

Transfer of *Rapanea brassii* P.Royen to *Myrsine* (Primulaceae)

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Abstract

The name *Rapanea brassii* P.Royen (Primulaceae) is here transferred to the genus *Myrsine* as *M. brassii* (P.Royen) B.J.Conn.

Introduction

The genus *Rapanea* was circumscribed by Aublet (1775) as having sessile stamens, distinct from species of *Myrsine* s. str. (Linnaeus 1753) that have extended staminal filaments. Although the usefulness of this distinction was first questioned by Hosaka (1940), most authors continued to maintain these two as separate genera (e.g. Sleumer 1986, Smith 1973). More recently, the studies by Chen and Pipoly (1996), Jackes (2005), Pipoly (1991, 1996), Pipoly and Chen (1995), Takeuchi and Pipoly (2009) have included *Rapanea* within a more broadly circumscribed *Myrsine*. These authors have observed that the presence or length of staminal filaments is variable, particularly between staminate and pistillate flowers. Contrary to this application of a broad generic concept, Ståhl and Anderberg (2004) regarded *Rapanea* as distinct from *Myrsine*.

Although there are currently about 20 species of *Rapanea* recognized as occurring in New Guinea, the taxonomy of many of these taxa is inadequately understood. For example, the plants that are broadly identified as *R. vaccinioides* Kanehira & Hatusima are treated as a complex of taxa. Pieter van Royen (1982) applied relatively narrow taxonomic concepts to the taxa growing in alpine regions of New Guinea and described several new species. Together with other species of *Rapanea*, Takeuchi and Pipoly (2009) transferred three of van Royen's new species to *Myrsine*.

During the long-term documentation of the trees of Papua New Guinea (Conn and Damas 2006+), most species of the Primulaceae were not studied because they are herbs or shrubs. However, one of the alpine species of *Rapanea* described by Royen (1982), namely *R. brassii* P.Royen, is a small subcanopy tree up to 15 m high. Since similar variation in the length of staminal filaments has been observed in New Guinea material of the *Myrsine-Rapanea* group (Takeuchi and Pipoly 2009), this species is here transferred to *Myrsine*, with the specific epithet (*Rapanea brassii* P.Royen) formally combined with the generic name *Myrsine*, as *M. brassii* (P.Royen) B.J.Conn.

Taxonomy

Myrsine brassii (P.Royen) B.J.Conn **comb. nov.**

Basionym: *Rapanea brassii* P.Royen, *Alpine Flora of New Guinea* Vol. 3: 1979 (1982)

Type: INDONESIA PAPUA: Snow Mountains, Lake Habbema, *L.J. Brass* 9550, Aug 1938 (holo: L006801!; iso: A00025649, BM000997150, BRI AQ0092758, CANB159244!)

Subcanopy trees, 3–15 m high; bole cylindrical, crooked or straight. Bark pale brown, slightly rough or smooth, slightly pustular; lenticels rounded/swollen; under-bark green; blaze consisting of a single layer, pale orange or pink, markings absent, faintly aromatic or non-aromatic; exudate absent. Leaves spiral, simple; petiole present; lamina obovate, (1–)1.5–2.5(–3.8) cm long, 0.8–1.5 cm wide, base symmetric, margin entire, apex rounded, often emarginate or retuse, venation pinnate, secondary veins open, prominent; lower surface pale green, upper surface dark glossy green, hairs absent, oil dots present (with round and elongate dark oil dots, and with scattered red-brown scales). Flowers 1.3–2(–3) mm long, c. 1.5 mm diam.; sepals and petals distinct, red or purple; petals 4; stamens 4, filaments very short, < 0.5 mm long; ovary superior, with 4–6 locules. Fruits 2–3 mm long, dark blue or purple, fleshy drupe. Seeds 1, c. 2 mm long, c. 2 mm diam.

Notes: Hermann Sleumer (1986) regarded *Rapanea brassii*, *R. communis* P.Royen and *R. vaccinioides* as synonyms of broadly circumscribed *R. cacuminum* Mez. However, the status of *R. cacuminum* is uncertain because the type material (*A. Pulle* 1044) at B and duplicates at BO, K, L, P and U have not been preserved. Furthermore, the protologue of this name (Mez 1924) is not circumscribed narrowly enough to align the concept of this taxon with any particular one of the previous taxa. Therefore, the name *R. cacuminum* is here regarded as unresolved (Anonymous 2013).

As circumscribed here, *Myrsine brassii* is only known from the alpine regions of New Guinea.

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