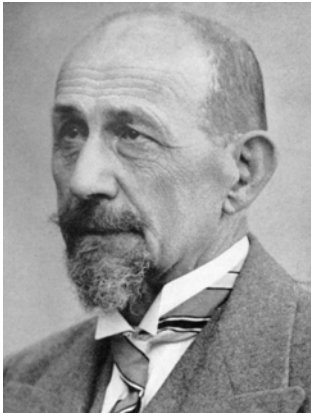


# KURT DINTER BIOGRAPHY

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**Dinter, Moritz Kurt (1868–1945)—pioneer discoverer of stemless mesembs — known as the "Father of Botany of Namibia".**



Born in Bautzen, Saxony, Germany on 10 June 1868, Kurt Dinter became a prominent botanist and botanical explorer in German South-West Africa. Educated at the Realschule secondary school in Bautzen and, after military service, he began his horticultural and botanical studies at the Botanical Gardens at Dresden, Germany as an assistant to Professor Dr Carl Georg Oscar Drude (1852–1933), a botanist and plant geographer, and at Strasbourg. He became interested in exotic plants—leading himself into succulent type plants. By 1894 Kurt was hired by Sir Thomas Hanbury (1832-1907) to take charge of his world-famous garden La Mortola, near Ventimiglia on the Italian Riviera. It was here that he published his first periodical "Alphabetical catalogue of plants growing in the garden La Mortola" in early 1897. After spending about 6 months at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, England to improve his command of the English language he resigned his post at La Mortola to visit German South-West Africa arriving at Swakopmund on the western coast in June 1897.

German South-West Africa was a colony of Germany from 1884 to 1915 — becoming South-West Africa from 1915 until its independence in 1990 as Namibia—hereinafter referred to as Namibia.

Upon arriving in Namibia, Kurt set about exploring and collecting around Swakopmund some 140 specimens making notes on *Welwitschia* which he saw on his way to Karibib. He spent days studying succulent plants growing among coastal rocks at Walvis and Lüderitz Bay. This was the start of his many days of exploring and collecting succulent and other type plants for a living in Namibia for a good part of the rest of his life—the early years on foot and by ox-wagon accompanied by Herero helpers— later by motor vehicles. Collecting and selling live plants to the firms Haage and Schmidt in Germany and herbarium specimens to Schinz at Zurich, Switzerland and Engler at Berlin-Dahlem in Germany became his primary objective in the early years.

On a trip back to Germany in 1905 he met Helena Jutta Schilde who followed him later back to Namibia where they married in 1906. She was his companion in the discovery and collecting of succulent plants on many of his trips throughout Namibia. Other than a one-month expedition by train and mule cart in 1913 with Dr Heinrich Gustav Adolf Engler (1844–1930) of Germany, Kurt's explorations and collections were mostly either by himself or with his spouse. In 1922 he helped design and layout a succulent garden for nurseryman Ernst Julius Rusch (1867–1957) on his farm Lichtenstein near Windhoek, Namibia—Ernst who had immigrated from Germany to Namibia in 1890. The genus *Ruschia* was named in Ernst's honor by Dr Martin Heinrich Gustav Schwantes (1881–1960) in 1926.

Of interest to the succulentist is the many genera Kurt described (most with Gustav Schwantes): *Astridia*, *Callistigma* (*Mesembryanthemum*), *Chasmatophyllum*, *Dracophilus*, *Ebracteola*, *Helenbergia*, *Hereroa*, *Humenocyclus*, *Namibia*, *Ophthalmophyllum*, *Psammophora*, *Sarcophagophilus* (*Caraluma*), *Schwantesia*, *Stoeberia*. Kurt also described many species of succulent plants (many of them stemless) — a good many of his described *Mesembryanthemum* species transferred to other generic species by other taxonomists, e.g. Gustav Schwantes, Heidi Hartmann, NE Brown, Des Cole and CH Friedrich. Some species were named in Kurt Dinter's honor under these genera: *Aizoon* (*Aizoanthemum*), *Anacampseros* (*Avonia*), *Aloe*, *Brachystelma*, *Ceropegia*, *Commiphora*, *Cotyledon*, *Lithops*, *Mesembryanthemum* (*Psilocaulon*), *Plectranthus* and *Trichocaulon*. Three species described by Kurt that were named in honor of his spouse, Jutta, under these genera: *Euphorbia*, *Hoodia* and *Mesembryanthemum*. The *Dinteranthus* genus was named in Kurt's honor by Gustav Schwantes in 1926 The genus *Schwantesia* was named in Gustav Schwantes honor by Kurt Dinter in 1927.

I know of at least 7 books in the German language authored by Kurt Dinter from 1897 to 1928. The botanical journal **Dinteria** was named in Kurt's honor to celebrate the centenary of his birth.

Moritz Kurt Dinter died in Neukirch/Lausitz, Saxony, Germany on 16 December 1945.

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