

## LAMIACEAE

## PLECTRANTHUS HILLIARDIAE SUBSP. AUSTRALIS, A NEW TAXON FROM EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

**Plectranthus hilliardiae** subsp. **australis** Van Jaarsv. & A.E. van Wyk, subsp. nov., a subspecies typica statura majora, foliis ellipticis, 85–160 × 30–50 mm, nitentibus, paene glabris, pagina adaxiali purpurea, marginibus serrato-dentatis differt.

TYPE.—Eastern Cape, 3129 (Lusikisiki): northern Transkei, Mbotyi Forest, forest floor, (–BC), Van Jaarsveld, Bellstedt, Dekker, F. van Wyk & Adams 16345 (NBG, holo.). Figure 12.

Erect to decumbent, soft, semi-succulent, herbaceous, aromatic perennial up to 650 mm tall; stems 4-angled, up to 4 mm diam, moderately branched, antrorse pilose with tufts of long, multicellular, purple-tinged hairs at nodes. Leaves elliptical, 85–160 × 30–50 mm, dark green, shiny, subglabrous to sparsely strigose on upper surface, dark purple to mottled purplish, reticulate-veined on lower surface, the veins sparsely strigose and dotted with small, transparent, sessile glands, apex acute, base cuneate, margin serrate-dentate, ciliate; petiole 15–35 mm long, appressed glandular-pilose. Inflorescence a simple or loose-branched panicle, up to 250 mm tall; rachis glandular-tomentose; bracts linear-lanceolate, up to 2 mm long, persistent. Flowers in sessile 3-flowered cymes forming 6-flowered verticillasters, 10–30 mm apart; pedicel 4–5 mm long. Calyx 3–4 mm long at flowering stage, enlarging to 10 mm in fruiting stage; upper lip ovate, erect, lower lip 4-toothed, deltoid-subulate. Corolla pale bluish, rarely white; lobes purple-flecked; tube 23–27 × 4 mm, parallel-sided and narrowing up to 3 mm at throat; upper lip erect, up to 6 mm long, bilobed at apex with lateral ear-like lobes; lower lip shallow cymbiform, up to 4 mm long, horizontal or deflexed. Stamens 4, free, lower pair longer, up to 8 mm long. Style horizontally exerted by 8–10 mm. Nutlets dark brown, 1.8 mm diam. Figure 13.

The new taxon was first noticed and recorded from Magwa Falls in 1992 (Van Jaarsveld & Powrie 12226). An evaluation of the southern forms of *P. hilliardiae* from between Port St Johns and Lupatane for their horticultural potential, revealed a consistent variation in leaf

shape, size, dentation and colour of the undersurface of the leaves. During a recent collecting trip (April 2000) the northern limits of the range of the new subspecies were traced to the Noyokaan Gorge, just south of Lupatane Gorge. Plants from the more open Lupatane Gorge represented the typical subspecies *hilliardiae*. Both subspecies of *P. hilliardiae* are confined to the Pondoland Centre of Endemism, a region congruent with surface outcrops of quartzitic sandstone belonging to the Msikaba Formation.

Subsp. *australis* is characterized by somewhat larger, elliptic, shiny leaves, 85–160 × 30–50 mm, with an almost glabrous, purple adaxial surface and serrate-dentate margin. It occurs in deep shade in well-watered gorges, but also in tree-fall openings of climax coastal escarpment forests (Mbotyi Forest). The leaves of subsp. *hilliardiae* are smaller, broadly elliptical to elliptical-obovate, 55–90 × 40–60 mm, sparsely strigose above, the surface not shiny and the margins crenate-dentate. The typical subspecies tends to occur in more open and exposed terrain and slightly drier situations, such as

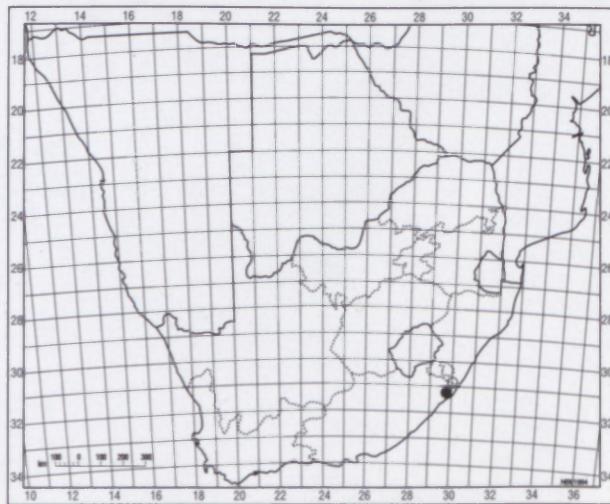


FIGURE 12.—Known distribution of *Plectranthus hilliardiae* subsp. *australis* in Eastern Cape, ●; typical subspecies, ○.



FIGURE 13.—*Plectranthus hilliardiae* subsp. *australis*,  $\times 0.75$ .  
Artist: Vicki Thomas.

along forest margins and the fringes of stream banks (Lupatane, Mkambati and Umtamvuna River Gorges). Subsp. *australis* exhibits a more vigorous growth in cultivation, retaining its ornamental purple leaf colouring and floriferous nature. In 1994, a specimen of subsp. *australis* from Magwa Falls was hybridized with *P. saccatus* var. *longitubus* (from Umtamvuna River Gorge) producing a very attractive cultivar.

#### *Other specimens examined*

EASTERN CAPE.—3129 (Lusikisiki): Fraser Falls, (–BC), *Van Jaarsveld, Bellstedt, Dekker, F. van Wyk & Adams 16381* (NBG); Magwa Falls, (–BC), *Van Jaarsveld & Powrie 12226* (NBG); Myokane Gorge, (–BD), *Van Jaarsveld 16339* (NBG).

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