as have cactus lovers who have stayed with *Notocactus* and not *Parodia*. This is not that we do not accept the work or findings of professionals but perhaps feel that the original concept was correct for this group of plants."

References:

Hargreaves, B.J. 1981. *Monadenium mafingensis* Hargreaves, sp. nov. *Cactus and succulent journal (U.S.)* 53 (6): 292---293. Pritchard, Albert. *Monadenium*. 2010. Cactus & Co.