

THE CONFUSED SPERMACOCE

William T. Gillis

In the process of preparing a new Bahama flora with George R. Proctor and collaborator Richard A. Howard, I have been concerned with accurate application of scientific names. Numbers of plants whose names in Britton and Millspaugh's flora (1920) were imprecisely applied have already been noted (Gillis, 1974a and 1974b). One particularly perplexing case turned up -- perplexing because it deals with an invalid name for a widespread weed of both New and Old World tropics and sub-tropics. This is the species originally described after a fashion by A. B. Rendle, Spermacoce confusa.

When Rendle (1936) described Spermacoce confusa, he neglected to provide a Latin diagnosis, a required procedure as of 1 January 1935. The binomial, therefore, is invalid and has no standing under the Code. It has, however, been used in a number of floras ever since, those of Barbados (Gooding, Lovell, and Proctor, 1965), Jamaica (Fawcett and Rendle, 1936; Adams, 1972), and Cuba (Alain, 1962), to name a few. Because this species is of concern to a number of flora writers presently at work (for Guatemala, Costa Rica, Tropical East Africa, etc.), it is vital to make this binomial valid. I believe that science is best served by validating Rendle's binomial, rather than proposing a different name at this time. Moreover, it is probably best to adopt his concept. Hence, I have chosen as type a collection that had been examined by Rendle himself. I should like to acknowledge with deep appreciation the advice and counsel to Dr. Bernard Verdcourt, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in choosing a type specimen.

Spermacoce confusa Rendle ex Gillis, sp. nov.

Herba annua, 30 - 90 cm. alta, caule suberecto aut effuso, scabridiusculo in angulis; radice palari verticali; foliis lanceolatis ad linearo-lanceolatis, supra pilosis ad scabridiusculis, subtus scabridiusculis in nervis, subsessilibus, acuminatis, angustatis ad bases, 2.0 - 6.0 cm. longis, 2 - 5 (-10) mm. latis, saepe uninerviis et revolutis; vagina stipulare 1 - 2 mm. lata, ferenti 3 - 5 setas filiformes; floribus 6 - 15 in inflorescentiis arctis axillaribus; tubo calycis 1.5 mm. brevior quam fructo, excedenti limbum 4-lobum; corolla lavandula basi gemmaeque, aliter alba, 2 mm. longa; lobis corollae ovatis ad 1 mm., minis quam dimidiis longioris quam tubis; staminibus insertis ad basem tubi, includis intra tubum; capsula subglobosa, 2.5 mm. longa, setosa, coronata lobis persistentibus sepalorum; semine oblongo, rufo-nigro, foveato leviter. Differt a S. ten-

uiore habitu annuo, foliis scabridiusculis, et capsula setosa.

Type: Jamaica, Lower Clarendon Parish, Inverness, 300 feet altitude, in the open in rocky soil. 7 December 1917, William Harris 12749. Holotype: BM; isotypes: F-479011, GH, IJ, NY.

S. tenuior Auct., non L.: Lam. Tab. Encyc. et Méth. 1: 273, t.62, fig. 1. 1791; DC. Prodr. 4: 552. 1830; Griseb. Fl. Brit. W. Ind. Is., p. 349. 1864; Griseb. Cat. Pl. Cub., p. 141. 1866; Hemsl., Biol. Centr. Amer., Cozumel I. Suppl. p. 102. 1887; Hitchc., Missouri Bot. Gard. Rept. 4: 45. 1893; Urban, Symb. Ant. 4: 608. 1911 and 8: 690. 1921; Britton, Fl. Amer. Virgin Is., p. 95. 1918; Britton, Fl. Bermuda, p. 365. 1918; Britton and Millspaugh, Bahama Fl. p. 423. 1920; Freeman and Williams, Fl. Trin. and Tobago 2 (pt. 1), p. 44. 1928; Small, Manual S.E. Fl., p. 1265. 1933.

as S. confusa Rendle, nom. invalid.: Rendle, J. Bot. 74: 12. (Fig. D-F). 1936; Fawcett and Rendle, Fl. Jamaica 7: 120. 1936; Alain, H., Fl. Cuba 5: 140. 1962; Gooding, Loveless, and Proctor, Fl. Barbados, p. 409. 1965; Adams, Fl. Pl. Jamaica, p. 732. 1972.

S. portoricense Balbis, Small, Fl. S.E.U.S. ed. 2: 1117. 1913.

as S. glabra Michx., Fl. S.U.S. ed. 3: 193. 1897.

Annual herb, 30 - 90 cm. high, with a suberect or spreading stem, scabridulus on the angles; with a vertical taproot; leaves lanceolate to linear-lanceolate, pilose to scabridulus above, scabridulus on the veins below, subsessile, acuminate, narrowed at the bases, 2.0 - 6.0 cm. long, 2 - 5 (10) mm. broad, often single-nerved and revolute; the sheathing stipule 1 - 2 mm. broad, bearing 3 - 5 filiform bristles; flowers 6 - 15 in tight, axillary inflorescences; calyx tube 1.5 mm., shorter than the fruit, exceeding the 4-lobed limb; corolla lavender at the base and in bud, otherwise white, 2 mm. long; lobes of the corolla ovate to 1 mm., less than half as long as the tube; stamens inserted at the base of the tube, included within the tube; capsule subglobose, 2.5 mm. long, setose, crowned by persistent lobes of sepals; seed oblong, red-black, lightly pitted. It differs from S. tenuior by its annual habit, scabridulus leaves, and setose capsule.

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