



A new species of *Aframomum* (Zingiberaceae) from Central Africa

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Abstract

The new species, *Aframomum sericeum*, is described and illustrated for the first time. It differs from the similar *A. sulcatum* by its dense covering of hairs on the abaxial leaf surface.

Introduction

Aframomum Schumann (1904) comprises an estimated 80 species of giant herbs endemic to Africa, where it is the largest genus of Zingiberaceae and is in many places a key ecological component of the forest understory. The genus was described by K. Schumann (1904) to accommodate the African species of *Amomum*. It is monophyletic (Harris *et al.* 2000) and is thought to have diversified during the late Oligocene to the Miocene (Auvray *et al.* 2010). The taxonomy of *Aframomum* is notoriously difficult (Lock & Hall 1975) and the genus is currently undergoing revision.

The diversity of *Aframomum* species is centred on Central Africa with several new species described recently (Dhetchuvi 1993, 1995, Dhetchuvi & Fischer 2006). The new species described in this paper was independently discovered and recognised as new by the first author in Gabon and by the corresponding author in the Central African Republic (Harris 2002). Subsequent comparison of specimens showed that the two discoveries were conspecific. Comparison with existing herbarium specimens revealed several more specimens, with an overall distribution including Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo.

Taxonomy

Aframomum sericeum Dhetchuvi & D.J.Harris, *sp. nov.* (Fig. 1)

Aframomum sulcatum similis sed pagina abaxiali foliorum dense tomentosa differt.

Aframomum *sp. D* in Harris (2002: 247).

Type:—GABON. Mpassa Forest Reserve, Makokou, 0° 34' N, 12° 52' E, 18 November 1994, *M.M. Dhetchuvi* 1725 (holotype BR!, isotype WAG!).

Clump-forming herbs to 6 m. Rhizomes to 15 mm in diameter, reddish-brown when dry. Stems often swollen up to 4 cm in diameter at base. Leaf sheaths with rounded and branched transverse and longitudinal ridges, glabrous, occasionally ciliate at edges. Ligules rounded, to 9 mm, bilobed towards tip, glabrous. Pseudopetioles to 10 mm, glabrous. Leaves narrowly elliptic, to 55 × 11 cm, base slightly asymmetric, apex caudate, acumen ca. 10 mm, margin glabrous, glabrous adaxially, tomentose abaxially, with erect, swollen-based trichomes to 0.5 mm long on laminae, midribs tomentose, secondary veins usually obscured by strands