

Notes on the Flora of Malaya: New Records, Overlooked Records and some Nomenclatural Clarification

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Abstract

Browallia americana L., *Persicaria nepalensis* (Meisn.) H. Gross, *Sonchus oleraceus* L. and *Verbena bonariensis* L. must be added to the flora of Malaya, being established as weeds in the highlands. *Ranunculus cantoniensis* DC. is recorded for the first time for Malaya. *Mitracarpus hirtus* (L.) DC. is probably also an established member of the weed flora of the lowlands. *Desmodium obcordatum* (Miq.) Kurz is native to the far north of Peninsular Malaysia. *Alsomitra macrocarpa* (Blume) M. Roem. was not included in earlier Malayan floras, but has been collected from the lowland forests of several states in the Peninsula. Two species of *Maclura* occur in Malaya. *Begonia perakensis* var. *rotundata* Irmsch. is reduced to the type variety of the species. *Phrynium pubinerve* Blume is the correct name for the widespread lowland forest maranta referred to previously as *Phrynium malaccense* Ridl. or *Phrynium capitatum* Willd.

Introduction

Whilst working on the compilation of a checklist of the vascular plants of Malaya (Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore) I have come across a number of records of species native or naturalized that have either not been published before, or have been published rather obscurely making it unlikely that any but the extremely persistent would come across the record. The purpose of this paper therefore, is to list these new or overlooked records and also to attempt to clarify a few nomenclatural problems in the flora.

New Weed Records from the Highlands

A high proportion of the new or overlooked records are weedy species that have become naturalized around the hill resorts in the Peninsula. I have not been able to find earlier records of their presence in the Malay Peninsula in the literature for some. Others appear only in Stone's *Summit Flora of Gunung Ulu Kali* (Stone, 1981) which is not easy to obtain.

***Browallia americana* L. [Solanaceae]**

Stone (1981 p. 144) reports this species as being naturalized on the summit zone of Gunung Ulu Kali in the Genting Highlands. I have also seen it growing as a weed of tea in the Cameron Highlands. A description of this blue-flowered herb is given by Backer and Bakhuizen van der Brink (1965 p. 482). This species is originally from South America but is now naturalized in the palaeotropics.

***Persicaria nepalensis* (Meisn.) H. Gross [Polygonaceae]**

This species has probably been accidentally introduced into the Cameron Highlands from the Himalayan region. It was first collected in the Boh Plantations by Md. Nur (*SFN* 32847) on 3 April 1937. J. Sinclair collected it in two localities the Cameron Highlands in August of 1956. The species is described in Backer and Bakhuizen van den Brink (1963 p. 222) and figured in van Steenis (1972 plate 41-8) under the synonym *Polygonum nepalense* Meisn.

***Ranunculus cantoniensis* DC. [Ranunculaceae]**

I was surprised to see a buttercup growing on a grassy roadside verge in Tanah Rata, Cameron Highlands. A visit to Kew allowed me to identify my collection [I.M. Turner 94-31] as *Ranunculus cantoniensis* DC., a species widespread in temperate and subtropical Asia. A single collection from one small patch of plants is not sufficient to confirm naturalization of the species, but it seems likely that this species will eventually be added to the list; the first *Ranunculus* for Malaya.

***Sonchus oleraceus* L. [Compositae]**

This softly-spiny yellow-flowered composite is now quite a common weed of cultivation around the towns of the Cameron Highlands. Native to temperate Eurasia, the earliest Malayan collection (in SING) was that of J. Sinclair (9959) made on 4 November 1958 at the junction of Batu Brinchang Road and Sungei Palas Tea Estate Road. For a detailed description see Backer and Bakhuizen van den Brink (1965 p. 435).

***Verbena bonariensis* L. [Verbenaceae]**

Stone (1981 p. 150) reported this plant from Gunung Ulu Kali. It has been collected a number of times from the Cameron Highlands also (e.g.

H.M. Burkill 2869, J. Sinclair 9931). It appears to persist readily as an escape from cultivation as an ornamental herb. A detailed description is given by Yeo (1990 p. 105).

New Records from the Lowlands

A few species found in the lowlands also appear to have been overlooked:

***Desmodium obcordatum* (Miq.) Kurz [Leguminosae]**

A twining subshrub with characteristic obcordate leaves, placed in the monotypic genus *Hegnera* by Schindler but now generally treated within *Desmodium sensu stricto*. I have seen three collections from Peninsular Malaysia. The earliest (M.R. Henderson, *SFN*23079) was made on 22 Nov 1929 from Gua Nangka in Perlis. Two others come from rubber estates in Kedah. Ohashi (1973) cites the distribution of this species as Indochina, South Sumatra and Java, so its presence in the driest parts of northern Peninsular Malaysia is not unexpected.

***Mitracarpus hirtus* (L.) DC. [Rubiaceae]**

This small herb appears to have become naturalized from tropical America. There are three collections in SING by J. Sinclair of this species from near Kepong in Selangor (*SFN*40076), Telok Paku Road, Singapore (10768) and the Scudai River in Johore (10825). All apparently from open dry sandy sites. Inspection of such sites in other places may reveal this species elsewhere in Malaya. Detailed descriptions are given by Verdcourt (1976 under the synonym *M. villosus* (Sw.) DC., and 1989). It is now a pantropical weed which originated from tropical South America.

***Alsomitra macrocarpa* (Blume) M. Roem. [Cucurbitaceae]**

Reid (1953), in a short article, noted the presence of this cucurbitaceous vine in the lowland forests of Peninsular Malaysia. There are collections in SING from Pahang, Negri Sembilan and Johore. The plant is remarkable for its football-sized fruits which contain winged seeds. The fruits, or at least the empty fruit shells, are featured in Davison (1988 p. 127) being used as playthings by kampung kids in Johore. Winged seeds, probably of this species, are shown gliding down through a rain-forest

canopy in Borneo in a spectacular film sequence in the BBC *The Private Life of Plants* series.

***Maclura* in the Malay Peninsula**

In an annotated key to genera of the Moraceae in Malaya, Kochummen (1978 p. 120) states that *Maclura amboinensis* Blume is only one native species belonging to this genus. Ridley (1923) also included only one species referable to *Maclura*. This was *Cudrania javensis* Tréc., which is a synonym of *Maclura cochinchinensis* (Lour.) Corner. Kochummen cites *Cudrania javensis sensu* Ridley as a synonym of *Maclura amboinensis* but I wondered whether Ridley might have actually correctly identified at least some of the Malayan material. Revisions of the genus (Corner, 1962; Berg, 1986) do not contain any specific reference to *Maclura cochinchinensis* in Malaya, but inspection of material in SING showed that both species are present. *Maclura amboinensis* Blume is a spiny climber of hill and montane forest collected from Perak and Pahang. *Maclura cochinchinensis* (Lour.) Corner is a small tree found in Perlis, Kedah and Penang with a majority of collections from limestone sites.

The varieties of *Begonia perakensis* King

In his monograph of *Begonia* in the Malay Peninsula, Irmscher (1929) described two varieties of *Begonia perakensis* King. However, he made no allusion to any type variety for the species. In describing the species, King referred to three specimens of Kunstler's, numbers 10338, 10506 and 10951. Irmscher included 10338 in the list of specimens of his variety *rotundata* and he rejected Kunstler 10566 from *Begonia perakensis*. I imagine that King's 10506 is the same as Irmscher's 10566 but typographical errors have occurred somewhere. The third syntype given by King is not mentioned by Irmscher. Thus there is a strong case for regarding var. *rotundata* as the type variety of *Begonia perakensis*, a conclusion that would become incontestable if Kunstler 10338 were declared the lectotype of *Begonia perakensis*. As I have not seen this specimen I refrain from lectotypification, but provisionally I reduce var. *rotundata* to the type variety.

Begonia perakensis King, J. Asiat. Soc. Bengal, Pt. 2 Nat Hist. 71 (1902) 64
 var. ***perakensis***
Begonia perakensis var. *rotundata* Irmsch., Mitt. Inst. Allg. Bot.
 Hamburg 8 (1929) 129.
 var. ***conjungens*** Irmsch., Mitt. Inst. Allg. Bot. Hamburg 8 (1929) 129

The correct name for *Phrynium capitatum*

In his monograph of Malayan Marantaceae Holttum (1951) used the name *Phrynium capitatum* Willd. for the common lowland forest maranta. Recently, Suresh and Nicolson (1986) have shown that *Phrynium capitatum* Willd. is an illegitimate name. They go on to provide a new name in *Phrynium* for the oldest combination available for this species *Pontederia ovata* L.; the new name being necessary as *Phrynium ovatum* was already occupied by a species described by Nees and Martelli in 1823. Suresh and Nicolson's new name, *Phrynium rheedei*, would be the correct one for the species if no other valid combinations in *Phrynium* existed for it. However, it appears that the species is widespread and at least two earlier combinations are available. The oldest being *Phrynium pubinerve* Blume as given below:

Phrynium pubinerve Blume, Enum. Pl. Javae (1827) 38; Back. & Bakh.f.,
 Fl. Java 3 (1968) 79; Noltie, Fl. Bhutan 3(1) (1994) 214.

Pontederia ovata L., Sp. Pl. (1753) 288. *Phrynium rheedei* Suresh &
 Nicolson, Taxon 35 (1986) 355.

Phrynium capitatum Willd., Sp. Pl. 1 (1797) 17, nom. illeg. Holttum, Gdns'
 Bull. Sing. 13 (1951) 287.

Phrynium malaccense Ridl., J. Str. Br. R. Asiat. Soc. 32 (1899) 180.

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