Notes on African plants

VARIous AUTHORS

CAMPANuLACEAE

THEILERA ROBUSTA, THE CORRECT NAME FOR THEILERA CAPENSIS

When Hong (2003) described *Theilera capensis*, he overlooked important contributions to the taxonomy of the South African Campanulaceae, particularly that of Sonder (1865). In his epic work in *Flora capensis*, Sonder provided the first keys to species of *Wahlenbergia*, described new species and made numerous new combinations. Among these was the transfer of *Lightfootia robusta*, a species described by De Candolle (1839), to *Wahlenbergia*. De Candolle based his name on a collection by Drège from Zwaanepoelpoortberg near Willowmore in the Eastern Cape. It would appear from the question mark after the generic name, that he was uncertain of the placement of this species. Additionally, Sonder reduced *Wahlenbergia rigida* Bernh. to synonymy under *W. robusta*. This species was described in 1844 based on a collection by Krauss from the Groot Winterhoekberge near Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape. In an unusual move, Kuntze (1891) transferred *W. robusta* (A.DC.) Sond. to *Campanopsis* R.Br., a name of different rank, regarded by him as having priority over *Wahlenbergia*.

Even after the account by Sonder, the identity of *Wahlenbergia robusta* remained confusing, and authentic material of the species appears unavailable. Von Brehmer (1915) omitted the species from his account of African *Wahlenbergia* and it is not clear what rationale he followed. When L. Bolus (1915) described *W. gutthriei* from the southern Cape based on the description of Sonder, she suggested that this species is allied to *W. robusta*. According to her, the two species differ in leaf, calyx and corolla characters, with *W. gutthriei* having sessile leaves widened at the base and usually lobed, the corolla tube 2–3 times as long as the segments, and the calyx segments sometimes much longer than the valves of the capsule. The corolla is a deep blue and very fugitive. Despite these differences pointed out by Bolus, many of the specimens of *W. gutthriei* in BOL, NBG, PRE and SAM are labelled as *W. robusta*. Following the establishment of the segregate genus *Theilera* to accommodate *W. gutthriei* (Phillips 1927), in herbarium practice *W. robusta* was often misidentified as *T. gutthriei*. After visiting the National Herbarium (PRE) in South Africa, Hong (2003) described *T. capensis* based on unnamed specimens (Viviers & Vlok 181 (PRE), Acocks 16019 (PRE)) from Willowmore and Steytlerville, respectively.

The search for the identity of *Wahlenbergia robusta* led to the examination of images of the type specimens of *Lightfootia robusta* (Drège 7691) and *W. rigida* (Krauss s.n.) from The Swedish Museum of Natural History and www.aluka.org, respectively. Unexpectedly these species resemble *Theilera capensis*. After examining the type specimen of *T. capensis* (Viviers & Vlok 181 (PRE)) I found all three types conspecific. Since *W. rigida* is a later name for *W. robusta*, the latter name has priority over *W. rigida* as required by Art. 11.4 of the Code (McNeill et al. 2006). The name *T. capensis* is therefore a synonym of *W. robusta*. Goldblatt & Manning (2000) argued for the return of *Theilera* to *Wahlenbergia*, whereas Hong (2003) stated that the two genera are distinct. Evidence from phylogenetic studies using morphology and DNA sequence data suggest that it is premature to return *Theilera* to *Wahlenbergia* (Cupido 2008) and that the two genera should be best kept separate for now. Despite the fact that *Theilera* is embedded among the *Wahlenbergia* species, the latter genus appears non-monophyletic. However, the results support the close affinity between the two species of *Theilera*. In view of the above discussion, the new combination *Theilera robusta* is here proposed as the correct name for *T. capensis*.

Theilera robusta (A.DC.) C.N.Cupido, comb. nov.


*Wahlenbergia rigida* Bernh.: 820 (1844). Type: South Africa, Uitenhage, Groot Winterhoekberg, Krauss s.n. (M, photo.).


Acocks 16019 PRE; Cupido 317 NBG; Long 1376 PRE; Taylor b PRE.

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ASPHODELACEAE: ALOOIDEAE

ALOE HAHNII, A NEW SPECIES IN THE SECTION PICTAE, IN THE SOUTPANSBERG CENTRE OF ENDEMISM, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

The Soutpansberg Centre of Endemism is situated in the Limpopo Province and comprises the Soutpansberg and Blouberg Massifs. The highest point in the Soutpansberg is Lejuma at an altitude of 1 748 m, while the Blouberg rises to 2 051 m. The vegetation of the Soutpansberg is mainly bushveld and thicket, with Afroemontane forest patches on the south- and east-facing slopes. At higher altitudes, grasslands are found on particularly the southern slopes, and a fynbos-type vegetation grows in the mist belt at places along the summit. This centre of endemism shows clear floristic links with other Afroemontane areas such as the Wolkberg Centre to the south and the Chimanimani-Nyanga Centre in Zimbabwe to the north (Van Wyk & Smith 2001).

The Soutpansberg Centre harbours an estimated total of 3 000 vascular plant taxa of which 45 (1.5%) are endemic to the area. The genus Aloe L. is well represented in this centre of endemism. At least 13 Aloe taxa have been recorded along a 9 km transect from Hanglip in the south to Tshikuwi in the north (Van Wyk & Smith 2001).

There has long been doubt as to the exact identity of maculate aloes occurring in the Soutpansberg, previously identified as Aloe swynnertonii Rendle (= A. chimanimaniensis Christian) (Christian 1936). According to Carter (2001), A. swynnertonii only occurs in Montane grassland in the mountainous border between Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and the eastern outliers of these mountains. Carter (2001) further states that the disjunct population of A. swynnertonii near Lake Fundudzi in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, as reported by Christian (1936) and Reynolds (1950), probably represents an extreme form of a species from the Soutpansberg. The Lake Fundudzi plants have shorter bracts, pedicels and petiole and are smaller than A. swynnertonii (Christian 1936; Reynolds 1950; Carter 2001).

The separate specific status of these plants was recently confirmed by Dr Norbert Hahn (pers. comm.). After extensive fieldwork in the Soutpansberg, he came to the conclusion that populations hitherto regarded as A. maculata All. from the Blouberg and Lejuma and A. swynnertonii from the eastern Soutpansberg (Hahn 2002, 2006) are the same taxon and represent extremes of a very polymorphic taxon. This taxon is considered to be endemic to the Soutpansberg region and is here described as Aloe hahnii Gideon F.Sm. & R.R.Klopper.

Aloe hahnii Gideon F.Sm. & R.R.Klopper, sp. nov., a A. swynnertonii differt bracteis, pedicellis, perianthiisque brevioribus et floribus nitidioribus scarlatinis magis decurvisque.

TYPE.—Limpopo, 2230 (Musina): Soutpansberg, Lejuma, due E of Lejuma peak, (–AB), 2007-06-08, Hahn 2172 (PRE, holo.), Hahn 2171 (PRE, para.).


Small, slow-growing, herbaceous, succulent, perennial herb, 200–400 mm tall, with rosettes solitary, not forming clusters, 250–400 mm diam. Stems usually absent, rarely up to 120 x 40–50 mm diam, creeping along ground, with persistent dried leaves. Leaves laxly rosulate, distinctly spreading, attenuate, tapering to dense, reflexed apex, 130–400 mm long, 40–60 mm broad at base, upper surface dull pale green to brown, with pale milky green to whitish spots, ± confluent in transverse bands, densely dotted with very whitish dots, lower surface uniformly pale to milky green, with dense whitish to milky green spots, ± confluent in transverse bands, usually with longitudinal darker greenish or purplish striations; margin not distinctly coloured, with very pungent, straight, brownish orange teeth, 2–4 mm long, 7–14 mm apart, ± evenly spaced; leaf exudate drying opaquely yellow, cut end eventually turning dark purple. Inflorescence single, 260–1 000 mm tall, erect, 4–8(–10)-branched from above middle, upper branches rarely re-branched, branches erectly spreading. Peduncle 5–8 mm wide at base, matt purplish brown with a soft, whitish bloom, basally planoconvex; without sterile bracts; branches subtended by up to 30 mm long, 5–10 mm wide at base, straw-coloured, thin, scarious, many-nerved bracts. Racemes cylindrical to head-shaped, 40–60 × 50–70 mm, varying in size according to age of plants, larger in old plants, smaller in young plants, laxly flowered; buds erect to spreading, somewhat congested at apex, flowers subduplicous when open. Floral bracts amplexicaul, 5–15 × 2–3 mm, dirty brownish white, margins the same colour, thin, scarious, many-