Megalastrum oppositum and Ctenitis canacae (Dryopteridaceae): A new combination and a new synonym, respectively, for Mascarene fern flora

YI-FAN DUAN1 & LI-BING ZHANG2

1International Cultivar Registration Center for Osmanthus, Nanjing Forestry University, Nanjing, Jiangsu, 210037, P. R. China. E-mail: yifan419@hotmail.com
2Chengdu Institute of Biology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, P.O. Box 416, Chengdu, Sichuan 610041, P. R. China and Missouri Botanical Garden, P.O. Box 299, St. Louis, Missouri 63166-0299, U.S.A.

*Author for correspondence: Libing.Zhang@mobot.org

Abstract

We synonymized Ctenitis canacae with C. opposita (basionym: Aspidium oppositum) and proposed a new combination, Megalastrum oppositum. We also lectotypified Aspidium oppositum.

Introduction

Ctenitis (C. Christensen) C. Christensen (1938: 544), a fern genus first distinguished as a natural group by Christensen (1938), contains about 100–150 species distributed in the New and Old World wet tropics (Christensen 1913, 1920, Mickel & Smith 2004). The best character to distinguish Ctenitis from others is its ctenitis hairs: these hairs consist of a few cells with quite thin walls and the apical cell is not acicular. When living, the hairs are quite terete and colourless, but when dried the lateral cell walls collapse irregularly so that the hairs on herbarium specimens are contorted and the contents of the cells turn to a rusty color (Holttum & Edwards 1986, Mickel & Smith 2004). The genus Megalastrum Holttum (1987: 161) is closely related to Ctenitis, but with a unique character combination that the basal basiscopic lobe of the pinnules gradually becomes adnate and decurrent to the pinna rachis and this adnate lobe is nourished by a vein that arises from the pinna rachis, not from the costule (Moran & Prado 2010). The systematics and nomenclature of Ctenitis are still ambiguous and many species are removed out of Ctenitis and placed in other genera (Holttum 1983, 1986, Holttum & Edwards 1986, Smith & Moran 1987, Sundue et al 2010, Rouhan & Moran 2011, Zhang 2012). In preparation for a revision of Ctenitis in the Old World, we found Ctenitis canacae Holttum (1983: 128) and C. opposita (Kaulfuss ex Sprengel) Copeland (1947: 124) are conspecific and the latter should be transferred to Megalastrum.

Taxonomy

Megalastrum oppositum (Kaulfuss ex Sprengel) Li Bing Zhang & Yi F. Duan, comb. nov.


Homotypic synonyms:—Ctenitis mascarenarum (Urban) Tardieu-Blot (1954: 90), nom. illeg.; C. opposita (Kaulfuss ex Sprengel) Copeland (1947: 124); Dryopteris opposita (Kaulfuss ex Sprengel) kuntze (1891: 813); D. mascarenarum Urban (1903: 14), nom. illeg.; Lastrea opposita (Kaulfuss ex Sprengel) C.Presl (1836: 393); Nephrodium oppositum (Kaulfuss ex Sprengel) Hooker (1862: 136).


Distribution: Mauritius, Réunion.
The generic assignment of this species has been controversial. It was published firstly as a member of *Aspidium* Swartz (1801: 29) by Sprengel (1827), transferred to *Lastrea* Bory (1824: 588) by Presl (1836), moved again to *Dryopteris* Adans (1763: 20) by Kuntze (1891), and finally to *Ctenitis* by Copeland (1947). Urban (1903) mistakenly considered *A. oppositum* to be a later homonym of *A. oppositum* (Vahl) Swartz (1829: 67) and proposed the replacement name *Dryopteris mascarenarum* Urban (1903: 14) which was later transferred to *Ctenitis* by Tardieu-Blot (1954). The replacement name is obviously superfluous.

The type of *Aspidium oppositum* was stated to have come from South Africa (“C.B.S.”) (Sprengel 1827, Copeland 1947). However, Morton (1967: 37) found that this species was based on *Sieber 36* from Mauritius. Morton’s (1967) discovery and statement implicitly designated *Sieber 36* as the type of *A. oppositum*. There are 16 sheets of *Sieber 36* deposited at B, BR, K, P and W. Roux (2009: 135) listed three sheets of *Sieber 36* as ‘holo(types)”. His designation is invalid. We here designated K-000351135 as the lectotype (image available at http://plants.jstor.org/specimen/k000351135?s=t). After examination of *Sieber 36*, we found that all of these sheets represent the same species and this species has basal basiscopic vein on the distal pinnules arising from the costa and hairs present on the adaxial surfaces of the axes with cells apparently twisted relative to each other when dried, which is consistent with *Megalastrum* as defined by Sundue et al (2010) and Rouhan and Moran (2011) but different from *Ctenitis*. Therefore, we transfer this species to *Megalastrum*.

When publishing *Ctenitis canacae* Holttum (1983: 128), he apparently overlooked Morton’s (1967) typification of *Aspidium oppositum*, but he stated that “If Kaulfuss’s type should be found, and if it agrees with the type I have proposed, the name *Ctenitis opposita* is available and would have to be used”. We checked the type of *C. canacae* and found that it agrees with the type of *C. opposita*. Therefore, *C. canacae* is a heterotypic synonym of *C. opposita*.

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