



Taxonomic revision of *Croton* section *Cleodora* (Euphorbiaceae)

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Abstract

Croton section *Cleodora* is a Neotropical section disjunctly distributed in Mexico and Central America, northern and northwestern South America, and eastern Brazil. Eighteen species are recognized as belonging to the section, which is characterized mainly by an arborescent or shrubby habit, presence of clear or reddish latex, leaves with a pair of basilaminar or acropetolar glands, pistillate flowers sepals with some degree of overlap, and 4-fid or multifid styles united at the base or above, usually forming a crown. We conduct a critical revision of *Croton* section *Cleodora*, congruent with the current understanding of its evolutionary history. We provide here an identification key for the two recognized subsections (*Croton* subsection *Sphaerogyni* and *C.* subsection *Spruceani*) and their species. Descriptions, illustrations, comments about taxonomy, habitat, geographic distribution and phenological information are provided for each species. Six lectotypes are here designated.

Resumo

Croton seção *Cleodora* é uma seção Neotropical, com distribuição disjunta entre o México e América Central, norte e noroeste da América do Sul e leste do Brasil. Foram reconhecidas 18 espécies para a seção, que podem ser caracterizadas pelo porte arbóreo ou arbustivo, com látex incolor ou avermelhado, folhas com um par de glândulas acropetolares ou basilaminares e flores pistiladas com sépalas em geral imbricativas e estiletos 4-fidos ou multifidos, unidos na base ou pouco mais acima, formando uma coroa. A presente revisão foi realizada com base no entendimento atual da história evolutiva da seção. É apresentada uma chave de identificação para as duas subseções reconhecidas (*Croton* subseção *Sphaerogyni* e *C.* subseção *Spruceani*) e suas espécies, bem como descrições, ilustrações, comentários sobre a taxonomia, fenofases, habitat e distribuição geográfica, sendo designados seis lectótipos.

Key words: Flora, Neotropics, Taxonomy, *Croton cajucara*

Introduction

Croton Linnaeus (1753: 1004), the second largest genus of Euphorbiaceae, has a pantropical distribution and an estimated 1200 species (Govaerts *et al.* 2000). The genus occurs mostly in tropical regions worldwide, but also has some representatives in subtropical and northern temperate areas, and its main centers of diversity in the Neotropics are Brazil, the West Indies, and Mexico (Burger & Huft 1995). *Croton* has great morphological diversity, ranging from herbs to trees, and most of its species are important elements of secondary vegetation, which make many species useful for reforestation of degraded areas. Infrageneric groupings within *Croton* were first recognized by Müller Argoviensis (1866, 1873) and Baillon (1858, 1864). After that, Webster (1993) reviewed those infrageneric groupings and recognized 40 sections and five subsections within the genus. The first molecular phylogenetic study of *Croton* and related groups was undertaken by Berry *et al.* (2005). They showed that *Croton* was monophyletic once some small satellite genera from tribe Crotonae