



Lectotypification of *Fimbristylis tenera* (Cyperaceae)

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Abstract

A lectotype is designated for *Fimbristylis tenera* Roem. & Schult. to fix the current usage of the name.

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Roxburgh (1814) first listed the name *Scirpus tenellus* Roxb. in ‘Hortus Bengalensis’ and later validated it in ‘Flora Indica’ (1820: 227). However, *S. tenellus* Roxb. (1820) is an illegitimate name since it is a later homonym of *S. tenellus* Link (1820). Roemer & Schultes (1824: 57), therefore, while transferring Roxburgh’s *S. tenellus* to *Fimbristylis* Vahl, created the new name *F. tenera* Roem. & Schult. In an attempt to identify *Fimbristylis* material collected from West Bengal (India), the authors looked for the type(s) of *F. tenera*. Roxburgh’s specimens are distributed in various herbaria, with the major collections at K, BM, BR, E, G and LIV, and smaller sets at A, B, C, DBN, FI, NY, OXF, P, PH and UPS. His drawings are at CAL, BM and K (Stafleu & Cowan, 1983; Forman 1997, Robinson, 2008). A thorough search of herbaria, both for drawings and specimens, yielded two specimens (one each at G and E) and two drawings (one each at K and CAL) that might potentially be considered as “original material” of Roxburgh’s *Scirpus tenellus*.

Roxburgh initially identified the specimens at G and E as *Scirpus dichotomus* L. This misidentification however, does not in itself necessarily preclude the specimens being original material of *Scirpus tenellus*. Roxburgh though not very often, used different names on specimens distributed to European collections and those used in his ‘Flora Indica’ manuscript (Forman, 1997). This could be one such case. It could well indicate second thoughts on the tentative identity given by Roxburgh on the sheets. He must have come to realise that *S. dichotomus* (= *F. dichotoma* (L.) Vahl) is a species with a hairy style and bifid stigma, whereas the specimens he annotated as *S. dichotomus* have ‘clean style and trifid stigma’. Since these and other diagnostic features of *S. tenellus* he described in ‘Flora Indica’ go well with specimens annotated as *S. dichotomus*, these could be assumed as the specimens he was referring to as *S. tenellus*.

The specimen of *F. tenera* at G (G00309005) from ‘Ind. Or.’ bears an annotation ‘Dr. Roxburgh’. This specimen is best suited as “original material” because of the following reasons. Forman (1997) mentioned that largest collection of Roxburgh material is in the Delessert Herbarium at Geneva. This was originally part of Lambert’s Botanical Museum and was sold in 1842 to an agent of Delessert for £34. The Roxburgh collection, in the sale catalogue, was said to contain ‘2,000 to 2,250 plants’. The authors are of the opinion that the name *Scirpus dichotomus* Linn. inked over a pencil original may be of Roxburgh himself and also could be the name Roxburgh sent it to Lambert. The inked handwriting matches well with the specimen handwriting of Roxburgh provided by Forman (l.c.) (Fig. 1). It was stated that Lambert discarded the original labels (used to be the practice during that period) probably in majority of sheets and prepared new ones. But in this specimen (G00309005) the original hand writing of Roxburgh appears to have been retained on the sheet at least as for the name ‘*Scirpus dichotomus* L.’ is concerned.

The specimen at E is also identified as *Scirpus dichotomus* L. in Roxburgh’s handwriting but the source of this specimen is unknown as it is not listed in William Wright’s catalogue where materials sent by Roxburgh from the Coromandel Coast to the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1789/90 were given (Forman l.c.). Therefore, despite the certainty of being collected by Roxburgh, and its identity with *Scirpus tenellus*, it cannot be ascertained as “original material”.

C.B. Clarke identified the G specimen as *Fimbristylis tenera* ‘var. *verucaenux*’ in July 1888 (as mentioned on the herbarium sheet). However, in *Flora British India* (C. B. Clarke, 1893) he published it as *F. tenera* var. *oxylepis*. Govaerts et al (2011) treated *F. tenera* var. *oxylepis* as synonymous to *F. tenera*. The authors have further authenticated the identity of G specimen through close scrutiny of stigma, nut (achene) and glume as agreeing with the original description of *S. tenellus*.

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