



## A new international journal for rapid publication of botanical taxonomy

MAARTEN J.M. CHRISTENHUSZ<sup>1</sup>, MARK W. CHASE<sup>2</sup>, MICHAEL F. FAY<sup>2</sup>, THORSTEN LUMBSCH<sup>4</sup>,  
ALEX MONRO<sup>1</sup>, MARIA VORONTSOVA<sup>1</sup> & ZHI-QIANG ZHANG<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Botany, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, United Kingdom;  
email: m.christenhusz@nhm.ac.uk

<sup>2</sup>Jodrell Laboratory, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3DS, United Kingdom

<sup>3</sup>Landcare Research, 231 Morrin Road, St. Johns, Auckland 1072, New Zealand

<sup>4</sup>Department of Botany, The Field Museum, 1400 S. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60606, U.S.A.

We are pleased to present you with the first issue of *Phytotaxa*, a new international journal for botanical taxonomy. Descriptive taxonomy—the discovery and description of taxa—is fundamental to biology and documentation of biological diversity (Wheeler 2007). With the current need to document and monitor biological diversity enshrined in international conventions (e.g. *Convention on Biological Diversity*, *Convention on Migratory Species*, *2010 Millennium Development Goals*) it is unfortunate that descriptive taxonomy finds itself marginalised within the scientific community and even in traditional centres of excellence such as natural history museums and universities (Zhang 2006). There is widespread perception among non-taxonomists that description of our flora and fauna was already completed years ago. This contributes to the bias against publications of new taxa.

Associated with this decline has been a reduction in access to media for taxonomic publication. In recent years, journal publishers/editors have prioritised non-descriptive analytical content. In addition, turnaround for publications can sometimes be in the order of years and there has been an increasing trend to levy page charges.

In an attempt to mitigate some of these trends, the journal *Zootaxa* was founded in 2001 (Zhang 2006). The aim of this journal was to provide a rapid outlet for descriptive taxonomic papers and monographs that were made available in the electronic form to increase availability and accessibility and concurrently in the printed form to conform to the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, and was free to publish in, whilst maintaining a rapid turnaround time for manuscripts. Since its launch *Zootaxa* received tremendous support from the global taxonomic community, publishing 20 articles in its first year, which has risen to more than 2,600 articles by 2008. It currently has an impact factor of 0.74 (Zhang 2008). A major benefit of this journal is its improved access not only to research communities in developing countries but also to those in developed world institutions that are struggling to cope with the current rapid rise in cost of journal subscriptions. The success of *Zootaxa* cannot be denied, and it is extremely beneficial for the field of descriptive taxonomy (Zhang 2008).

With the same aims as *Zootaxa* but serving the botanical community, *Phytotaxa* will provide a high quality and rapid medium for the publication of taxonomic papers. *Phytotaxa* will publish descriptions of new species and longer articles that are currently difficult to publish elsewhere and often face substantial delays in traditional journals: monographs, checklists and floras. Moreover, publication of a new species, floras or monographs can be very rapid after acceptance of the manuscript.

Delays in publication will be reduced because the printed journal has unlimited pages. As soon as a volume is full, it will be published simultaneously online and in print. There will therefore be little backlog. This also eliminates the situation in which an editor rejects good manuscripts simply to control the size of the

journal. Moreover editors, reviewers and authors commit to a rapid turnover of manuscripts, reducing the time a manuscript is in review.

In addition *Phytotaxa* will consider updates to keys, floras and checklists. *Phytotaxa* will seek to counter the low impact factor of taxonomic botanical papers by citing the publications in which cited species are described, currently done using only the author abbreviation, in the reference section. The aim of this is to overcome the unintended consequence of citing species names with the authors only in the abbreviated form provided by Brummitt & Powell (1997) and not citing the publication in which a species is described. The result of this is that articles and journals in which species are described are not considered to have been cited and so do not contribute to the calculation of the impact factor, thereby penalising researchers and journals that undertake descriptive taxonomic work.

An example of this would be the citing of *Canna indica* Linnaeus (1753: 3). The tradition is to cite this name as *Canna indica* L., using only the author abbreviation, but in *Phytotaxa* the full name and original publication will be included in the reference section, as done here. With this we follow other taxonomic journals (e.g. *Kew Bulletin*, *Blumea*) and hope that other biological journals will follow this example in the future. In exceptional cases such as checklists, we may opt for the traditional means of citing to reduce the number of references, but this will not generally be the case.

*Phytotaxa* will provide authors with the option to publish articles and monographs without page charges; the full contents of these papers and monographs will be secured for subscribers. Authors have the option to make papers Open Access for a modest page charge of currently 20 US\$ per page. The editors will strongly encourage authors to use this option as articles published in Open Access enjoy full accessibility online, which has been shown to increase article downloads and citations (Davis et al. 2008, Lawrence 2001, Harnad et al. 2008). We will therefore seek funds to make as many articles as possible open access from authors from developing countries.

A large board of editors is essential for *Phytotaxa* to meet its aims, and a number of editors from various countries, working on various plant groups have already volunteered to make this journal a success. We hope you enjoy this first issue!

## References

- Brummitt, R.K. & Powell, C.E. (1996, and onwards) *Authors of plant names, a list of authors of scientific names of plants, with recommended standard forms of their names, including abbreviations*. Royal Botanic Gardens Kew. <http://www.ipni.org/ipni/authorsearchpage.do>
- Davis, P.M., Lewenstein, B.V., Simon, D.H., Booth, J.G. & Connolly, M.J.L. (2008) Open Access publishing, article downloads, and citations: randomised controlled trial. *British Medical Journal* 2008, 337: a568.
- Harnad, S., Brody, T., Vallières, F., Carr, L., Hitchcock, S., Gingras, Y., Oppenheim, C., Hajjem, C. & Hilf, E.R. (2008) The access/impact problem and the green and gold roads to Open Access: an update. *Serials Review* 34: 36–40.
- Lawrence, S. (2001) Free online availability substantially increases a paper's impact. *Nature* 411: 521.
- Linnaeus, C. (1753) *Species Plantarum* 1(1). Laurentii Salvii, Stockholm.
- Wheeler, Q.D. (2007) Invertebrate systematics or spineless taxonomy? *Zootaxa* 1668: 11–18.
- Zhang, Z.-Q. (2006) The making of a mega-journal in taxonomy. *Zootaxa* 1358: 67–68.
- Zhang, Z.-Q. (2008) Contributing to the progress of descriptive taxonomy. *Zootaxa* 1968: 65–68.