

MYRICACEAE

A NOTE ON THE IDENTITY OF *MYRICA CONIFERA* BURM. F.

While working on the genus *Myrica* for the Flora of Southern Africa, the author discovered that the name *Myrica conifera* Burm. f. cannot be applied to the species known by that name in South Africa. *M. conifera* was described by Nicholas Burman in his Prodr. Cap. 31 (1768), the species being based on Pluk. Phytog. t. 48, f. 8 (1691). The figure is of a twig with male inflorescences. The relative legend, though it indicates that the plant comes from Africa, includes two pre-Linnean citations which refer to the American species, *M. cerifera* L. (1753).

Lamarck, in his Encycl. 2: 593 (1786), was apparently the first to suggest that Fig. 8 represented not an African species, but the American species, *M. cerifera*. In a note on *M. cerifera* he states that *M. aethiopica* L. (Linnaeus regarded *M. conifera* as a synonym of this species) is probably conspecific with *M. cerifera*. According to Lamarck, neither Fig. 8 cited by Linnaeus under *M. aethiopica* in Linn. Mant. Alt. 298 (1771) nor the description of that species, reveals any significant differences between the two species. Moreover, Ray Hist. 1800 (1704) cited by Plukenet under Fig. 8 refers to a plant from Carolina and not from Africa.

Rendle, in Journ. Bot. 41: 85 (1903), points out that Fig. 8 is obviously a male specimen of the same species as Fig. 9, which represents a fruiting specimen of *M. cerifera*. He states that the leaves are exactly alike in the two specimens and have the serrations in the upper part of the blade, which is characteristic of *M. cerifera*. He concludes that *M. conifera* is a synonym of *M. cerifera* and does not apply to the African species.

The present author has compared the two figures and agrees that they represent *M. cerifera* rather than the African species. Of probably greater diagnostic value than the leaf margin mentioned by Rendle, are the short and broad male inflorescences (Fig. 8) and the clustered fruits (Fig. 9)—characters which clearly refer the figures to *M. cerifera*.

According to Rendle, the valid name of the African species is *M. aethiopica*. The specimen of *M. aethiopica* in Herb. Linn, (1169·4) certainly represents the African species. However, *M. aethiopica* is illegitimate, because it is nomenclaturally superfluous: in the original description of *M. aethiopica*, the earlier *M. conifera* is cited as a synonym. See Article 63 of the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (1961).

The oldest name available is *M. serrata* Lam. The type, a Sonnerat specimen (photo., PRE) in the Lamarck Herbarium, Paris, agrees with the species which up to now has been known as *M. conifera*.

The synonymy as given above may be summarized as follows:—

1. ***Myrica cerifera* L.**, Sp. Pl. 1024 (1753).
Myrica conifera Burm. f., Prodr. Cap. 31 (1768).
Myrica aethiopica L., Mant. Alt. 298 (1771), nom. illegit., pro parte quoad syn. excl. spec. in Herb. Linn.
2. ***Myrica serrata* Lam.**, Encycl. 2: 593 (1786).
Myrica conifera auct. non Burm. f.
Myrica aethiopica L., nom. illegit., pro parte, quoad spec. in Herb. Linn. tantum.