

Notes on African plants

VARIOUS AUTHORS

ASPHODELACEAE

ALOE GREATHEADII VAR. *DAVYANA* (ALOOIDEAE), A NEW LOCALITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

The grass aloes (*A.* sect. *Leptoaloe* A.Berger) and maculate aloes (*A.* sect. *Pictae* Salm-Dyck) are notorious for the intergradation of their constituent species, complicating accurate field and herbarium identification. In southern Africa, Glen & Hardy (1987, 2000) have substantially reduced the number of species recognized, while Carter (1994) sank the eastern African *A. graminicola* Reynolds into *A. lateritia* Engl. as var. *graminicola* (Reynolds) S.Carter.

The second author recently came across a small population of a maculate aloe in the Pietermaritzburg District in south-central KwaZulu-Natal which, at first sight, did not fit in comfortably with the description of any of the known species in *Aloe* sect. *Pictae*. Specimens from this population were characterized by the distinctly conical shape of the young and mature inflorescences, the prominence of the floral bracts and the comparative robustness of the plants. However, following careful consideration of the combination of these and other characters, we regard the specimens as belonging to the northern, predominantly grassland and savanna taxon, *A. greatheadii* Schönland var. *davyana* (Schönland) Glen & D.S.Hardy, and therefore, this extends its distribution range in a southeasterly direction by 120 km (Figure 1).

Aloe greatheadii var. *davyana* is exceptionally common throughout its distribution range and is not threatened in any way. However, some populations of this variety, such as the one south of Pietermaritzburg reported here, may become locally extinct as a result of urban expansion.

For a description of the taxon see Glen & D.S.Hardy (1987). For a complete synonymy see Glen & Hardy (2000).

KWAZULU-NATAL.—2930 (Pietermaritzburg): valley bushveld adjacent to Ashburton Township, (–CB), *N.R. Crouch* 821 (NH).

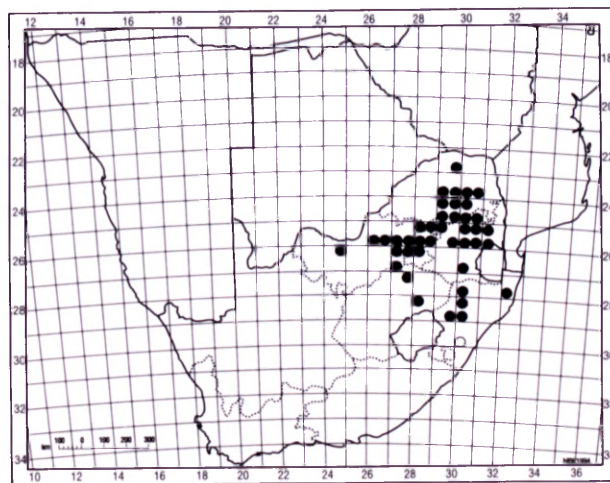


FIGURE 1.—Distribution map of *Aloe greatheadii* var. *davyana*, based on Van Wyk & Smith (1996) and specimens kept in PRE and NH. New locality in KwaZulu-Natal, ○.

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MS. received: 2000-06-30.