



## Consideration of a recommendation to co-publish optional combinations in alternative classifications of the Ornithogaleae (Scilloideae, Asparagaceae)

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A number of new taxa were recently described from the tribe Ornithogaleae of the subfamily Scilloideae in the Asparagaceae, with names following the generic classification by Martínez-Azorín *et al.* (2011). Manning & Goldblatt (2013) subsequently provided new combinations to enable a transfer of these taxa to an alternative generic classification system proposed by Manning *et al.* (2009). In view of the prevailing nomenclatural flux within the Ornithogaleae epitomised by the aforementioned publications, Manning & Goldblatt (2013) recommended that “all future descriptions of species and any new combinations in the [Ornithogaleae] include an optional combination in the alternative classification (i.e. Manning *et al.* 2009 or Martínez-Azorín *et al.* 2011) to obviate the necessity for separate publications on the combinations, and to facilitate their direct integration into existing collections and databases”.

To herbarium curators this suggestion may sound promising, as it could relieve their dilemma of filing specimens that lack names with valid combinations corresponding with their chosen classification. However, the Melbourne Code (McNeill *et al.* 2012) frames significant limitations to this proposal, with Art. 36(2) stating that “When, on or after 1 January 1953, two or more different names based on the same type are proposed simultaneously for the same taxon by the same author (so-called alternative names), none of them is validly published. This rule does not apply in those cases where the same combination is simultaneously used at different ranks, either for infraspecific taxa within a species or for subdivisions of a genus within a genus (see Rec. 22A.1–2 and 26A.1–3), nor to names provided for in Art. 59.1”.

In that most recent new combinations within the Ornithogaleae are at the corresponding rank it is clear that the same authors cannot simultaneously co-publish the optional combinations envisaged, lest all names be invalidated. However, one member of the research team who favours a particular classification could publish the needed names under that classification, and another member the names needed under a different classification. Assuming that all other criteria for valid publication are met, and if the separate authorship is clear, the names would be validly published regardless of whether they share the same specific epithet.

These legitimate names would be of equal priority, and accordingly, should a later author decide to transfer this taxon to a third genus, they are enabled (see Art. 11.5, Note 3; McNeill *et al.* 2012) to choose either competing name, or its final epithet in the required combination, and simultaneously reject or relegate to synonymy the other homotypic synonyms thereof. To facilitate this choice it would be optimal if in the original description and provision of alternative names, one name was clearly designated as the basionym of the other.

### References

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