

CORRESPONDENCE

Nomenclatural Notes of *Boerhavia rubicunda* Steud. (Nyctaginaceae)

Debasmita Dutta Pramanick

Botanical Survey of India, Headquarter, CGO Complex, 3rd MSO Building, Sector-1, Salt Lake City, Kolkata-700 064

ABSTRACT

In the present paper, attempt has been made to solve nomenclatural controversies of the taxon *Boerhavia rubicunda* Steudel (Nyctaginaceae).

KEYWORDS: *Boerhavia rubicunda* Steud., *Boerhavia elegans* Choisy, nomenclatural controversy.

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Introduction

The genus *Boerhavia* L. (often spelt as '*Boerhaavia*'), belongs to the family Nyctaginaceae, comprising of more than 200 binomials published time to time (as per *Index Kewensis*) of which most are taxonomic synonyms, some are nomenclatural synonyms and homonyms, and rest are transferred to different genera (Fosberg, 1978). The major sources of controversies in taxonomic identity of the members of the genus are its apparent plasticity or polymorphic nature, variable diagnostic characters and wide geographical ranges. The genus is composing of 50 species worldwide (Mabberley, 2008), mostly distributed in tropical and subtropical regions of both the hemispheres, few are of temperate and warm distribution. In India, the genus *Boerhavia* L. is represented by 4 species, viz. *B. crispa* Heyne ex Hook. f., *B. diffusa* L., *B. erecta* L. and *B. rubicunda* Steud. of which controversy exists regarding nomenclature of latter one (Dutta Pramanick *et al.*, 2015).

During revisionary study of the family Nyctaginaceae in India, the author came to observe that nomenclature of *Boerhavia rubicunda* Steud. faces a difficulty in writing a Code of rules that is universally satisfactory. In 1840, Steudel reported a plant and published the name as *Boerhavia rubicunda*. Later in 1849, Choisy during revision of the family Nyctaginaceae, described a plant with similar attributes and along with mentioning Steudel's name as synonym, published the name *B. elegans*. Examination of original publication of Steudel's name exhibits that only descriptive information accompanying the name is a symbol 'u' explain perennial nature of the plant. A

specimen "Arab.fel. Boerhavianr. 744 Herb. Arab.un it.", cited in protologue, is certainly the same to Schimper's collection cited by Choisy in protologue of *B. elegans*. Both the names are borne out by two sheets of this collection of which one is in Paris Herbarium (P) and another in US with 'Herbarium Steudel', written on the upper margin of the label as *B. rubicunda* Steud. According to Brummit (2002), it is not clear that such name with very short description or symbol whether fulfil the requirement of 32.1 (d) of valid publication or not and often may be referred to as '*nomina subnuda*'. While four members of Committee for Spermatophyta accepted the proposal of '*nomina subnuda*', seven members were in opposition and rest were abstaining (Brummit, 2002). The symbol 'u' is certainly not an adequate description. However, International Code of Nomenclature, Art. 32.1(d) (McNeill *et al.*, 2012) which deals with conditions for valid publications requires only a 'description' or 'diagnosis', not necessarily an 'adequate one'. Thus there is no way to avoid the Steudel's name *B. rubicunda* as validly published correct one. There is also no doubt to consider *B. elegans* as superfluous and illegitimate name as Choisy did not take up earliest published available epithet.

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