

Gymnocalycium gibbosum subsp. *gibbosum* (Haworth) Pfeiffer ex Mittler

First Description (Haworth)

Synopsis Plantarum Succulentarum: p.173 (1812)

Cactus gibbosus Haworth

"Flattened globular, with less than 16 prominent deep ribs; apex sunken, without spines; ribs have prominent humps with clusters of spines; spines black.

Habitat unknown; Flower unknown. In cultivation before 1808.

I have not seen this nor any other species with so small a number of ribs as ten. Described from Mr. Vere's collection.

I presume that this has not been specifically named by any other author."

Since this description is brief, it is useful to refer to a later one assumed to be of the same species. A few years after this first description of *G. gibbosum* by Haworth, an English author Edwards published a description with a good illustration, (*Botanical Register* 2. pl.137 (1816)). This illustration shows a plant that conforms to the Haworth's description.

Cactus gibbosus

Div. Echinomelocactus, subrotundi.

C. gibbosus, short columnar, with 16 ribs. Spines set in rows of tubercled ribs, the longish tubercles alternate with bare, pressed together humps.

Elongated-globular, a dirty green colour, c. 3" (76mm) high, 2.5" (63.5mm) diameter, with angled ribs. Ribs with swollen humps; humps having a



Fig.171 The illustration of *Cactus gibbosus* Plate 1524 from Loddiges *Botanical Cabinet* (1929)

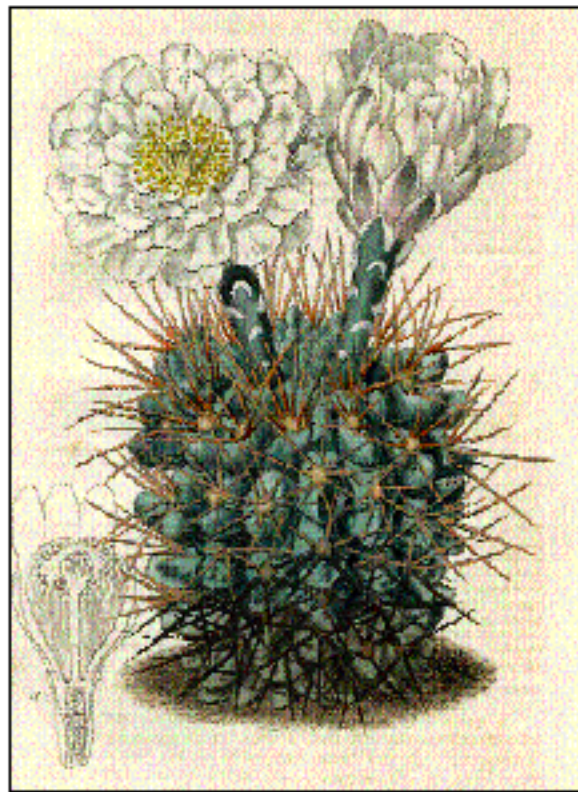


Fig.172 The engraving illustration of *Cactus gibbosus*, the Edwards *Botanical Register* illustration. Plate 137 (1816).

depressed, round, brown felted areole, which alternates with thinner, naked projecting warts, which are all pressed together. Areoles carry up to 7 very strong pointed spines. Flowers 3" (76mm) long come from the topmost areoles with spines; the bottom of the flower-tube is green, towards the petals becoming dirtier and paler, internally white, odourless. Calyx cylindrical, carrying blunt, adpressed, whitish scales, irregularly inserted. Numerous petals, pointed spatulate, narrow at the base, inner petals longer but hardly wider. Ovary 1" (25mm) long. Spines are at first short, erinaceous, the older spines lose their colour.

This description is followed by these observations:

This species is not yet classified in the plant kingdom, nor till now are the flowers known to botanists. It has been cultivated in the greenhouse of Mr. Vere, at Kensington Gore, from before 1808, and flowered in June last year for the first time. This gentleman's gardener informs us, that it was raised from seed received from Jamaica by Messrs Lee and Kennedy, of the Hammersmith nursery.

It belongs to the section of the genus Echinomelocactus, or Melon-Thistle, from the form and armature of the species of which it consists. Some of the strange looking plants are said to

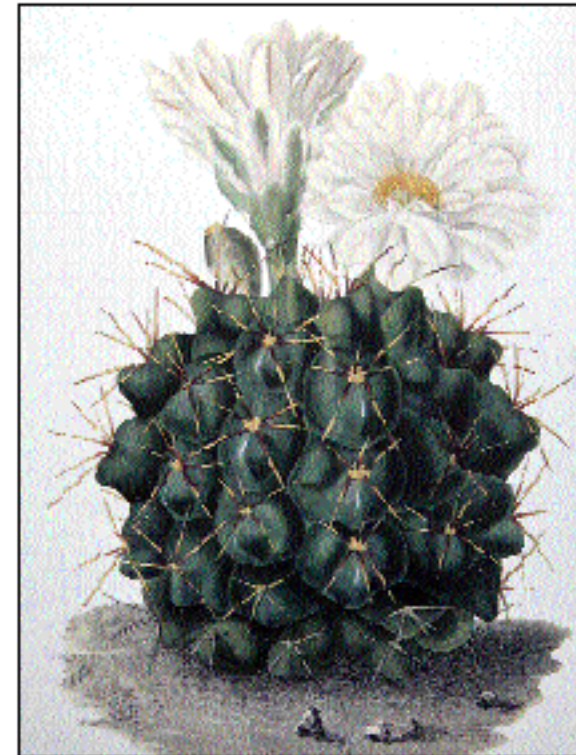


Fig.173 Plate 5 of *Echinocactus gibbosus* from Lemalle *Iconographie des Cactées* (1940)

exceed two yards in girth in their native places, and are composed of a succulent green flesh of one consistence throughout. In times of drought they are known to be sought after by the cattle, who after stripping off the spiny covering with their horns, devour them greedily. The entire genus, with the exception of *C. opuntia*, common to both Europe and America, is indigenous to the West Indian Islands, and the warmer parts of the American continent; where it is numerous and multifarious species are said to grow from fissures in the sides of the steepest rocks. The fruit (or fig or pear, as it is sometimes called from its shape) is succulent in most of them.

The present specimen, the only one we have seen of this species, was not much more than three inches high, of an oblong cylindrical form, depressed at the summit, somewhat narrowed towards the base, and had 16 angles or ribs.

Each rib or angle consists of a vertical rank of tubercles of two different forms, alternating one with the other, one sort having a depressed tomentose crown armed with a divergent fascicle of about 7 or 8 horny acicular thorns, the other soft and narrow, free from all pubescence and armature, and projecting much beyond the other. The flowers appear from the axils of the uppermost thorny fascicles, which terminate each rib at the outer edge of the depressed thornless tessellated area of the summit of the plant; these in this instance were two, nearly 3 inches in length, externally of a reddish or liver-coloured green, internally white, scentless. Corolla composed of numerous obscurely ligulate petals, arranged in several imbricating ranks.

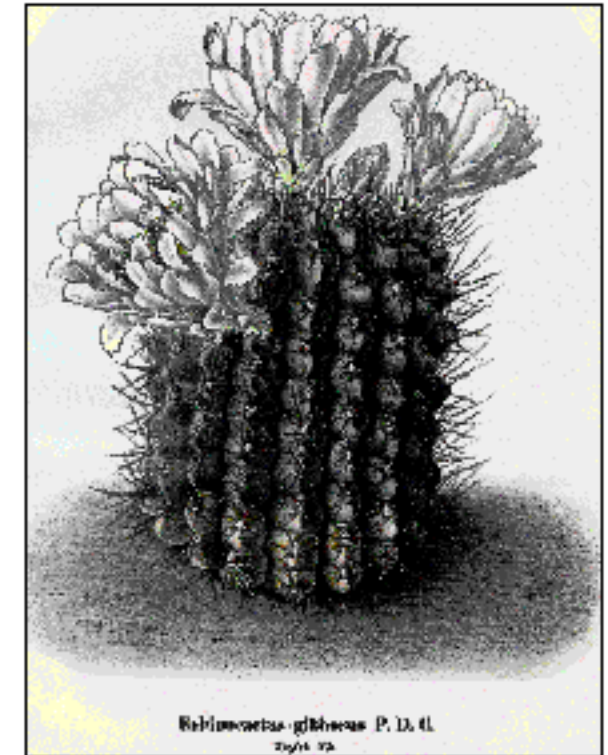


Fig.174 Plate 95 of *Echinocactus gibbosus* from Valis of Güta *Bücher der Kakteen* (1905)

green cylindrical outwardly loose-scaled persistent calyx.

Lectotype: The Edwards *Botanical Register* illustration; plate 137 (1816). Designated by Kiesling *Flora of Patagonia*, p.226 1988 (see Fig.172)

Etymology

From the Latin 'gibbosus' meaning hump-like swellings referring to the tuberculate plant body.

Other Names

Cactus gibbosus Haworth (1812)
Echinocactus gibbosus (Haworth) DeCandolle (1826)
Cereus gibbosus (Haworth) Pfeiffer (1837)

Synonyms

G. brachypetalum Spegazzini in *Nuevas Notas Cactológicas/Anales de la Sociedad Científica de Argentina* 99: pp.135-137 (1925)

First description of *Gymnocalycium brachypetalum* Spag. (n.sp.)

Body globular to cylindrical, dark greenish-blue. Ribs 16 with areoles rounded bosses, separated by deep sharp zig-zag grooves. Tubercles three-sided, the fronts flattened to rounded. Areoles elliptical, scales with a little greyish felt. Spines 6-7, round, thin, rigid, more or less spreading, radiating, curved upwards, yellowish when young, later brownish-grey. Flowers large, narrow, funnel-shaped, outside greenish-blue, with scales, ovary narrow cylindrical, petals broad ovate, sharp pointed, pure white, many stamens arranged in two sets, filaments white, anthers orange, style greenish-white with 12 stigma lobes of the same colour, standing above the anthers.

Habitat: In the hills and gullies of the Rio Negro, and in the region of Comodoro Rivadavia.

Observations: Intermediate species or variety between *C. gibbosum* and *C. chabouanum*, in its characteristics. Style large with the stigma level with or above the anthers, the outstanding length