

SHORT COMMUNICATION

A new combination in *Lobelia* L. (Campanulaceae: Lobelioideae)

The separation of *Lobelia* and *Pratia* on the basis of a solitary character–fruit type (*Lobelia* with dehiscent capsules, cf. *Pratia* with indehiscent berries) has been a problem historically. Several overseas authors (e.g. Moeliono & Tuyn 1960) have opted to combine the two under the early name *Lobelia* on the grounds that fruit type is unreliable. Citing as evidence Moeliono & Tuyn (l.c.) claim to have examined a collection of the Malesian species *Lobelia angulata* Forst. with both fleshy berries and true capsules. *Pratia purpurascens* (R. Br.) F. Wimmer is an example of an Australian species that may have variable fruits. Carolin (1982) describes the fruits of *Pratia purpurascens* as tardily dehiscent, but Wimmer (1953) was confident that the fruits are indehiscent.

Despite the uncertainty of fruit type as a reliable character for separating *Pratia* and *Lobelia*, the two genera have long been accepted by Australian herbaria. Various flora treatments (e.g. Wiecek 1992) have attempted to correlate additional characters with fruit type. Such characters include sexuality, habit, anther tube apex and relative dimensions of the upper and lower corolla lobes. Although some of these characters may be useful regionally for the identification of relatively few species, when all species of *Lobelia* and *Pratia* are considered, few, if any, of these characters correlate well with fruit type. Generic limits in Lobelioideae are presently one of my concerns and in due course this work will be published.

Although the status of *Pratia* and *Lobelia* is presently uncertain there is little doubt that the generic placement of *Pratia darlingensis* F. Wimmer is incorrect. Wimmer described *P. darlingensis* without seeing ripe fruit, but assumed that they would be indehiscent. I have examined fruiting specimens housed at NSW, CBG, CANB and BRI and studied fruit development in cultivated plants obtained from near Bourke, and in all instances have found fully ripe fruit to be capsular and loculicidally dehiscent. As fruits mature the summit expands to 1–1.5 mm above the top of the hypanthium (base of calyx lobes) and finally splits into two valves when fully mature. The paucity of fully ripe fruiting herbarium specimens, and the frequent persistence of the corolla, which can obscure the summit of the fruit, are the likely reasons why this has escaped notice.

If *Pratia* and *Lobelia* remain as separate genera the generic placement of *Pratia darlingensis* is incorrect because the fruit are capsular. If the two genera are united under *Lobelia* a new combination is also required for *Pratia darlingensis*. The new combination is made here as the correct generic placement is assured irrespective of the ultimate status of the two genera.

Lobelia darlingensis occurs with certainty in New South Wales and Queensland. At BRI it has been filed under *Pratia* sp. Q1 (aff. *puberula*). The Victorian record cited by Wimmer (1943) is based on a Mueller specimen from the Darling River. It is likely that Mueller's specimen was collected in New South Wales.

***Lobelia darlingensis* (F. Wimmer) Albr., comb. nov.**

BASIONYM: *Pratia darlingensis* F. Wimmer, Das Pflanzenreich IV. 276b (Heft 106): 108, fig. 27 (1943).

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Directors of NSW, AD, CBG, CANB and BRI for loans and access to their collections, and to Mike Maher of the Department of Conservation and Land Management at Bourke for the collection of live material.

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Manuscript received 13 May 1993

Manuscript accepted 20 September 1993

David Albrecht
National Herbarium of Victoria
Birdwood Ave
South Yarra Victoria 3141
Australia