

PROPOSALS TO AMEND THE CODE

Edited by Nicholas J. Turland & John H. Wiersema

(364) Proposal to provide a more direct definition of the term “gathering”

John H. Wiersema

United States Department of Agriculture/Agricultural Research Service, National Germplasm Resources Laboratory, Bldg. 003, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC-West), Beltsville, Maryland 20705-2350, U.S.A.; john.wiersema@ars.usda.gov

DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.12705/655.32>

The concept of typification is one of the basic principles (Principle II) of the *Melbourne Code* (McNeill & al. in *Regnum Veg.* 154. 2012), as elaborated in its Section 2, and determines the application of all names at family rank and below. A type must be a specimen or an illustration (Art. 8) and, since 2007, in nearly all cases a specimen (Art. 40.4). Fundamental to the definition of a specimen (Art. 8.2, 8.3) is the definition of a gathering, and in certain provisions of the *Code* (Art. 9.5, 9.17, 40.2, 40.3) the concept of a gathering is of critical importance, yet nowhere in the *Code* is this term directly defined. Currently, the information on what constitutes a gathering must be indirectly gleaned from the definitions of the other terms “specimen” and “duplicate” in Art. 8, leaving room for ambiguity in its interpretation. There exists the following entry in the Glossary:

“*gathering*. [Not defined] – used for a collection of one or more specimens made by the same collector(s) at the one place and time (Art. 8.2 and 8.3 footnote).”

This indicates that at least three invariant elements must be characteristic of a gathering, which is a collection of algae, fungi, or plant specimens made: (1) by the same collector(s), (2) at a single locality, and (3) at one time.

Note that there is no reference to this collection as representing a single taxon in the Glossary because, as Art. 8.2 and the footnote to Art. 8.3 point out, a gathering could be unintentionally or unavoidably mixed yet still constitute a single gathering. It is the sorting out and apportioning of that representing a single species or infraspecific taxon from all or part of a gathering that determines the extent of an individual specimen and its duplicates. This determination of what makes up a specimen can occur upon its initial preparation (Art. 8.3), from a later curatorial action (Art. 8 Ex. 5), or during a subsequent act of typification (Art. 9.14).

Note also that beyond satisfying these three characteristics, there is no current provision in the *Code* for all parts of a gathering to have uniform labelling, numerically or in some other way. The useful clarification of this in the *Code* has been proposed in alternative ways by both Zhu (Prop. 30 in *Taxon* 63: 1145–1146. 2014) and Sennikov (Prop. 100 in *Taxon* 64: 1337–2015), but opposed by Husain & al. (Prop. 305–307 in *Taxon* 65: 898–899. 2016). These proposals can be considered as independent from the present one.

In the context of typification, some vagueness in the interpretation of what constitutes uniformity among specimens assignable to

the same gathering may be desirable, especially with older collections, since one or more of the three defining characteristics may be absent from some or all of them. As long as there is no definite conflict in collector(s), date/time, or geographical locality among specimens, they could be assigned to the same gathering if thought to belong to the same taxon. Taking account of taxonomic interpretations, Sennikov has proposed (Prop. 249, 250 in *Taxon* 65: 647–650. 2016) to allow the extent of a gathering to be delineated not just by the original collector(s), but by the author of a name or a later typifying author. This, too, can be considered independently from the present proposal.

It is here proposed to provide a more direct definition of “gathering” in a new footnote to Art. 8.2, where the term first appears in the *Code*. Adding this definition will allow for the removal of now-redundant text from Art. 8.2 and the current Art. 8.3 footnote 2. Moving the last sentence of Art. 8.3 footnote 2 to the new footnote, provisionally numbered Ibis, also seems appropriate.

(364) Add a new footnote to Art. 8.2 and modify the current Art. 8.3 footnote 2 as follows (new text in bold, deleted text in strikethrough):

“8.2. For the purpose of typification a specimen is a gathering^{this}, or part of a gathering, of a single species or infraspecific taxon ~~made at one time~~, disregarding admixtures (see Art. 9.14). [...]”

“^{this} **Here and elsewhere in this *Code*, the term “gathering” is used for a collection presumed to be of a single taxon made by the same collector(s) at the same time from a single locality. The possibility of a mixed gathering must always be considered by an author designating a type, and corresponding caution used.**”

[footnote to Art. 8.3] “² Here and elsewhere in this *Code*, the word duplicate is given its usual meaning in curatorial practice. A duplicate is part of a single gathering of a single species or infraspecific taxon ~~made by the same collector(s) at one time. The possibility of a mixed gathering must always be considered by an author choosing a lectotype, and corresponding caution used.~~”

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful for past discussions of this issue with Nick Turland and Werner Greuter, and the former’s review of the manuscript.