

NAME CHANGES

Mr. Warren's booklet on the name changes occurring in Allan's 1961 Flora, lists a couple of hundred examples from what is virtually the Auckland province, and without taking the monocotyledones into account. Such changes while irksome, are always based on research and their twofold aim (somewhat paradoxically) is fixity of names and accuracy of classification. The great bulk of name changes involve the principle of priority - the remainder are a matter of opinion between experts, who sometimes disagree.

The International Code of Botanical Nomenclature lays down very definite rules for plant names. For genera '...the correct name is the earliest legitimate one validly published with the same rank...'. So also for species and lower categories. Consequently where several names exist for a plant, the earliest must be diligently sought out and applied. One or two examples of the recent resurrection of early names may be of interest.

Acaena anserinifolia - Ancistrum anserinefolium Forst.1776
Ancistrum sanguisorbae Linn.f.1781

Corybas Salisb.1805 - Corysanthes R.Br.1810

Cyathodes juniperina - Epacris juniperina Forst.1776
Ardisia acerosa Gaertn.1791

Libocedrus plumosa - Dacrydium plumosa D.Don 1832
Thuja doniana Hook. 1842

Loxome R.Br. 1837 - Loxosoma Endl. 1841.

Ignorance and error, combined with priority, precipitate quite a few changes. Corybas saprophyticus Hatch 1950 from Wellsford is not the plant described from New Guinea by Schlechter in 1911. My name is invalid and has to be replaced by another not already in use in Corybas. Hence C.cryptanthus. Johnson's erroneous use of Gunnelaea comes into this category too. Research and priority go hand in hand. When Rupp for instance decided that the Townsonias of Australia and New Zealand were identical, he had to use Hooker's viridis 1850 in place of Cheeseman's deflexa 1906. Similarly with Pterostylis nutans R.Br. 1810, against Pt.matthewsii Cheesem. 1915. Gender can also cause minor name changes. Corybas is masculine, but Corysanthes feminine, which necessitated altering the familiar 'a' endings of the Manual to 'us'. (rivularis, being both masculine and feminine, remains unchanged).

Experts will sometimes disagree among themselves over the relative importance of characters used in research. Examples of this are Allan's placing of the Leucopogon species in Cyathodes, and his preference for Myrsine as against Oliver's use of Rapanea, for the species Cheeseman placed in Suttonia. Genera versus subgenera in the filmy ferns is another thorn in our side. These are different points of view, not necessarily right or wrong, but still confusing to the amateur. F.D.H.