

(140) Proposal to amend Art. 23 by adding examples of correct usage of Latin compounds

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I propose that Art. 23.5 and Ex. 5, 6 and 8 be extended to comply with the correct usage of Latin compounds.

(140) Extend Art. 23.5 and Ex. 5, 6 and 8 as follows (new text in bold):

“23.5. The specific epithet, when adjectival in form and not **demonstrably** used as a noun, agrees grammatically with the generic name. **When the specific epithet** is a noun in apposition or a genitive noun, it retains its own gender and termination irrespective of the gender of the generic name. Epithets not conforming to this rule are to be corrected (see Art. 32.7). In particular, the usage of the word elements **-cola, -fuga, and -gena** as an adjective is a correctable error, **and the word elements -fer, -fera, -ferum, -ger, -gera, -gerum** are adjectival.

Ex. 5. Adjectival epithets: *Helleborus niger* L., *Brassica nigra* (L.) W. D. J. Koch, *Verbascum nigrum* L.; *Rumex cantabricus* Rech. f., *Daboecia cantabrica* (Huds.) K. Koch (≡ *Vaccinium cantabricum*

Huds.); *Vinca major* L., *Tropaeolum majus* L.; *Bromus mollis* L., *Geranium molle* L.; ***Erigeron florifer* Hook.; *Townsendia florifera* (Hook.) A. Gray; *Peridermium balsameum* Peck**, derived from the epithet of *Abies balsamea* (L.) Mill., treated as an adjective.

Ex. 6. Names with a noun for an epithet: *Convolvulus cantabrica* L., *Gentiana pneumonanthe* L., *Lythrum salicaria* L., *Schinus molle* L., all with epithets featuring pre-Linnaean generic names. *Gloeosporium balsameae* Davis, derived from the epithet of *Abies balsamea* (L.) Mill., treated as a **genitive singular** noun. ***Macaranga calcicola* Airy Shaw; *M. calcifuga* (Whitmore) R. I. Milne; *Gentiana nubigena* Edgew.**

Ex. 8. *Rubus “amnicolus”* is a correctable error for *R. amnicola* Blanch. (1906); *Mesembryanthemum “nubigenum”* is a correctable error for *M. nubigena* Schltr. (1898); *Townsendia “florifer”* is a correctable error for *T. florifera* (Hook.) A. Gray (1880) because **“florifer” was not demonstrably used as a noun in its basionym *Erigeron florifer* Hook. (1834).**”

(141) Proposal to clarify Article 23 for the case of Greek epithets ending in *-ma*

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Many botanical epithets are of Greek, not Latin, origin, and adapting Greek to the very different requirements of the Latin language can cause difficulties. Epithets ending in *-ma* and derived solely from Greek are fairly common, but it is not obvious how best to treat them for purposes of nomenclature. In Greek, such epithets are nouns. Good scholarship would insist that they remain nouns in Latin. On the other hand, convenience would argue that we may cause fewer problems for ourselves if we pretend that they are the feminine form of Latin adjectives. Earlier botanists generally applied good scholarship, but more recently some botanists have preferred convenience: as just one example among many, the name *Verrucaria actinostoma* Ach. when combined into *Diploschistes* has nearly always been written *Diploschistes “actinostomus”*, even though *actinostoma* is a (compound) noun in Greek and would have been regarded as a noun in classical Latin.

Some epithets ending in *-ma* are indeed Latin adjectives, most often the superlative form of adjectives, and they include some very common epithets such as *albissima*, *gracillima*, *maritima*, *minima*, *minutissima*, *nigerrima*, *tenuissima*. It is perhaps not surprising that the, generally less common and less familiar, epithets in *-ma* from Greek have caused confusion now that knowledge of the classical languages is in decline.

The *Vienna Code* (McNeill & al. in *Regnum Veg.* 146. 2006) is not very helpful here. Article 23.5 begins “The specific epithet, when adjectival in form and not used as a noun ...”, but this does not clearly

address the case of a Greek epithet that is not adjectival in form in Greek, that would not have been treated as an adjective had it ever been taken into classical Latin, but that could be said to be adjectival “in form” in Latin. Such epithets are also, of course, substantive in form in Latin: classical Latin did have nouns in *-ma* (many of them borrowed from Greek), e.g., *acroama*, *epigramma*, *hypomnema*, *lacrima*, *peripetasma*, *poema*—all words used by Cicero himself. Most authors do not state whether they are using an epithet as a noun or an adjective, so we generally have only the ordinary rules of language to help us decide.

A complicating factor is that an epithet derived from a Greek noun could be first published in a form that is most naturally interpreted as a Latin adjective. If the species mentioned above had first been published as *Diploschistes “actinostomus”* the epithet would be regarded by most people, including myself, as an adjective, not a correctable error for the noun *actinostoma*. If combined into a genus of feminine gender it would become “*actinostoma*”. It is thus possible for the same epithet to be treated as a noun when applied to one taxon but as an adjective when applied to a different taxon. Although this is workable, it is a little disconcerting.

If it really is the intention of the *Code* that, in some circumstances, a noun should be treated as though it were an adjective, in defiance of the normal rules of language, then the point really ought to be made explicitly. If, on the other hand, nouns are always to be

treated as nouns, then it would seem essential to provide guidance to the many botanists who have treated such cases differently.

There are good arguments on both sides. Treating nouns as nouns seems like a good idea if we wish to maintain the notion that botanical nomenclature bears any relation at all to a real language—and abandoning that notion feels to me like the start of a slippery slope that could end in chaos. Also, legitimizing dubious or incorrect usage retrospectively may be convenient in the short term, but too much of it will bring the *Code* into disrepute. Another point is that nouns are more convenient than adjectives as epithets, as their form never needs to be changed when combined into a different genus, so it seems a good idea to use them whenever possible. On the other hand, consideration must be given to stability of nomenclature. If usage of *-ma* nouns as adjectives has become widespread, then adopting any other usage could be quite disruptive. A further point is that knowledge of Greek is less widespread than knowledge of Latin. Some botanists may not easily recognize whether an epithet is or is not Greek, and treating everything ending in *-ma* as an adjective would save them some effort. My own preference is simply to treat nouns as nouns, so I make the following proposal.

(141) After Art. 23 Ex. 6 insert the following new Example, and renumber the present Ex. 7–19:

“Ex. 7. Epithets derived solely from Greek and ending in *-ma*

are nouns, e.g., *Verrucaria actinostoma* Ach., *Diploschistes actinostoma* (Ach.) Zahlbr., *Lecidea cladonema* Wedd., *Clypeococcum cladonema* (Wedd.) D. Hawksw., *Lichen leucostigma* Ach., *Coniocarpon leucostigma* (Ach.) Duby, *Variolaria leucostigma* (Ach.) Ach., *Patellaria polychroma* Müll. Arg., *Byssoloma polychroma* (Müll. Arg.) Zahlbr.”

If it were desired to legitimize alternative usage in a simple way, it could be done by inserting the following sentence after the first sentence of Art. 23.5: “If an epithet is derived solely from Greek and ends in *-ma* it is to be regarded as an adjective, regardless of classical usage.” (and, in the sentence beginning “Epithets”, replace the phrase “this rule” with “these rules”). However, I do not recommend this route, but rather offer it for consideration by other botanists.

There is a third possibility. We could adopt the rule that the usage of the first author to employ an epithet in a way that is unambiguously as a noun or unambiguously as an adjective is to be followed for the taxon concerned. In practice, this would mean following the usage of the first author who employed the epithet in a genus that was not of feminine gender. This possibility has little to commend it. It sanctions linguistically correct usage in some cases and incorrect usage in others, without offering the compensating benefit of simplicity; it would be difficult to apply as it would be necessary to examine a large part of the nomenclatural history of a taxon. It would, in my opinion, be an unsatisfactory way to approach the problem.

(142–148) A few proposals on cultivated plants

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In several places the *Code* refers to the *International code of nomenclature for cultivated plants*. Its most recent edition is that of 2009 (8th edition, Brickell & al. in Regnum Veg. 151), which recognizes three categories of cultivated plants that under that *Code* may receive a name that consists of a botanical name followed by an epithet (or more than one epithet). These are the cultivar (defined in Art. 2), the Group (defined in Art. 3) and the grex (defined in Art. 4). In addition, the cultivated plant *Code* provides for “names” at the rank of genus for graft-chimaeras between plants belonging to different genera (defined in Art. 5). Exactly what categories are recognized by the cultivated plant *Code* tends to vary from edition to edition, with the cultivar always present, and the Group usually present (although it was called a “cultivar-group” in the 1995, 6th edition); the grex came in only with the 2009 edition. It is somewhat dubious to have the botanical *Code* follow the cultivated plant *Code* in close detail, given that it changes so often; it appears wiser to rephrase in more generalized terms, without going into specifics (restricting detail to the Examples).

(142) In Art. 28 Note 2, replace the last part (from “where ...”) by:

“which defines the cultivar as its basic category.”

The cultivated plant *Code* defines the cultivar as “[t]he basic category of cultivated plants whose nomenclature is governed by this *Code*” (Art. 2.1), before going on to define the other categories. In many of its provisions the ICNCP does not distinguish between

cultivar epithets, Group epithets and grex epithets, but uses general rules that apply to these epithets equally.

(143) Rephrase Art. 28 Note 4:

“Note 4. Epithets in names published under the botanical *Code* may be retained as epithets in names under the rules of the *International code of nomenclature for cultivated plants*, when it is considered appropriate to treat the taxon concerned under the cultivated plant *Code* rather than the botanical *Code*.”

Both the ICBN and the 2009 ICNCP use “taxon” in preference to “(taxonomic) group”.

(144) Add an Example to Art. 28 Note 4:

“Ex. 1 bis. *Rhododendron mishmiense* Hutch. & Kingdon-Ward (1930) may be treated as a Group, which can then be designated as *Rhododendron boothii* Mishmiense Group; *Brassica oleracea* var. *sabauda* L. (1753) may be treated as a Group, which can then be designated *Brassica oleracea* Sabauda Group.”

These are taken from the 2009 ICNCP (Art. 3 Ex. 4 and Ex. 6), under the assumption that it is desirable to promote uniformity. Alternatively, other cases could be selected.

(145) In Art. 28 Note 5, delete the word “cultivar”, and add an Example with non-cultivar epithets:

“Ex. 3 bis. *Rhododendron* Jacqueline Group, *Allium cepa* Shallot Group, *Festuca rubra* Hexaploid Non-creeping Group.”