

Haworthia marginata (Lam.) Stern

Alan Rollason

H. marginata has to be one of the most stunning *Haworthia* species to be found in habitat and can be equally as beautiful in cultivation. It is also one of the largest.

Having been privileged to see it in habitat at three different locations in all, the first at Tafelberg, north of Drew, in somewhat open ground, the now famous Ashton Hill site, and finally at Heidelberg (as Jakub recorded it, “the Heidelberg rubbish dump”). At each location the plant was quite easy to spot, even growing amongst tall grass at Ashton.

Bruce Bayer recorded that the species has been severely over collected and at the same time destroyed by agriculture. In his opinion it should be regarded as a threatened species.

It is not known who first discovered *H. marginata* but it is said to have been known as early as the 1700s. A description was first published and illustrated by Commelin in his *Praeludia Botanica* (Amsterdam) in 1703, and later in his *Plant. Rar. Amstelaed* in 1715. It was first introduced to England in 1797 by Lason.



Tafelberg location



Tafelberg location

H. marginata and is understood to have been a common sight along routes taken by the early explorers of South Africa.

It is understood to naturally hybridize with both *H. pumila* and *H. minima* in nature although we did not see any plants that were obvious. Some plants we photographed at Ashton were really stunning and one plant in particular with long slim leaves was at least 30cm in diameter.

H. marginata is not the easiest plant to grow in cultivation. Larger plants have a habit of losing their roots fairly regularly, and can be very difficult to re-root. The best way I have found is in a propagator on damp, warm sand. It is always much easier to grow on from seed or young seedlings as they adapt better to your specific growing conditions. It is very pleasing to see that it is now fairly common in cultivation in the UK, with some really nice

crosses available too. Do look out for the ones with the white edging to the leaves.

Again, I am grateful for the opportunity to have seen for myself these wonderful plants in nature and thank Jakub and his friends for waiting for me, particularly how long a time it took me to climb up Ashton Hill. It was a long way but worth every second in the end.



Road sign with all the greatest place names!

H. marginata at Ashton Hill.
The biggest and best plant ever – has to be
the best plant I have ever seen in the wild!







H. marginata at Ashton Hill



H. marginata at Ashton Hill



H. marginata with white leaf edges at Ashton Hill



Looking down over Ashton from the Hill



H. marginata at Ashton Hill