Report of the General Committee: 16

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Summary Decisions are reported on (1) two complicated proposals to conserve names (one rejected, one accepted); (2) two requests about potentially confusable names (both cases considered not confusable); and (3) two requests about whether descriptive material is adequate for valid publication (both considered adequate). The committee also discussed and voted on the list of institutional votes for the next Nomenclature Section in Shenzhen in 2017 and gave its collective opinion on proposed changes to the Code that are relevant to this committee.

The previous report of the General Committee for Botanical Nomenclature was published in Taxon 65: 1150–1151. 2016.

General Committee membership was 25 at the time that all of the following proposals and requests were considered so the super-majority (60%) required to approve or reject was 15 votes. The voting figures are shown against any proposal where the decision was not unanimous. Committee votes are shown in the order: For the proposal – Against the proposal – Abstain – More discussion/refer back to the relevant Committee.


Proposal (1927) to conserve the name Agaricus rachodes with that spelling engendered much discussion in the NCFungi and General Committee (GC). The GC eventually voted to reject the conservation proposal (6–15–4–0). A second ballot then considered whether the spelling of the epithet should be the orthographically correct “rachodes” or the original ‘rachodes’. The GC voted for the spelling “rachodes” (18–4–3–0) and for Agaricus rachodes to be proposed as a voted proposal (1682) to conserve Paeonia broteri against P. lusitanica also engendered considerable discussion, not about the conservation of the name but about the correct spelling of the epithet. The GC voted to accept the proposal (22–0–3–0), and to keep the original spelling of the epithet (broteri) (15–8–2–0), as recommended by the NCVP.

3. Requests for binding decisions under Art. 53.5 on confusable names from NCVP Report 60 (in Taxon 58: 280–292. 2009)

The NCVP and GC have discussed extensively and frequently what defines confusable names but have agreed that no hard and fast rules can be set and that each case needs to be considered separately but aiming for consistency in approach as far as possible.

In the case of Solanum cheesmaniae and S. cheesesmanii, the GC voted (2–21–2–0) that the names are not confusable, as recommended by the NCVP.

For Astragalus matthewsii and A. matthewsiae, the GC voted (6–17–2–0) that the names are not confusable, contrary to the recommendation of the NCVP.


The GC voted (19–4–2–0) that the description of Moronoea esculenta is adequate to validate the name, contrary to the NCVP’s recommendation. It was felt that if this description was considered inadequate then there was the potential for many other old names to be rejected. The GC is now voting on the original conservation proposal (1564) that involves this name.

Similarly, the GC voted that the description of Agave noah is adequate, contrary to the NCVP’s recommendation, and is now voting on the original proposal (1601) to reject this name.


Proposal (1956) to reject Muco was accepted (20–3–2–0), as recommended by the NCVP. There had been a suggestion that “muco” might be a morphological term in Latin. Our discussion concluded that there is no such botanical term.


The NCVP failed to reach a majority recommendation on Proposal (2013) to conserve Myrcia against Calyptranthes. The GC initially rejected the proposal (9–15–1–0). However, a convincing case for conservation was put to the GC by a group of 23 workers on New World Myrtaceae and a second vote (18–4–3–0) reversed the initial decision, i.e., Myrcia is conserved against Calyptranthes.

7. Institutional votes for the Nomenclature Section of the XIX International Botanical Congress in Shenzhen

The list was approved by our committee (23–0–2–0). Comments on votes allocated to many users of this name. Assuming the Section approves this report that spellings engendered much discussion in the NCFungi and General Committee membership was 25 at the time that all of the following proposals and requests were considered so the super-majority (60%) required to approve or reject was 15 votes. The voting figures are shown against any proposal where the decision was not unanimous. Committee votes are shown in the order: For the proposal – Against the proposal – Abstain – More discussion/refer back to the relevant Committee.
Rapporteur-général, as chair of the Special Committee on Institutional Votes, for their consideration.

8. Proposed changes to the Code

The Rapporteurs invited the GC to give its collective opinion on proposals to amend the Code that are relevant to this committee, for mention in the forthcoming Synopsis of Proposals. Matters discussed include (1) defining which journal(s) conservation proposals and requests should be published in (Proposals to Amend the Code 207–213 and Proposal 286 paragraph 1.4); (2) setting up trial procedures for possible future registration of algal and plant names (including fossils) (Prop. 276–279); (3) the rewriting of Division III (Prop. 286) on the governance of the Code; and (4) changing the procedure for proposals to change the Code that affect names applying only to fungi (Prop. 362, 363).

On (1), the committee agreed with the principle of including a statement in the Code (votes 24–0–1–0) but that the statement should simply authorize the GC to nominate the appropriate journal(s), i.e., that no journal should be directly specified in the Code (votes 21–3–1–0). This would formalise what has been standard practice since at least 1994 (as outlined in Taxon 61: 248. 2012). This wording would avoid having to change the Code if the journal(s) of choice changed.

On (2), the committee was not unanimous about the principle of registration (votes 18–5–2–0) but agreed (votes 20–3–2–0) that the set of proposals (276–279) would be suitable for investigating possible mechanisms for future registration, if these proposals were accepted in Shenzhen in July 2017.

On (3), the committee agreed in principle that rewriting Division III was useful (votes 24–0–1–0) but felt that some sections were too detailed and too specific (e.g., new paragraphs 7.11 and 7.12). Keeping details such as number of committee members and number of voting rounds in committee guidelines (published in Taxon from time to time) as at present, not in Div. III, would maintain more flexibility. The GC will propose revised wording for some paragraphs.

On (4) – dealing with proposals to amend the Code that exclusively affect names applying to fungi – the Committee was divided. A narrow simple majority voted against supporting these proposals (votes 8–14–3–0), particularly (362), which is the one that involves the GC. Concern was expressed by some members about the complexity of what is proposed and the possible unforeseen consequences of that complexity.

The many points raised will, no doubt, be discussed extensively by the Nomenclature Section in Shenzhen in July.