

Cornelius Osten (1863-1936)

Notas sobre cactáceas

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Cornelius Osten was born in Germany (Bremen) where he received a solid traditional education in foreign and dead languages, sciences, and geography. In 1896, i.e., at the age of 33, he emigrated to Uruguay where he became a business man¹. He devoted a significant part of his income to science and especially botany. In Montevideo, he met José Arechavaleta and he began his plant collection that became one of the biggest of the *La Plata* area. Along his numerous trips to Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and through Uruguay he collected many plants and he met famous botanists such as Emil Hassler, Teodoro Rojas, Wilhelm Herter. His friendship with Georg Kükenthal was at the origin of his main botanical contribution devoted to the family Cyperaceae (*Las Ciperáceas del Uruguay*). Just before his death, he bequeathed his huge herbarium (23000 plants) to the *Museo de Ciencias Naturales de Montevideo*.

The Assistant Director of the museum, Diego Legrand, discovered among the bequeathed material some original notes and excellent pictures of cacti, and he decided to publish these as a posthumous work and as a tribute to Osten. The notes were originally written in German at different dates, some before Britton and Rose contribution, some after. This is exemplified by the progressive changes of point of view of Osten oscillating between Schumann and Britton and Rose system. The notes were translated and published owing to the accuracy of the reported data (74 pages of text) and the quality of the 71 black and white pictures. Two pictures (53 and 55) illustrate the same plant twice under different names without any explanation; this is probably an error.

Right: Plate 50, *Gymnocalycium schroederianum*, Osten.

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1)

The introduction of the *Notas* and some web sites tell that he emigrated in 1886 at the age of 23. This is wrong as shown by the archives of the city of Bremen:

<http://www.die-maus-bremen.de/Datenbanken/auswanderer/passregister/index.php?id=perslist&ia=Osten&lang=en>

2)

The file contains a “searchable” layer of interpreted text. Corrections are indicated in red when the layer “comment” is made visible.

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