Some Proposed Amendments to the Botanical Code

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Reviewed work(s):


Published by: International Association for Plant Taxonomy (IAPT)

Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1220311

Accessed: 16/08/2012 02:24

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SOME PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE BOTANICAL CODE

The 1978 Leningrad ICBN is so finely composed and indexed, and so much better laid out than its predecessors, that one hesitates to suggest that there could still be room for improvement. Bouquets to the editors have not, I admit, been freely handed out in the past, but one user at least thinks that they are well earned.

One small criticism is that the examples could sometimes be reduced in number or changed so that two or three do not all illustrate the same point. This is a small editorial task that could perhaps be looked into for the next edition. The following points are all minor and listed under the Articles to which they apply.

Proposal (43). In Article 4 add a recommendation:

"The non-Latin words 'group,' 'sort' and 'kind' (and their equivalents in other languages) are best reserved for general use and not assigned special rank in the hierarchy.""

This would discourage the popular misuse of other category names, such as "family" for a group of plants that are not, in fact, a botanical family, by supplying other alternative neutral words.

Proposal (44). Article 9.3, "... impossible to preserve a specimen ..." leaves various questions unanswered. I know that this is a controversial issue and cannot please everyone, but propose the following rewording as a step nearer what is wanted:

"If it is impossible to preserve a specimen in such a way that the diagnostic features remain recognisable ..." If it is the intent of this Article that it applies only to non-flowering plants, then it should be stated.

Proposal (45). On the naming of families in Article 18.1, I propose an amendment to read:

"The name of a family is a plural adjective used as a substantive and treated as a plural noun ..." This would avoid the common dilemma of whether to write "The Rosaceae is ..." or "The Rosaceae are ...""

Proposal (46). Under Article 23.6 (a) alter the wording to:

"Words or symbols not intended as names."

Add as a further example:


Under (c) Examples, line 7, alter "'are' to 'is.'"

Proposal (47) on Article 33.2. The interpretation of the wording of this Article is crucial to the validity of hundreds of new binomials introduced each year and has already given rise to much discussion (see R. K. Brummitt in Regn. Veg. 60: 42-49. 1969, and Taxon 23: 381-386. 1974). Clearly it will never be possible to find a wording that covers every eventuality. The most that we can do is to try to legislate for the majority of cases, bearing in mind that the object is not to throw out as many well-intentioned names as possible but only those basionym citations that are obviously muddled, defective or untraceable.

The Kew Record and Index Kewensis at present take a very narrow interpretation of Art. 33.2, and even reject a basionym citation where more than one page number is cited. This is surely not the intention of the Code: one could argue with equal justification that a single page number is not a "full and direct reference" where the Latin diagnosis is on one page, the type cited on another, and the binomial itself on a third! A small change in wording will resolve any
Proposed ambigu as alteration Proposal ambiguus located family-group name England. the (or mendations. (excepting reference.

Proposal (48). A further refinement in Article 33.2:

In lines 4-5, alter “indicated” to “cited.”

This is required to make sure that the actual name of the basionym is stated, not just a reference. “Indicated” is too vague a term.

Proposal (49). Alter the last sentence of Article 33.2 to read:

“Bibliographic errors of citation, and citation of a later synonym in place of the earliest basionym, do not invalidate the publication of a new combination.”

Then add to the examples:

“Sulcorebutia ambigua (Hildm. ex K. Schum.) F. Brandt was founded upon Weingartia ambiguus (Hildm. ex K. Schum.) Backeb., whereas the basionym of both names is Echinocactus ambiguus Hildm. ex K. Schum.”

Proposal (50). Recommendation 73C.

Article 73.10 makes it compulsory to change wrong endings of specific epithets, yet guidance for the formation of these endings has only the status of recommendations (as Rec. 73C). The logic is a bit twisted here: either Rec. 73C needs the full force of an Article, or Art. 73.10 should become a Recommendation. I would favour the former, and propose that Rec. 73C.1 and 73C.2 (excepting the last sentence) be promoted to the status of Article, with appropriate editing: alteration of “may be latinised” to “are latinised,” etc.

Recommendation 73C.2 last sentence, and 73C.3 and 73C.4, can be retained as Recommendations.


PROPOSALS TO AMEND THE CODE

Superfluous and Allegedly Superfluous Names

Arts. 7.9, 7.11, and 63 constitute an equivocal and illogical group of rules. Objection has been raised repeatedly to the punitive nature of Art. 63 whereby a name that was initially superfluous is stigmatized with illegitimacy even after circumstances have changed to the point where the name could be useful. Apart from this objection, we are faced with an anomalous situation, provided for by Art. 7.11, in which a name may have a type different from the type of the name that allegedly causes the later name to be superfluous. It is incomprehensible to me how a name (or epithet) can be superfluous when its author initially designated a type or, as in the case of a family-group name, it has an automatic type upon which no legitimate name had previously been based. Art. 7.9 is defective. If the replaced name is legitimate, the replacement is superfluous and Art. 7.11 applies. Surely Art. 7.9 was intended to apply to legitimate substitute names, as shown by the example. Even if the article is amended to read ‘older illegitimate name’ a conflict in typification exists. An example follows.

Iridophycus Setchell et Gardner (Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 22: 469. 1936) was proposed as a substitute for Iridaea Bory (Dict. Class. Hist. Nat. 9: 15. 1826, also as Iridea), a later homonym that subsequently has been conserved. No taxonomic synonyms were available. Intending to clarify the taxonomic status of the genus, Setchell & Gardner explicitly by-passed the lectotype of Iridaea (Fucus cordatus Turner) because the type specimen could not be located at that time, designating as type Iridaea capensis J. Agardh, for which type material was