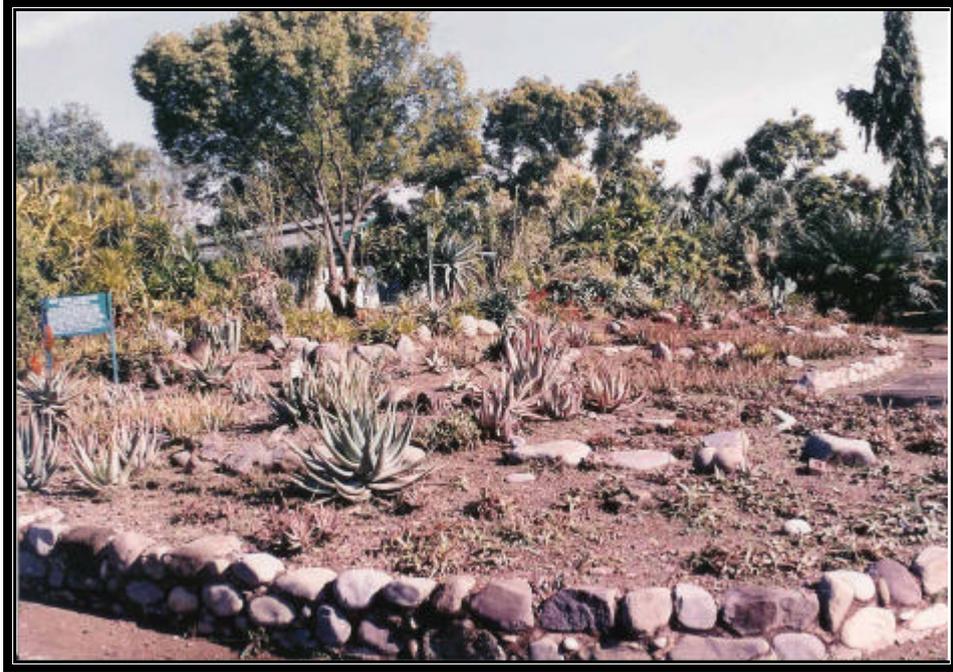


8. ROCKERY IV



A sign board “Aloe L. Fam. Liliaceae” invites you to our ALOE BOTANICAL COLLECTION. This rockery does not present a very attractive sight during the hot dry months from May to middle of July, when due to heat leaves of most of the species are badly shriveled, with some having the slender parts of the leaves scorched. With the arrival of monsoons the plants pick up growth and, with turgid green and glossy leaves, Aloes present another sight. Out of the thirty five odd species, a few are unidentified or hybrids. For succulent lovers fond of flowering plants the different species are not to be missed. This rockery is relatively quite small being just 30 meters long by 10 to 15 meters wide.



Like in other rockeries the bigger plants, here *Aloe arborescens* and several species of *Aglonema* and *Dracaena*, are in the background, thus forming a hedge which cuts off the view of the propagation area and its glasshouses. Two large CAMPHOR trees complete the partition.



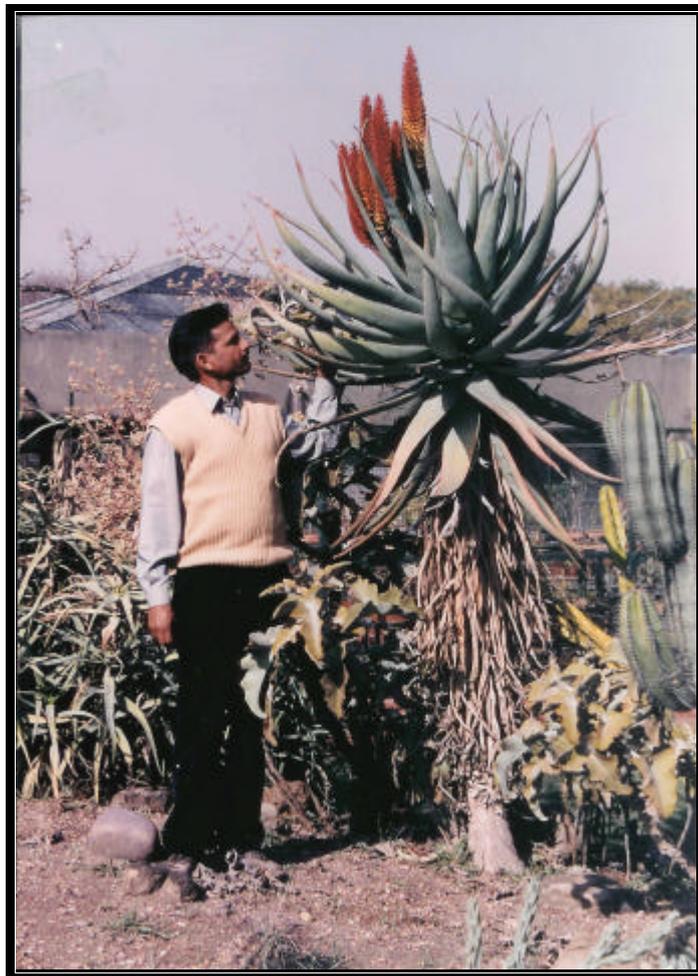
Aloe arborescens

Aloe arborescens along with *Aloe barbadensis* Syn. *Aloe vera* are the first one to come in bloom during the monsoons, their flowering season extending up to the middle of winter. Some groups of *Aloe arborescens* are up to three meters high, with profuse branching from near the base or along the stems. The length of leaves varies in different clones/localities. The scarlet flower racemes are simple, up to three to four form a rosette. They come in flowers at the end of October and the flowering season last 3 to 4 months. Flowers are yellowish green in colour.

There are two groups of *Aloe pluridens* also in the background. The plants have long sickle-shaped leaves, and the stems are about three to four cm thick. Dried leaves cover most of the stems. The groups have about ten to fifteen stems, and they tend to break easily. The flower racemes and colour of flowers is like *Aloe arborescens*, but this species is a shy bloomer as compared to *Aloe arborescens*.

There are two large plants of *Aloe speciosa* in the background. These majestic plants are about two and a half meter high and branchless. The large thick leaves, blue-green in colour, form a large rosette on the top about one meter across. The thick trunk is covered with dried leaves. Plants in different locations come in flower at very varying periods from end of October to February. Inflorescence spikes, branchless, vary in number from

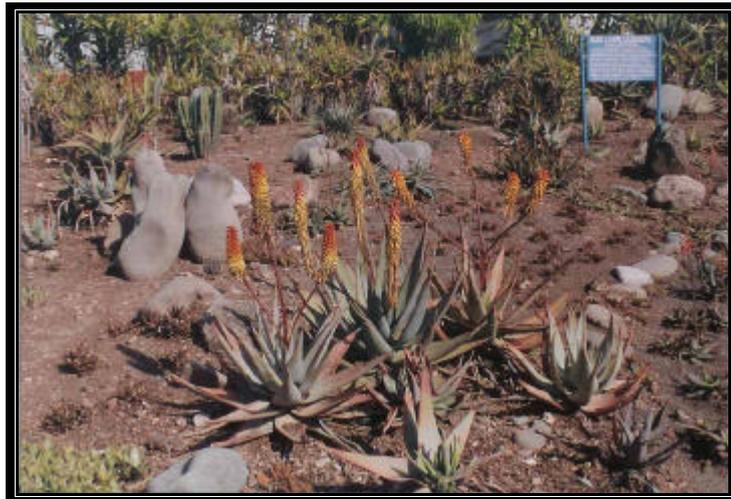
four to nine on a single plant. The buds are red and open upwards. Flowers are beautiful yellowish orange in colour. One plant shown here has seven inflorescence racemes, and the other plant with one of the garden workers, MR. SUSHIL KUMAR, standing near it, is now two and a half meters high. This second plant is at the eastern end of Rockery No III described earlier.



Aloe speciosa Bak.

There is a group of six plants of *Aloe gestneri* growing near the middle of this rockery. Three plants of this beautiful species flower every year for

two to three months, starting in November after the rains. The plants are solitary. The mature plants form stemless rosettes of dull green tapering upright leaves about twenty to twenty five cm long and about five to six cm broad near the base. The inflorescence is simple or branched into two to three thin tapering racemes up to twenty-five to thirty cm long. The younger racemes are brownish red and as it grows and the reddish orange downwardly pointed flowers open, it becomes golden in the lower part. It is a good landscaping plant.

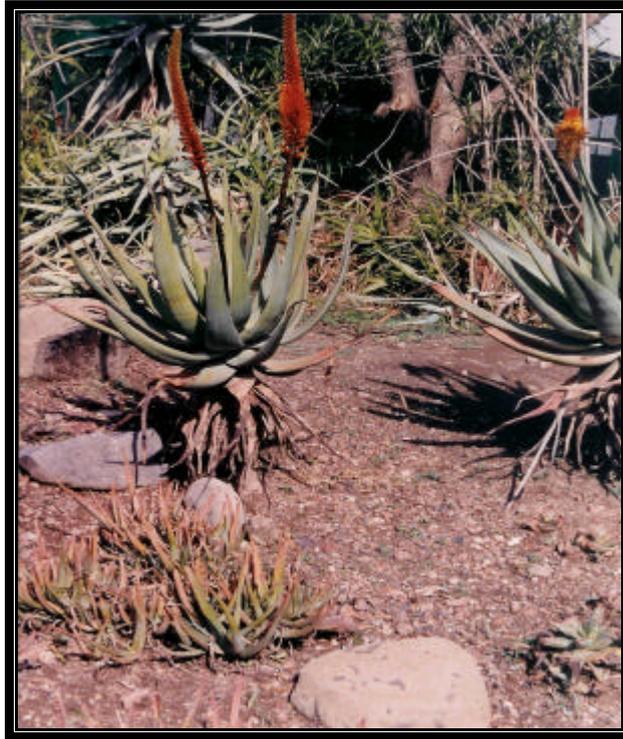


Aloe gerstneri REYNOLDS



Aloe ferox Mill.

There are three plants of *Aloe ferox* on this rockery. Another four plants are grown on another rockery. This aloe gets its name from the presence of spines on upper or lower surfaces of the leaves. On the other hand plants with hardly any spines on leaves are also described. Most of the plants in this garden are practically unarmed, and few have very small spines on the upper and lower surfaces near the middle. Most of the plants are only one meter high while two are one and a half meter high; with old dry persistent leaves covering the thick trunk. The inflorescence is a branched panicle with two to five erect candle shaped racemes and are covered with bright orange and scarlet flowers. They start flowering in November and the flowers last till the end of February.



Aloe castanea SCHNOL.

There is a group of five plants of *Aloe castanea* near the middle of this rockery. This lovely *Aloe* grows up to four meters height when very old. Our young plants have hardly any trunk. The rosette consists of tapering bluish green upright leaves forming a dense rosette. About thirty to forty cm., long sickle shaped tapering inflorescence raceme is densely covered with reddish brown buds, and as the yellow flowers open the lower part of the raceme becomes golden coloured. The plants flower during winter, starting in December going on to early March.



Aloe globuligemma POLE EVANS

Near the beginning of this rockery is a group of *Aloe globuligemma* plants. Its thick glaucous spreading leaves have recurved apices. The plants flower in spring when the cold wave has abated. The inflorescence is about half meter high, with long obliquely curved branches. The plant gets its name from rounded globular buds which are turned upwards and towards the base. The brownish buds open into club shaped pale yellow flowers. *Aloe striata* is another interesting species on this rockery. There are two groups of four to five plants each near the middle. The plants are solitary with rather flat rosettes of about seven cm broad, light bluish green leaves. The leaves taper rather abruptly. The margins are smooth. The plants get its name from numerous parallel striations on the leave surface. The plants flower during summer or rainy season. The inflorescence is well branched and rebranched corymbose panicle, there being one to three from a rosette

simultaneously or successively. The wide inflorescence with several branches of orange red flowers is attractive.



Aloe marlothii BERGER

Aloe marlothii is an attractive landscaping taller growing species. In nature very large old plants up to six meter tall occur. We have two plants on Rockery No II, both about fifteen years old. One of the plants in flowers is about one and a half meter high while the other is smaller being about one meter tall. It has thick leaves about thirty cm long and five cm broad. The thick trunk is covered with dry leaves. Both surfaces of the leaves have small sharp spines. Leaf is glaucous green and during summer becomes reddish. It flowers during February and the flowers last for about three months. The inflorescence is a many branched panicle with about ten or more racemes. The racemes are horizontal and the buds and flowers are

pointed upward. Racemes colour varies from shades of light brownish orange to deeper hues.

Aloes have a great tendency to hybridize in nature and cultivation. On this rockery we have four groups of hybrid plants of the *Saponaria* Group, which flower profusely practically throughout the year, more so in cooler months. Closer examination of the different inflorescence points to the conclusion that, probably one of their parents is *Aloe zebrina*, *Aloe keithii*, *Aloe saponaria* or *Aloe greenii*. There are three to four other groups of hybrid *Aloes*, but it is difficult to determine their parentage. One of these may be a hybrid of *Aloe rauhii*, with slightly bigger and broader leaves.

Several smaller growing *Aloes* are also here. A group planting of *Aloe humilis* looks very attractive when in growth during summer and rainy season. This *Aloe* offsets freely and forms large groups. Leaves are about ten to twelve cm. long and up to two cm in width, with numerous small white tubercles on both surfaces and margins. During hot summer months the tips of the leaves tend to die. The inflorescence is simple and laxly flowered. Flowers are scarlet. It starts flowering during spring continuing through to the rainy season. It is a good landscaping *Aloe* for small rockeries. *Aloe juveana* also forms a nice group here.

There are three or four small groups of *Aloe brevifolia*. They form compact groups but are shy bloomers. A couple of plants of *Aloe distance* are also here. A small group of *Aloe jucunda* is struggling hard to survive outdoors. This aloe forms a very good pot plant. A small trailing bushy, *Aloe ciliaris* has naturalised near a couple of stone boulders. It flowers during the rainy season. *Aloe antandroi* and *Aloe bakeri* have also survived outdoors but need more shade. *Aloe variegata* plants too survive outdoors but needs a shady and cooler location.

There is also an impostor here: despite its looks, *Hesperaloe parviflora* belongs to the *Agavaceae* Family. The plants do not look very attractive. The leaves are about ten to fifteen cm long, linear, tough and grooved with fibrous edges. It is the inflorescence which makes it a very attractive pot and outdoor plants. The inflorescence is one to two and a half meter long, sometimes branched with numerous small, twenty-five to thirty-five mm, pinkish red flowers. It flowers during summer and rainy season and the inflorescence lasts two to three months.

There is a small indoor *Aloe* collection as well. Madagascar aloes are represented by the small *Aloe haworthoides* and a vigorously growing hybrid of this species. *Aloe rauhii* is represented by two clones, one of them having more brightly marked whiter leaves and labeled 'Snow Flakes.' *Aloe*

albiflora forms nice groups. *Aloe parvula* and *Aloe descoingsii* groups also do well. *Aloe bakeri* grows quite well under glass.

Several other African aloes are also present. *Aloe jucunda* forms large groups easily and is one of the favourites with the growers. A beautiful hybrid with *Aloe jucunda* as one of its parents, 'Hey Babe', is a connoisseur's item. There are plants of *Aloe jacksonii* and *Aloe pearsonii* as well. *Aloe sladeniana* is also present. It is difficult to have robust plants of this species. Several plants of *Aloe longistyla* are also grown. This is a beautiful flowering species, and by keeping some plants in isolation its seeds are being produced for propagation. *Aloe juveana* is another easy to grow species. Several unidentified species are also being grown under glass.

In front of the *Aloe* collection rockery is an open space. At the far end is a small WATER TANK with a small decorative bridge. The large golden fish in this tank attract children and adults alike. Around this tank are a few succulent plants. A large *Beaucarnea stricta* plant with a large caudex is growing near one end. *Jatropha podgarica*, *Adenium obesum* and some groups of *Bromeliades* (plants of the pineapple family, *Bromeliaceae*) also grow around this tank.

In the centre of this open space is a very large plant of *Cycas revoluta* (Sago Palm) with profuse offsetting. Along the paths on both sides four

plants of SANDALWOOD trees have been planted. This tree grows in forests of Karnataka in South India. In its habitats I found the tree of moderate height of about six to seven meters only. During the last four years, when they were planted as small saplings, the trees have shown good growth. Two small plants of *Gingko biloba* (Maidenhair Tree) have also been planted here. This area, with lush green grass forms a cool retreat for many a visitor groups who like to sit in this isolated area.

Next to this lawn, and more or less parallel to Rockery IV, is another small mound, Rockery V.