ASPHODELACEAE: ALOOIDEAE

REINSTATEMENT OF *ALOE SPECTABILIS*

Aloe spectabilis Reynolds (1937) was described from material that was collected from KwaZulu-Natal, the eastern-most province of South Africa. Previously, material of this species was erroneously considered to represent a form of *A. ferox* Mill. (Berger 1908: 310, 311), a predominantly southern and eastern Cape species (see Van Wyk & Smith 2003: 56 for a distribution map of *A. ferox*). *Aloe spectabilis*, in contrast, has its present-day centre of distribution around Bushman's River Valley near Weenen, along the Mooi River near Muden and

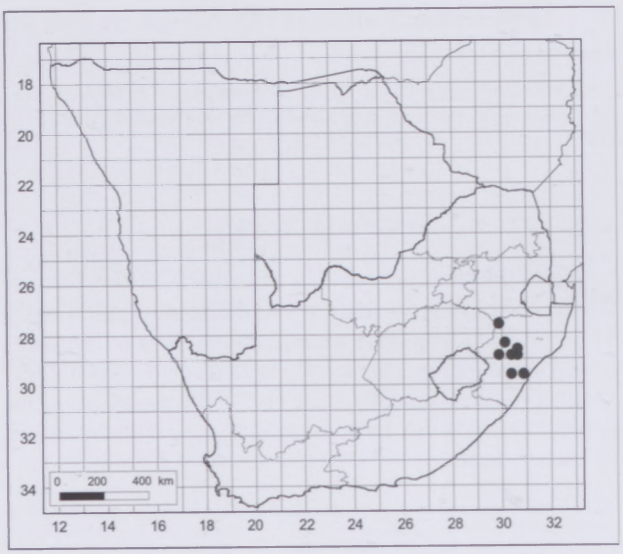

FIGURE 31.—Distribution of *Aloe spectabilis*, based on specimens at PRE.

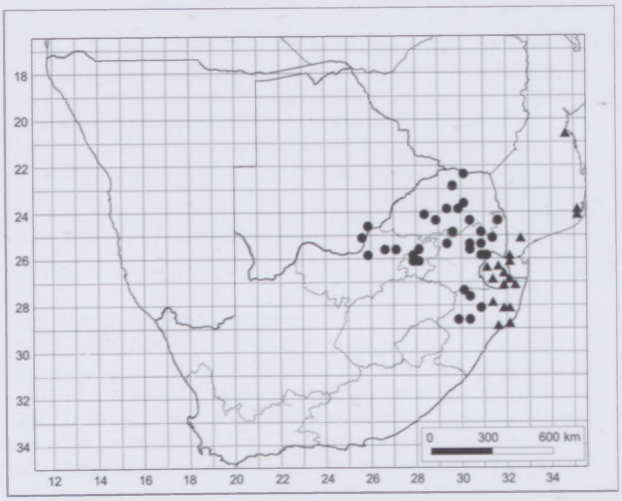

FIGURE 32.—Distribution of *Aloe marlothii* subsp. *marlothii*, ●; and *A. marlothii* subsp. *orientalis*, ▲, adapted from Glen & Hardy (2000).

Keats Drift, and in the Tugela [Thukela] River Valley between Mpofana and Pomeroy on the Greytown–Dundee Road in KwaZulu-Natal (Figure 31).

Further north in Zululand this species seems to grade into *Aloe marlothii* A.Berger, which is its closest relative. However, *A. marlothii* is typically an element of southern Africa's northcentral and northeastern savannas, with subsp. *marlothii* widely distributed in KwaZulu-Natal, western Swaziland, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Gauteng, North-West and the eastern border of Botswana, while *A. marlothii* subsp. *orientalis* Glen & D.S.Hardy has a more easterly distribution in northern KwaZulu-Natal, Swaziland and into Mozambique (Glen & Hardy 2000) (Figure 32).

Overall, plants of *Aloe marlothii* tend to be more robust than *A. spectabilis* in general appearance. *Aloe spectabilis* is a single-stemmed, tree-like aloe up to 5 m high (Figure 33). It is distinguished by its tall, unbranched stem and much-branched inflorescences with very dark brown to almost black peduncles and between 10 and 14, erect to slightly spreading, rather truncate racemes. Furthermore, it differs from *A. marlothii* in having almost erect racemes that are shorter and broader, with flowers more evenly distributed around the axis. The apices of the inner perianth segments are a dull to deep glossy black and the exserted portion of the filaments is orange in *A. spectabilis*, whereas both are a light to deep purple in *A. marlothii* (Reynolds 1937, 1950; Jeppe 1969; Bornman & Hardy 1972) (Table 4).

Given superficial similarities between *Aloe spectabilis* and *A. marlothii*, some previous authors considered the two species to be conspecific (Glen & Hardy 2000; Van Wyk & Smith 2003). Others have more recently suggested that *A. spectabilis* represents a good species (Smith & Van Wyk 2008), and warrants reinstatement. This is done here.

Aloe spectabilis *Reynolds* in Journal of South African Botany 3: 129 (1937). Type: South Africa, [KwaZulu-Natal], 2830 (Dundee): Tugela [Thukela] Valley, between Greytown and Helpmekaar, (–CB), *Reynolds 2033* (PRE!, holo.; BOL, iso.).

A. ferox auct., sensu A.Berger, non Mill.: 310 (1908).

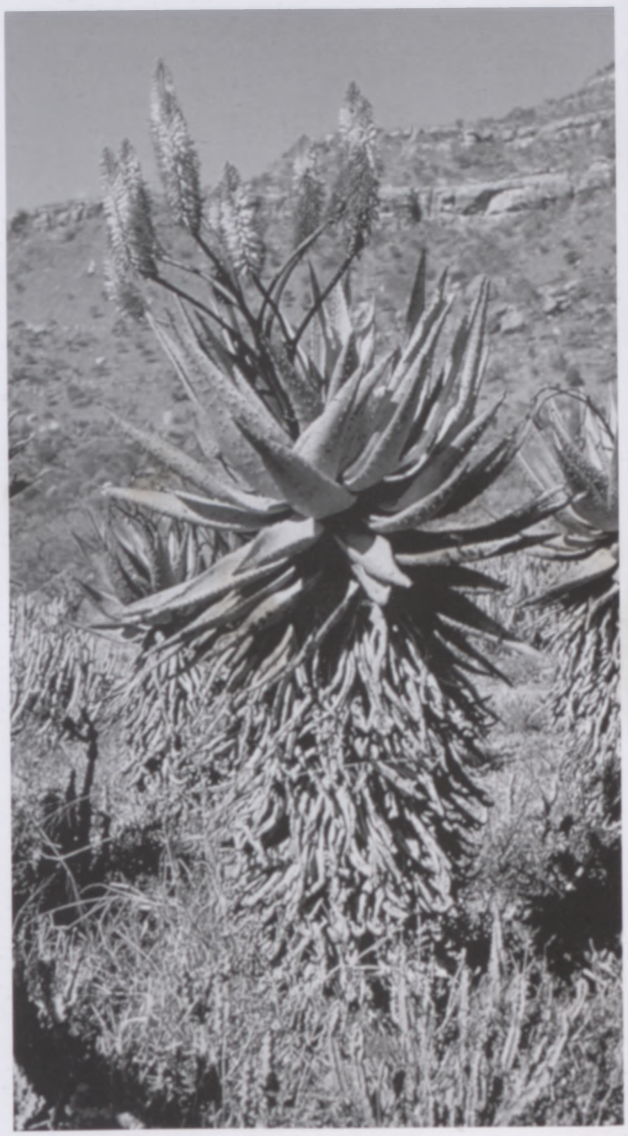

FIGURE 33.—*Aloe spectabilis* in the Tugela [Thukela] River Valley. Photograph: G.F. Smith.

TABLE 4.—Differences between *Aloe spectabilis* and *A. marlothii*

Character	*A. spectabilis*	*A. marlothii*
Raceme		
orientation	suberect	oblique to horizontal
dimensions	± 250 × 90–100 mm	300–500 × 50–60 mm
number	10 to 14	20 to 30
Peduncle colour	dark brown to almost black	green to reddish brown
Flower disposition	evenly distributed around axis	secund
Apex of inner perianth segments	dull to deep glossy black	light to deep purple
Exerted portion of filaments	orange	light to deep purple

A. ferox auct., sensu A.Berger, non Mill. var. *xanthostachys* A.Berger: 310 (1908). Type: South Africa, [KwaZulu-Natal], Ladysmith, *Marloth 4157* (B).

Specimens examined

KWAZULU-NATAL.—2729 (Volksrust): valley at Igogo, ± 32 km from Newcastle, (–DB), 1970-07-22, *Floquet PRE38541* (PRE). 2829 (Harrismith): Weenen Dist., Blaauwkrantz Valley near Weenen, (–DD), 1944-08-11, *Acocks 10526* (PRE). 2830 (Dundee): Meduna, (–AC), 1915-07-16, *Keeling 110* (PRE); Dundee Dist., Biggarsberg, near Waschbank, (–AC), 1935-06-02, *Reynolds 1394* (PRE); Weenen Dist., in Muden Valley, ± 18 miles [± 11.2 km] NW of Greytown, Mooi River Valley, (–CD), 1936-07-28, *Reynolds 2031* (PRE); Kranskop Dist., Inadi River Valley leading into Tugela River Valley, (–DA), 1943-05-12, *Dyer 4383* (PRE); Estcourt Dist., near Keat's Drift in the Mooi River Valley, (–DC), 1936-07-28, *Reynolds 2034* (PRE). 2930 (Pietermaritzburg): Lion's River Dist., Zwartkop Location, (–CB), 1964-09-30, *Moll 1125* (PRE); Ndwedwe Dist., 3 miles [± 1.9 km] W of Ndwedwe, (–DB), 1966-07-13, *Moll 3287A* (PRE).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Ms Hester Steyn, National Herbarium, South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria, for producing the distribution map; and an anonymous referee for suggesting improvements to the manuscript.

REFERENCES

BERGER, A. 1908. Liliaceae–Asphodeloideae–Aloineae. In A. Engler & K. Prantl, *Das Pflanzenreich* IV, 38, III, II (Heft 33): 1–347. Engelmann, Leipzig.

BORNMAN, H. & HARDY, D.S. 1972. *Aloes of the South African veld*. Voortrekkerspers, Johannesburg.

GLEN, H.F. & HARDY, D.S. 2000. Aloaceae (First part): *Aloe*. In G. Germishuizen, *Flora of southern Africa*, vol. 5, part 1, fascicle 1: 1–159. National Botanical Institute, Pretoria.

JEPPE, B. 1969. *South African aloes*. Purnell, Cape Town.

REYNOLDS, G.W. 1937. Notes on *Aloe ferox* Mill. and *A. supralaevis* Haw., with a new name for a Natal aloe. *Journal of South African Botany* 3: 123–132.

REYNOLDS, G.W. 1950. *The aloes of South Africa*. The Aloes Book Fund, Johannesburg.

SMITH, G. F. & VAN WYK, A.E. (Braam). 2008. *Aloes in southern Africa*. Struik, Cape Town.

VAN WYK, B-E. & SMITH, G.[F.] 2003. *Guide to the aloes of South Africa*, edn 2. Briza Publications, Pretoria.

R.R. KLOPPER* and G.F. SMITH**

* Biosystematics Research and Biodiversity Collections Division, South African National Biodiversity Institute, Private Bag X101, 0001 Pretoria. E-mail: r.klopper@sanbi.org.za; g.smith@sanbi.org.za.

** Acocks Chair, H.G.W.J. Schweickerdt Herbarium, Department of Botany, University of Pretoria, 0002 Pretoria.

MS. received: 2009-08-27.