The history of the project that eventually led to the publication of the present handbook series was outlined in the preface to the Monocotyledons volume, published in the summer of 2001. A short summary of its history will therefore be sufficient:

Handbooks devoted to succulent plants (including cacti) have a long-standing tradition. First treatments covering the family *Cactaceae* were already published in the 19th century, but the first handbook dealing with the so-called 'other succulents', authored by Hermann Jacobsen, was only published in 1954 - 1955, then called "Handbuch der sukkulenten Pflanzen". A revised and enlarged English edition was published 1959 and was repeatedly reprinted subsequently.


First ideas leading to the present "Illustrated Handbook" were developed prior to the 1990-congress of the International Organization for Succulent Plant Study (IOS) in Zürich. Gustav Fischer Verlag Jena, publisher not only of Hermann Jacobsen's "Sukkulentenlexikon", but also of the equally renowned "Kakteenlexikon" by Curt Backeberg, was interested to have new editions of these works prepared. The feeling amongst participants of an ad-hoc meeting during this congress was that the situation presented a unique occasion to produce a set of authoritative volumes embracing all succulent plants.

The initial project planned a set of 3 volumes, devoted to *Cactaceae*, *Aizoaceae*, and the "other succulents", respectively. It soon became apparent, however, that a single volume will not be sufficient to cover the vast array of these "other succulents", and they will now embrace 4 of the 6 volumes that constitute this series of "Illustrated Handbooks". The other 2 volumes, devoted to the *Aizoaceae* and edited by Heidrun E. K. Hartmann, have been published in the second half of 2001. A similar handbook covering the *Cactaceae* has not become ready in time for inclusion in the present series of handbooks.

In comparison with Hermann Jacobsen’s "Sukkulentenlexikon", the present handbooks have many additional features: The descriptions are vastly expanded and as diagnostic as possible. There are literature references and usually typification data for all accepted taxa, and full synonymies. Published illustrations are cited for many of the accepted taxa that are not illustrated in the handbooks, and the etymology of the generic names is explained.

It was with pride that the first volume of the series of "Illustrated Handbooks of Succulent Plants", covering the monocotyledons, was put before the public last summer. It is the result of a collaborative international effort of many colleagues, and it is gratifying to see that it was well received by the audience. It is the hope that this will also be the case for the present volume on dicotyledonous succulents.

Acknowledgments

As for the monocotyledons volume, a special word of thanks goes to all the contributors to this volume. Without their help and enduring patience, the project to compile and edit this handbook would not have been the pleasure that it was.

It is also my pleasure to thank the publishing houses of Springer-Verlag Heidelberg (for the English edition) and Ulmer-Verlag, Stuttgart (for the concurrent German edition), who provided a firm base for the publication of these handbooks.
The compilation of the volumes treating the "remaining succulents" has been undertaken using computing infrastructure provided by the Municipal Succulent Plant Collection Zürich (ZSS), and the permission to do so is heartily acknowledged with a deep feeling of gratitude, both to its former director Diedrich J. Supthut, as well as to the present director Dr. Thomas Bolliger, and to the authorities of the City Parks Department.

Numerous persons have helped during the compilation and editing process. Apart from those already listed in the preface to the monocotyledons volume, I would also like to express my thanks to all the numerous plant collectors and hobby growers for published and unpublished information. An astonishingly large number of succulents is cultivated in public and especially private collections, and without this enormous amount of material, our knowledge would be far less complete than it actually is. It is very much the merit of the growers and the respective societies and associations that this information is published in dozens of journals, and we should be gratefully aware of the importance of this effort.

Finally, I would like to again thank my family, wife and son, as well as all my colleagues at ZSS and elsewhere for their patience when the handbook kept me busy. A special word of thanks is due to Dr. Johanna Schlüter of the now defunct Gustav Fischer Verlag Jena, who so ably accompanied this project during the first three quarters of its long history. A further word of thanks goes to Dr. Dieter Czeschlik and Dr. Jutta Lindenborn from Springer-Verlag, for their help to make this Handbook become a reality.

Zürich, November 2001

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Illustrated Handbook of Succulent Plants: Dicotyledons
Egglı, U. (Ed.)
2004, XVIII, 547 p., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-3-540-41966-2