

FABACEAE

LESSERTIA SNEEUWBERGENSIS, A NEW SPECIES FROM THE MIDDELBURG DISTRICT OF THE CENTRAL CAPE PROVINCE

Lessertia sneeuwbergensis Germishuizen, sp. nov.,
L. cryptanthae Dinter affinis, sed longitudine calycis
 florumque, magnitudine et forme fructus, floribus ex
 axillis foliorum summorum ortis, atque seminis multis in
 quoque fructu differt.

TYPE. — 3124 (Hanover): Middelburg District, Gordonville, Sneeuwberge, (–DA), 1952-10-28, *Acocks 16536* (PRE, holo.).

Small, erect annual herb 30–200 mm high. *Stems* much branched from base, yellow-brown, strigose, with scattered white hairs. *Taproot* slender, simple or branched, up to 200 mm long, up to 3 mm thick at base. *Stipules* paired, obliquely ovate, acute, up to 2.0 mm long, white, strigose along margins. *Leaves* variable; leaflets usually solitary, terminal, rarely up to 4, in short-stalked, opposite to subopposite pairs, linear, 2.0–12.0 (–14.0) × 1.0–1.5 mm, acute or obtuse at apex, obtuse at base, strigose, with white hairs on both surfaces; *petioles* up to 65 mm long, strigose, with scattered white hairs. *Inflorescence* few-flowered, pedunculate axillary raceme, bracteate. *Bracts* broadly ovate, acute, strigose, brown hairs intermixed with white hairs, especially at apex and along margins; bracteoles present, small, up to 0.5 mm long. *Flowers* small, flower colour not known. *Calyx* campanulate, 3–4 mm long, subequal, 5-toothed, densely brown, strigose, with a few white hairs intermixed. *Vexillum* broadly obovate, shallowly bilobed, up to 9 × 6 mm, glabrous. *Wing petals* narrowly elliptic, shorter than keel, up to 8 × 2 mm, with little sculpturing. *Keel petals* oblong obtuse, up to 9 × 4 mm; auricle and pocket absent. *Staminal sheath* up to 8 mm long, persistent in fruit; anthers uniform. *Style* hooked, with conspicuous tuft of white hairs behind stigma, persistent in fruit. *Pods* inflated, broadly oblong ovoid, 14–24 × 9–12 mm, yellow-brown, sometimes mottled with purple, glabrous, conspicuously veined. *Seeds* broadly reniform or 'U'-shaped, yellow-brown, slightly wrinkled, up to ± 17 per pod. Figure 7.

CAPE.—3124 (Hanover): Oppermanskraal, Sneeuwberge, (–BA), 1952-10-28, *Acocks 16516* (PRE); Gordonville, Sneeuwberge, (–DA),

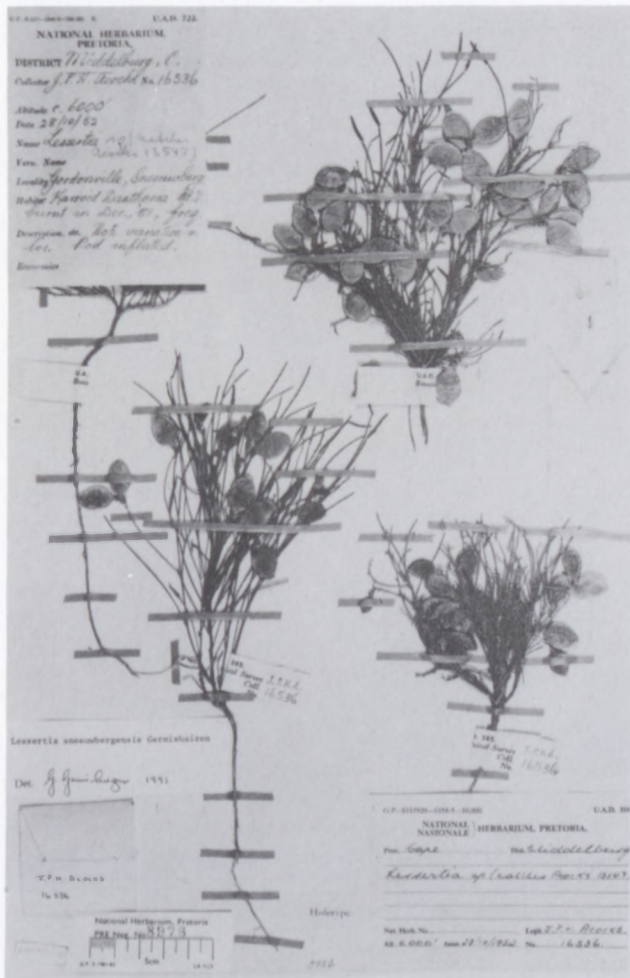


FIGURE 7.—Holotype of *Lessertia sneeuwbergensis*, *Acocks 16536*.

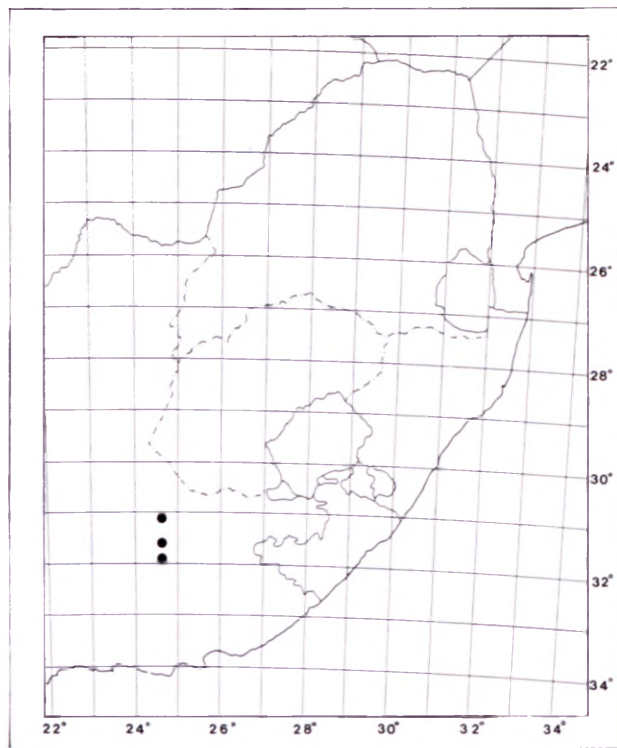


FIGURE 8.—Distribution of *Lessertia sneeuwbergensis*.

1952-10-28, *Acocks 16536* (PRE); Lootsberg Pass, (—DC), 1947-03-28, *Acocks 13547* (PRE).

Lessertia sneeuwbergensis is endemic to the Sneeuwberge and Lootsberg of the Middelburg District of the central Cape Province (Figure 8). Found mainly in Karroid *Merx-muelleri* Mountain Veld of upper southern slopes. Fruiting takes place between October and March.

The specific epithet *sneeuwbergensis* is derived from the locality in which this new *Lessertia* species was collected. Acocks collected the type species on the southern slopes of the Sneeuwberg Mountain Range.

In 1975, when R. Dahlgren was studying material for a revision of the genus *Wiborgia*, he thought the specimen of *Acocks 13547* belonged to the genus *Lebeckia* because of its unusual leaves. However, it belongs to the genus *Lessertia* because of its membranous inflated fruits and the presence of a tuft of hairs around the stigma.

Lessertia sneeuwbergensis and *L. cryptantha* closely resemble one another, but are separated by a number of morphological differences (see Table 1) and by their distribution. *L. cryptantha* occurs in the Klinghardt Mountains in central Namibia and *L. sneeuwbergensis* occurs in the Sneeuwberg Mountain range and Lootsberg in the central Cape Province.

TABLE 1.—Comparison of morphological characters in *Lessertia sneeuwbergensis* and *L. cryptantha*

Morphological character	<i>L. cryptantha</i>	<i>L. sneeuwbergensis</i>
calyx length (mm)	2.5	3.4
flower length (mm)	4.5–5.0	9
fruit length (mm)	9	14–24
fruit width (mm)	8	9–12
fruit shape	almost spheroid	ovoid
seeds per fruit	5	17
flowers borne	near ground	flowers borne in upper leaf axils
	level	

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