



A new infraspecific taxon of *Phyllanthus myrsinites* (Phyllanthaceae) from the Brazilian Amazon

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Abstract

Phyllanthus myrsinites subsp. *platyphyllus*, a new subspecies from Amazonas States, Brazil, is described and illustrated. It differs from *Phyllanthus myrsinites* subsp. *myrsinites* in its wide-orbiculate leaves that can be up to 2.7 cm wide, with a subapical gland 4–5 mm from the apex, secondary veins evident on the adaxial surface, and staminate flowers grouped only in the leaf axils.

Key words: Brazilian Flora, new subspecies, plant taxonomy

Resumo

Phyllanthus myrsinites subsp. *platyphyllus*, uma nova subespécie do Estado do Amazonas, Brasil, é descrita e ilustrada. Difere de *Phyllanthus myrsinites* subsp. *myrsinites* pelas folhas largo-orbiculadas, que podem atingir até 2,7 cm de largura, com uma glândula subapical localizada abaixo de 4-5 cm do ápice, nervuras secundárias evidentes na face adaxial e flores estaminadas agrupadas apenas nas axilas das folhas.

Introduction

Phyllanthus Linnaeus (1753: 981) is the largest genus of Phyllanthaceae comprising about 800 species (Radcliffe-Smith 2001) with a pantropical distribution, of which ca. 200 species occur in the Americas. Approximately 90 species are distributed throughout Brazil, according to surveys published in the Species List of the Brazilian Flora (Secco *et al.* 2013). These species have varying habits, but are generally herbaceous, with cymose inflorescences, sometimes reduced to a single flower, monochlamydeous, gamosepalous, rarely polysepalous flowers, entire or segmented disk, free or joined stamens, anthers dehiscing horizontally, obliquely to vertically, styles 3, free or united, fruit a septidial capsule, rarely bacaceous or drupaceous, and seeds trigonous.

Phyllanthus myrsinites Kunth (1817: 11) is one of the most variable species of the genus in terms of leaf morphology which has resulted in the proposal of many superfluous species based on individual specimens and made its taxonomy quite confusing, such as *P. dinizii* Huber (1914: 182), *P. gallinetae* Jablonski (1967: 111), *P. glaucoviridis* Jablonski (1967: 101), which are all considered synonyms of *P. myrsinites*, as well as *P. pimichianus* Jablonski (1967: 111), which is a synonym of *P. myrsinites* subsp. *francavillanus* (Müller 1863: 20) Webster (1999: 198).

During a revision of the species of *Phyllanthus* from the Brazilian Amazon and additional studies directed towards updating Phyllanthaceae for the Species List of the Brazilian Flora (Secco *et al.* 2013), specimens that had been identified as a probable new subspecies by the late Dr. Grady L. Webster were encountered. After a detailed investigation, especially of the published works of Jablonski (1967) and Webster (1956, 2002a, 2002b, 2003, 2004) it was determined that many of the studied specimens did in fact represent a new infraspecific taxon. The new subspecies is described, commented, and illustrated here.

Webster (1999) proposed *P. myrsinites* subsp. *francavillanus* based on the shape of the branches (more or less flattened), leaves obovate to oblong, and the size (ca. 0.5 mm diameter) and position of the subapical gland (mostly <1 mm from the apex). However, in analyzing the vast collections of *P. myrsinites* subsp. *myrsinites* deposited in the IAN, INPA, MG, and NY herbaria, it was noticed that the characteristics used by Webster (1999) to propose *P. myrsinites* subsp. *francavillanus* were also present in every individual of *P. myrsinites* subsp. *myrsinites*. Consequently, these characteristics could not be used to distinguish different subspecies, and the synonymization of *P. myrsinites* subsp. *francavillanus* with *P. myrsinites* subsp. *myrsinites* is proposed here.

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