

MYRSINACEAE

A NOTE ON MYRSINE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

When preparing the text for an illustration of *Myrsine africana* L. for publication in Flowering Plants of Africa, the second author noted that the species is dioecious. This fact is not recorded in the first author's treatment of the species in the Flora of Southern Africa 26: 5-6 (1963), although it is mentioned in the generic description that flowers are often unisexual. One result of the oversight is that the key in the Flora is not entirely accurate. The first character given in the key to distinguish *Myrsine africana* from *M. pillansii* Adamson is "Anthers exerted beyond corolla-lobes" versus "Anthers included within corolla-lobes." In *M. africana* the anthers are exerted only in the male flowers; in the female they are included. As regards *M. pillansii*, the anthers referred to are of female flowers. In other words, the anthers of male flowers in *M. africana* are compared with those of female flowers in *M. pillansii*. The leaf characters, however, used in the key to distinguish the two species, hold good. So far, male flowers of *M. pillansii* do not appear to have been collected, so we are ignorant of their structure. The female flowers contain "male" organs resembling fertile stamens, but in all specimens examined by the authors none has shown pollen, consequently they are merely staminodes.

Adamson in his original description of *M. pillansii* in J. S. Afr. Bot. 7: 204 (1941) refers to male flowers as follows: "*in floribus masculis ovarium abortivum minutum adest.*" However, in the type material which was kindly sent on loan

from the Bolus Herbarium, there is no trace of functionally male flowers. What Adamson probably observed were young female flowers with undeveloped ovaries and staminodes.

After Vol. 26 of the Flora of Southern Africa appeared, a specimen of *M. pillansii* (Moss sub TRV 19775) from Witpoortjie, Krugersdorp district, in the Transvaal, was located in the National Herbarium, Pretoria, and further specimens from the Transvaal have since been collected by Mr. J. H. Vahrmeijer (Nos. 1763 and 1819) of the Botanical Research Institute, at Breed's Nek in the Magaliesberg and by Mr. G. K. Theron (No. 1954) at Loskop Dam. It is clear that *M. pillansii* has a much wider distribution than was at first realized and it is all the more surprising that no functionally male flowers have yet been preserved. It would be appreciated, therefore, if collectors would search for male trees of *H. pillansii* to fill this serious gap in our knowledge of the species.