



Reinstatement of *Crotalaria pellita* (Leguminosae, Papilionoideae) and a new combination for its variety

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Abstract

This work is part of a study on the taxonomic revision of the genus *Crotalaria* in India. Based on the types and specimens examined, literature survey and the rules of ICN, we recognize *Crotalaria pellita* as the legitimate name and synonymize *C. ramosissima*. Further, a new combination for the variety *C. ramosissima* var. *ramnadensis* is hereby provided.

Introduction

The genus *Crotalaria* Linnaeus (1753: 714) comprises 702 species that are distributed in tropical and subtropical regions of the world (Lewis *et al.* 2005, Le Roux *et al.* 2013). Approximately 543 species of *Crotalaria* are endemic to Africa and Madagascar (Polhill 1982). The main centers of diversity are eastern and southern tropical Africa and one of the secondary centers of diversity is India (Polhill 1968, Subramaniam *et al.* 2013).

Crotalaria ramosissima was first published as a naked name (*nomen nudum*) by Roxburgh (1814: 54) in Hortus Bengalensis. Later he himself validated the binomial and described *C. ramosissima* Roxburgh (1832: 268) in Flora Indica. Later workers such as Wight & Arnott (1834), Baker (1876), Cooke (1903), Gamble (1918), Sanjappa (1991), Pullaiah & Chennaiah (1997), Almeida (1998), Singh & Karthikeyan (2001), Pullaiah & Ramamurthy (2001) and Ansari (2008) also carried forward the same name as the legitimate one. Type of *C. ramosissima* Roxburgh is an illustration that was numbered 1598 in Icones Roxburghinae (Fig. 1A). The type is also available online at the Kew's Roxburgh Flora Indica webpage. Roxburgh in Flora Indica also mentioned that this plant is native to interior parts of Bengal (India) and blossoms most part of the year.

Ansari (2008) published a new variety "*C. ramosissima* var. *ramnadensis*" which he distinguished from the variety *ramosissima* based on bracts and bracteoles and the calyx margin. In variety *ramosissima* the bracts and bracteoles are ovate or lanceolate and recurved whereas in variety *ramnadensis*, the bracts and bracteoles are linear and not recurved. Further, calyx in *ramosissima* has reflexed margins whereas in *ramnadensis* calyx margins are not reflexed.

Thomas *et al.* (2012) published another variety under *ramosissima* from Kanuvay hills, Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu, India naming it after the place of collection, *C. ramosissima* var. *kanuvayensis* Binu, Prabhu *et* Rajendran (2012: 1–3). The new variety is allied to *C. ramosissima* in having recurved bract and bracteole and reflexed calyx margins, but mainly differs from it in having the decumbent nature of plant, small linear leaves with acute apex and presence of aroma and oils throughout the plant (information directly taken from the protologue). In *C. ramosissima* leaves show a size of 1–3.5 x 0.3–0.8 cm with an apiculate apex, while in the new variety the leaf size is 0.6–0.8 x 1.5–2 mm with an obtuse apex. Ironically, the key published in their paper does not mention the new variety.

We have made an extensive survey in different parts of India viz., Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal and collected *C. ramosissima* from the open scrub and dry areas of Anantpur (Andhra Pradesh) and (Pazhani hills) Tamil Nadu (Fig. 1B–D). All the vouchers have been deposited in the Delhi University Herbarium (DUH). *C. ramosissima* is endemic to Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh (Ansari 2008).

Distribution in India:—Tamil Nadu, Endemic.

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