

THE GENUS *RABDOSIA* IN SOUTH AFRICA

In Mitt. Bot. Staatssamml. München 10: 250 (1971) reasons were advanced for keeping the genus *Isodon* (Benth.) Kudo (1929) separate from *Plectranthus* L'Herit. Support for this view comes from various sources, the most recent being Blake in Contr. Queensland Herb. 9: 4 (1971) who, however, points out that there is an earlier name for the genus, namely, *Rabdosia* (Bl.) Hassk. in Flora 25 Beibl. 2: 25 (1842), based on *Elsholtzia* Willd. sect. *Rabdosia* Bl., Bijdr. Fl. Nederl. Indië 825 (1825), the type of which is *E. javanica* Bl. = *Rabdosia javanica* (Bl.) Hassk. = *Plectranthus javanicus* (Bl.) Benth.

Other generic names that have been put forward are *Amethystanthus* Nakai (1934), based mainly on the Asiatic species included by Bentham in *Plectranthus* sect. *Amethystoides* Benth., and *Homalochellos* J. K. Morton (1962), based on a tropical African member of the group, *P. ramosissimus* Hook.f.

The genus *Rabdosia* is, therefore, accepted as including the following sections described by Bentham, Lab. Gen. Sp. 40-45 (1832): *Isodon*, *Amethystoides*, *Melissoides* and *Pyramidium*. Section *Pyramidium* consists of only two closely related species:

P. ternifolius Don, which occurs in India, and *P. calycinus* Benth., found in the eastern Cape Province, Natal, Swaziland and eastern Transvaal. The Indian species has recently been transferred as *Rabdosia ternifolia* (D. Don) Hara in J. Jap. Bot. 47: 201 (1972).

These two species are remarkably similar in appearance, but the leaves of *P. ternifolius* are narrower in relation to their length than those of *P. calycinus*, while the calyx teeth of the former are shorter than those of the latter species. Both differ from typical *Rabdosia* in being stout, erect plants with usually ternate leaves and dense, pyramidal inflorescences of condensed scorpioid cymes. As in *Rabdosia*, the bracts are leaf-like, becoming progressively smaller towards the apex of the inflorescence and the calyx is equally 5-toothed. The South African species is now transferred to *Rabdosia*.

***Rabdosia calycina* (Benth.) Codd, comb. nov.**

Plectranthus calycinus Benth. in E.Mey., Comm. Pl. 230 (1837). Lectotype: Transkei, between Morley and Umtata River, Drege (K).

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