

The correct name for *Asparagus fasciculatus* Thunb. (Asparagaceae)

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The name *Asparagus fasciculatus* Thunb. (1818) for a South African species in the genus is an illegitimate later homonym of the northern Australian *A. fasciculatus* R.Br. (1810). The later taxonomic synonym *A. consanguineus* (Kunth) Baker is available for the South African taxon and is thus the correct name for it.

Keywords: Africa; *Asparagus consanguineus*; homonym; nomenclature; taxonomy

Introduction

Asparagus Tourn. ex L. (Asparagaceae) comprises at least 215 and possibly up to 300 species widely distributed through Africa and Eurasia with a single species extending through Asia to Australia (Kubitzki & Rudall 1998; Bentz et al. 2024). The genus is well represented in southern Africa, with over 80 species in the region, including *A. fasciculatus* Thunb. (1818) from the Greater Cape Floristic Region (Jessop 1966; Manning & Goldblatt 2012).

Asparagus fasciculatus Thunb. was described by the Swedish botanist Carl Peter Thunberg from an herbarium specimen prepared from plants collected by the Scottish horticulturist Francis Masson, between 1772 and 1774, for the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew (Jessop 1966). The species is endemic to the northern parts of the Greater Cape Floristic Region (Manning & Goldblatt 2012). The name *A. fasciculatus* R.Br. (1810) had, however, been published earlier for an Australian plant that Scottish botanist Robert Brown collected in northern Australia in 1802. This name is now considered to be conspecific with the widespread *A. racemosus* Willd., which ranges from southern and tropical Africa through Asia to northern Australia (Clifford & Conran 1987). Its existence, however, renders *A. fasciculatus* Thunb. an illegitimate later homonym (ICN Art. 53.1, Turland et al., 2018).

Fortunately, there exists a later synonym for the South African species in its current circumscription in the form of the combination *A. consanguineus* (Kunth) Baker (1875). This species was described under the name *Asparagopsis consanguinea* by Kunth (1850) from a specimen collected by Johann F. Drège, who travelled widely in the southern and eastern parts of South Africa between 1826 and 1834 (Glen & Germishuizen 2010). Kunth provided no locality information for his species, but his description is adequate to identify it (Jessop 1966), and type material located at Kew confirms this decision. The name was subsequently transferred to the genus *Asparagus* by Baker (1875), and this becomes the earliest legitimate name for the taxon.

Results

***Asparagus consanguineus* (Kunth) Baker** in J. Bot. Linn. Soc., Bot. 14: 615 (1875). *Asparagopsis consanguinea* Kunth, Enum. Pl. [Kunth] 5: 76

(1850). Type: South Africa, without precise locality or date [Western Cape, Piketberg], *Drège s.n.* (KIEL, holo.; K000255699—image!, L0041372—image!, iso.).

Asparagus fasciculatus Thunb., Fl. Cap. (Thunberg) Ed. 1a, 2: 329 (1818), nom. illeg., non R.Br. (1810). Type: South Africa, 'Cap Bonae Spei', without precise locality or date, *Masson s.n.* (UPS, holo.).

Asparagus racemosus Willd., Sp. Pl., ed. 4 [Willdenow] 2(1): 152 (1799). *Protasparagus racemosus* Willd. (Willd.) Oberm., S. African J. Bot. 2: 243 (1983). Type: India, in herb. Willdenow (B, holo.).

Asparagus fasciculatus R.Br., Prodr. Fl. Nov. Holland: 281 (1810). Type: Australia, Carpentaria Islands, Groote Eylandt, 14 Dec. 1802, *Brown 5663* (BM000990612, holo.—image!; E0068205, ?iso.—image!).

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