

POACEAE

A LONG-AWAITED NAME CHANGE IN *POLYPOGON*

In 1955 Chippindall noted that *Agrostis griquensis* Stapf should be classified as a species of *Polypogon* Desf. Gibbs Russell (1990) placed this taxon correctly, but the combination was never validly published.

According to Clayton & Renvoize (1986), the genus *Polypogon* is characterized by the spikelet falling entire with the upper part of the pedicel still attached. In contrast, the spikelet in *Agrostis* disarticulates above the glumes.

***Polypogon griquensis* (Stapf) Gibbs Russ. & L.Fish, comb. nov.**

Agrostis griquensis Stapf in Kew Bulletin, Additional ser. 1897: 290 (1897). Type: Northern Cape, 2823 (Griquaastad): near Griquatown, (-CC), December 1811, Burchell 1863 (K, holo.; PRE fragment of holo.).

Other specimens examined

FREE STATE.—2926 (Bloemfontein): Bloemfontein, near Tempe Farm, (-AA), *Geo Potts* 2467, fragment of *Geo Potts* 2470; both October 1917.

NORTHERN CAPE.—2824 (Kimberley): in Barkly West area, Holpan, (-CB or -BC; there are two places with the same name in this area), October 1937, *Acocks* 2466.

Gibbs Russell (1990) also placed *Polypogon minutiflorus* Pilg. into synonymy under *P. griquensis*. Pilger (1941) described *P. minutiflorus* based on the specimen 'Rusch. Jun. in herb. Dinter 7944, Leutwein'. The locality is Namibia and may refer to a locality near Windhoek and date of collecting as October 1934. Although the type seems to have disappeared and has not been traced, Gibbs Russell (pers. comm.) felt that the description matched that of *P. griquensis* and that the two entities were therefore conspecific.

At PRE the only specimen from Namibia was collected in the Naukluft River by Volk (*Volk* 848) in October 1939. It was originally identified as '*Polypogon minutiflorus* ex descr.' but according to Gibbs Russell it is a good match of the type of *Agrostis griquensis* housed at K.

Is Polypogon griquensis extinct or an alien grass?

According to the information gathered from collections at PRE, *Polypogon griquensis* grows under wet conditions,

flowers in October and has not been collected since 1939. The question is: is this an endemic species that is extinct, rare or threatened, or was it an alien that never really became naturalized? Some 18 species of *Polypogon* are found in the warm temperate regions of the world and the tropical mountains. Three species occur in the FSA (*Flora of southern Africa*) region of which two, *P. monspeliensis* (L.) Desf. and *P. viridis* (Gouan) Breistr., are naturalized, whereas *P. strictus* from the Eastern and Western Cape is widely regarded as endemic. The author has not seen any species other than those occurring in southern Africa.

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