Agave cerulata Trelease var. ***nelsonii*** (Gentry) R.H.Webb & G.D.Starr comb. nova (Fig. 19)

BASIONYM: *Agave nelsonii* Trelease, *Missouri Bot. Gard. Rep.* 22: 61. 1911.

TYPE LOCALITY: Misión San Fernando, Sierra San Miguel, BC, 4 September 1905 (Nelson & Goldman 7111, US) (Fig. 17).

This prolifically offsetting variety of *Agave cerulata* has short-stemmed, compact rosettes that are 50-75 cm in diameter at maturity. The leaves are gray-green and mostly 20-35 cm by 6-8 cm, lanceolate to triangular-lanceolate, with a thick gray to bluish glaucous coating. The grayish brown marginal spines are 3-9 mm long with a brownish ring around the base, are regularly spaced about 1-2 cm apart, and may be on small teats. The terminal spine is 2-4 cm long, grayish brown, and decurrent to the first or second set of marginal spines. The inflorescence is stout, 2.5-4 m tall, and has 15-20 ascending to arching lateral branches. The umbels are compact and globose, and the slender, light yellow flowers are 45-55 mm long.

We change these plants from subspecies to variety because we found substantial overlap in distribution with *Agave cerulata* ssp. *cerulata* at the southern end of the distribution for *A. cerulata* var. *nelsonii*. (Fig. 17). For example, we found both taxa east of El Rosario, at Laguna Chapala, and at Agua de Higuera. Gentry (1978) discussed variability in the forms of *A. cerulata* found at the type locality of Calmallí, and one or more of those could be fit into variety *nelsonii*. This variety is the dominant taxa in the northernmost distribution of the *A. cerulata* complex (Fig. 17), being found on both sides of the southern Sierra de San Pedro Mártir. Between El Rosario and the southwestern flank of the Sierra de San Pedro Mártir, the distribution overlaps with *A. shawii* ssp. *goldmaniana* and, because of its large clusters of dense rosettes with broadly linear-triangular or broadly ovate leaves and frequently long, reclining trunks, can be mistaken for small forms of that taxa when not in flower. The vegetative similarities and overlap in distribution leads us to speculate whether *A. cerulata* var. *nelsonii* is probably the result of some long ago hybridization between *A. cerulata* and *A. shawii* ssp. *goldmaniana*, which has stabilized over the millennia. However, the tall, narrow inflorescence is definitely more like *A. cerulata* and section Deserticolae than it is like *A. shawii* ssp. *goldmaniana* and section Umbelliflorae. *Agave cerulata* var. *nelsonii* can be considered the higher-elevation form of *A. cerulata* as it occurs in the Sierra la Libertad north and east Misión San

Figure 19. *Agave cerulata* var. *nelsonii* east of Cataviña, Baja California.

Borja and generally occurs upslope of subspecies *cerulata* in the north.