

New Combinations in Malesian Myricaceae

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Abstract

In line with recent opinion favouring the splitting of the genus *Myrica* L. *sensu lato*, new combinations in *Morella* Lour. (*Morella esculenta* (Buch.-Ham.) I.M. Turner and *M. javanica* (Blume) I.M. Turner) are provided for the two Malesian species of Myricaceae.

Introduction

The genus *Myrica* L. as traditionally circumscribed consists of some 40–50 extant species of trees and shrubs ranging from the arctic to the tropics. The generally accepted type of the genus, circumboreal *Myrica gale* L., and the Californian endemic *Myrica hartwegii* S. Watson differ significantly from the rest of the species. This is manifested principally in having inflorescences inserted at the ends of the previous year's growth rather than on the old wood, and smooth fruits with a pair of adnate bracteoles rather than papillate fruits lacking adnate bracteoles (MacDonald 1989, Wilbur 1994). Chromosome numbers and essential oil chemistry also distinguish the groups (MacDonald 1989). This division has often been recognised at infrageneric rank (e.g. Kubitzki 1993) but, despite long-standing reluctance by botanists to split *Myrica*, the tide seems to have turned to favour the recognition of at least two genera. Unfortunately as *Myrica* is typified by *Myrica gale* L. the generic name has to remain with the numerically minor element and the many warm temperate and tropical species have to be placed in a different genus. A proposal to conserve *Myrica* with a conserved type (Verdcourt and Polhill 1997) was made in order to reduce the number of necessary name changes. This was rejected (Brummitt 1999, p. 367) largely on the grounds that, as the split was unsettling to the nomenclature of important species whichever element was maintained as *Myrica*, accepted typification and nomenclatural priority should be upheld.

The next oldest generic name available for the tropical segregate is *Morella* Lour., typified by *Morella rubra* Lour., better known as *Myrica rubra* (Lour.) Sieb. & Zucc., a relatively important fruit tree in China and Japan. New combinations in *Morella* have already been published for species from North American (Wilbur 1994) and Africa (Killick, Polhill and

Verdcourt 1998). Even if the proposal to conserve *Myrica* had been accepted it might not have prevented the resurrection of *Morella* because the proposed conserved type was to be *Myrica cerifera* L.. This is one of the waxy-fruited North American species that are possibly generically distinct from the fleshy-fruited African and Asian species.

In Malesia, two species of *Myrica* have long been recognised: *Myrica esculenta* Buch.-Ham. and *Myrica javanica* Blume. See Backer (1951) and Noorsiha (1996) for extensive synonymies, description, illustrations and notes on ecology and uses. Both species are widespread, common and ecologically important, as well as possessing traditional utility. Both are clearly best placed in *Morella* rather than *Myrica sensu stricto* and new combinations effecting this change are made below:

Morella esculenta* (Buch.-Ham.) I.M. Turner, *comb. nov.

Basionym: *Myrica esculenta* Buch.-Ham. in D. Don, Prodr. Fl. Nep. (1825) 56.

Type: Nepal, *Hamilton s.n.* (K).

Distribution: India and Nepal, China, Indo-China, Malesia (excluding New Guinea).

Morella javanica* (Blume) I.M. Turner, *comb. nov.

Basionym: *Myrica javanica* Blume, Bijdr. Fl. Ned. Ind. (1825) 517.

Type: Java, Mt. Gede, *Reinwardt s.n.* (L).

Distribution: Malesia except Malay Peninsula.

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