

STICTA, AN "EASY" GENUS BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT

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In the eastern United States Sticta is a genus easily recognized by the cyphellae on the lower side of the thallus. The species have likewise been no problem: S. limbata with soredia, S. fuliginosa with laminal isidia and S. weigelii with marginal isidia. In examining specimens referred to S. weigelii (described from Guadeloupe) in order to identify material from the Dominican Republic, it became clear that they may actually include as many as six species. Additionally, much of the North American material cannot be matched with any of the West Indian forms and represents a separate species. A review of the literature turned up only a single species described as new from eastern North America, Sticta beauvoisii Delise (Hist. Lich. Sticta 83, pl. 7, fig. 25. 1822.). This species is based on a collection made by Palisot de Beauvois in "l'Amérique septentrionale." According to Agnes Chase (in Niles, 1925), Palisot collected in North America from ca. 1791-1798 mainly around Philadelphia but also southward as far as eastern Tennessee. P. M. Jørgensen (1978) reports that most of the foliose genera, including Sticta, are missing from the Delise herbarium at Caen. Fortunately a fragment was sent to Tuckerman (FH-Tuck 1089) which agrees with eastern North American specimens and may serve as a lectotype if no more appropriate specimen is located elsewhere in France.

The situation in North America is complicated in that a second Sticta with marginal isidia occurs in the southern coastal plain. It is identical to the most common taxon of the S. weigelii group in the West Indies but until the Acharian type of S. weigelii can be examined I cannot be sure that the name applies to this taxon. However, I will use the name temporarily. The two species can most easily be separated by the nature of the hairs forming the tomentum on the lower side of the thallus (figs. 1, 2). Also, S. beauvoisii has scattered rhizines (similar to those in Peltigera) which are apparently absent in S. weigelii. Sticta beauvoisii generally seems browner, more regularly branching and more rosette-forming than S. weigelii, which tends to be bluish-gray and irregularly branched. Additionally the two species are geographically separated. Sticta beauvoisii, as far as I now know, ranges from southern Canada south to the mountainous areas of North Carolina and northern Georgia west to Arkansas, Texas and New Mexico. Sticta weigelii is a widespread neotropical species known in the United States from Florida and the coastal plain of Alabama and Louisiana. The only anomalous record of S. weigelii, where the two might occur together, is from Tennessee collected by W. W. Calkins, who, in my opinion, was not overly careful about labeling his specimens. The Tennessee collection may be verified and the precise distributions of the two species in the Southeast better defined by future collecting. It is by collecting "problem species" in critical areas that amateur botanists can make valuable contributions.

In summary, the majority of marginally isidiate Stictas in eastern North America should be called Sticta beauvoisii Delise and only the southernmost, subtropical collections retained in Sticta weigelii auct. until this species complex is further resolved.

Jørgensen, P. M. 1978. The lichen family Pannariaceae in Europe. Opera Botanica 45: 1-123.

Niles, C. D. 1925. A bibliographic study of Beauvois' Agrostographie.
Contributions from the United States National Herbarium 24: 135-214.

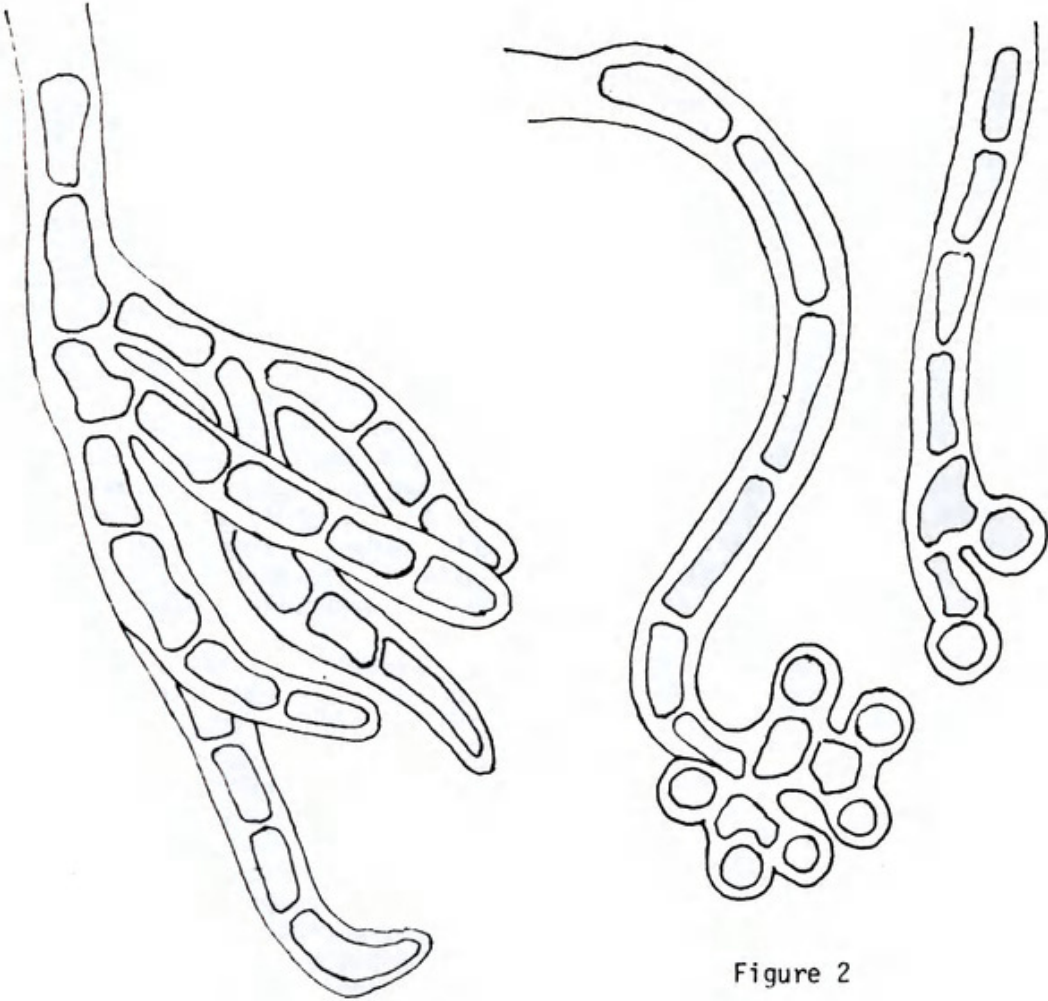


Figure 1

Figure 2

Figures 1 and 2. Tomentum hairs in Sticta. Figure 1: S. beauvoisii;
Figure 2: S. weigeliai.



Harris, Richard C. 1984. "Sticta, an 'easy' genus becomes more difficult." *Evansia* 1(1), 7-8. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.344542>.

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