

Who was the author of *Montbretia crocosmiiflora*?

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ABSTRACT

Montbretia crocosmiiflora, the basionym of *Crocoshmia* × *crocosmiiflora* (Iridaceae) was published by Victor Lemoine in *The Garden*, 1880, not by E. Morren; the correct citation of the current name is *Crocoshmia* × *crocosmiiflora* (Lemoine) N.E.Br.

INTRODUCTION

Montbretia crocosmiiflora is the basionym of the currently accepted name for the well-known garden plant, *Crocoshmia* × *crocosmiiflora* (Iridaceae), which has escaped and become widely naturalized in coastal parts of the British Isles (Stace 1991; Nelson 1993). Although the generic name *Montbretia* has long since been abandoned, it remains in everyday use as the vernacular name especially for the naturalized plant. *C.* × *crocosmiiflora* is an artificial hybrid created by Victor Lemoine of Nancy, France, who pollinated *C. pottsii* (Baker) N. E. Br. with pollen from *C. aurea* (Hook.) Planch.; the seedlings first bloomed in August 1880.

For many years standard botanical accounts (e.g. de Vos 1984) credited publication of *Montbretia crocosmiiflora* to C. J. Edouard Morren (1881), and the usual citation of the hybrid's name was *Crocoshmia* × *crocosmiiflora* (Lemoine ex E. Morren) N. E. Br. (cf. de Vos 1984). Kosteljik (1984) pointed out that Morren's account, published in *La Belgique Horticole* 31 late in 1881 to accompany plate 472, was predated by a note printed in the October 1881 number (118) of *The Floral Magazine*, edited by Richard Dean, but Kosteljik (1984) and Wijnands (1986) omitted to note that the September issue of the same periodical had an earlier account, reading as follows

“. . . *Montbretia crocosmaeflora*, a novelty sent by Mons. Lemoine, Nancy, France; much the same in colour as *M. Pottsii*, but perhaps a little more yellow, and the flowers larger.”
Kosteljik (1984) proposed altering the citation to *C.* × *crocosmiiflora* (Lemoine ex Burb. & Dean) N. E. Br.; this was noted by Wijnands (1986), and taken up by Trehane (1989), Stace (1991) and Kent (1992) among others.

EARLY DESCRIPTIONS OF LEMOINE'S HYBRID

Kosteljik's bibliographic search was not exhaustive. The following are even earlier accounts in which the binomial *Montbretia crocosmiiflora* was used:

The Garden 21 August 1880 (p. 188)

“New Hybrid *Montbretia*. – Mons. V. Lemoine, of Nancy, sends us a new bulbous plant, which he has obtained by fertilising *Montbretia Pottsii* . . . with *Tritonia* (*Crocoshmia* [sic]) *aurea*. The progeny Mons. Lemoine proposes to name *Montbretia crocosmaeflora*. The flowers, he says, are four or five times the size of *M. Pottsii*; and this successful cross he considers to be the starting point for the production of a race of beautiful hardy varieties. The flowers sent are borne in the same manner on the spike as those of *M. Pottsii*, but they are much larger and of a deeper colour. The cross seems to be precisely intermediate between the two parents.”

The Garden 30 July 1881 (p. 125)

“*Montbretia crocosmaeflora*, similar in every respect to *M. Pottsii* [sic] . . . but more robust in habit, and having larger flower-spikes.”

The Gardener's Chronicle 30 July 1881 (p. 153)

"Mr Barron also showed *Montbretia crocosmaeflora* [sic], one of Mons. Lemoine's novelties, much the same colour as *M. Potsii* [sic], perhaps a little more yellow, but the flowers larger – a very good plant . . ."

The Garden 27 August 1881 (p. 203)

"MONTBRETIA CROCOSMAEFLORA – A very promising plant with orange and red flowers, very bright, but somewhat withered owing to its journey from Nancy . . . From M. Lemoine."

DISCUSSION

The first quotation from *The Garden* (18: 188, dated 21 August 1880) must have been written very shortly after the seedlings bloomed for the first time; it contains a diagnosis that is adequate under the *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature* (Greuter *et al.* 1988; Art. 32.2) to validate the binomial *Montbretia crocosmiiflora*. It must be stressed that both the binomial and at least part of the description are explicitly attributed to Lemoine, and the passage is written in the present tense. But, by including the clause "Mons. Lemoine proposes to name . . .", does the author perhaps fall foul of Art. 34.1, that a name is "not validly published . . . when it is merely proposed in anticipation of . . . a particular circumscription"?

The two subsequent notes, both published almost one year later on 30 July 1881, do not contravene any articles of the current *I.C.B.N.* and thus the binomial was validly published as early as 30 July 1881 – unless description in the issue of *The Garden* of 21 August 1880 is *not* ruled out.

Deciding which of the 30 July 1881 issues of the separate periodicals was the first published seems a pointless exercise, but they predate *The Floral Magazine* notices by at least one month, so that the protologue of *Montbretia crocosmiiflora* may be credited to one or other of these, or both. At this period *The Gardener's Chronicle* was edited by M. T. Masters, and *The Garden* by its founder, William Robinson, and thus possible citations might include 'Lemoine ex Masters', and 'Lemoine ex W. Robinson'.

The publication of names in reports of horticultural shows is a matter that is not addressed by the *I.C.B.N.* There is no reason to reject names, accompanied by diagnostic statements, when included in such reports, except when they contravene particular articles of the code. Under the *I.C.B.N.* (Art. 29, Berlin 1988), publication in non-scientific newspapers was forbidden after 1 January 1953; thereby there is the implication that before that date publication of binomials in such periodicals is valid. The descriptions of *Montbretia crocosmiiflora* quoted above appeared in reports of the Royal Horticultural Society's exhibition on 26 July 1881, and it is possible that London newspapers of 27 July contained reports in which there were descriptions – I have made *no* attempt to trace any such reports. It is even possible that French periodicals and newspapers contained even earlier reports of the first flowers in August 1880, for example.

The consequences of this conundrum is that it is impossible unambiguously to assign *Montbretia crocosmiiflora* to a single author. Both Masters and Robinson were describing the same plant, having seen the same specimens on the same day, although it cannot be established that Masters or Robinson personally wrote the news items concerned; they were the editors of the respective periodicals, and one of their journalists could have contributed the show reports. Furthermore, because of the real possibility that newspapers printed in August 1880 and July 1881 carried descriptions and the binomial, it may be impossible to determine if the original place of publication was really *The Gardener's Chronicle* or *The Garden*.

CONCLUSIONS

Each of the quoted descriptions is of the same, indeed the original hybrid, so the best solution to this conundrum is to accept that the name was first devised and used by Victor Lemoine, that it was published validly in *The Garden* on 21 August 1880, and that because the clause "proposes to name" is in the present tense this diagnosis need not be regarded as provisional and thus contrary to Art. 34.1. Thus the citation should read:

Crocoshmia × **crocoshmiiflora** (Lemoine) N. E. Br., *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa* **20**: 264 (1932).

Basionym: *Montbretia crocoshmiiflora* Lemoine, *The Garden* **18**: 188 (21 August 1880) [as 'crocoshmaeflora']; *The Garden* **20**: 125 (30 July 1881); *The Gardener's Chronicle* **16** (n.s.): 153 (30 July 1881); *The Garden* **20**: 203 (27 August 1881); *The Floral Magazine* no. 117 (September 1881); *The Floral Magazine* no. 118, tab. 472 (October 1881); *La Belgique Horticole* **31**: 229, tab. 14 (1881) [with formula "× *Montbretia aureo-pottsi*"].

TYPIIFICATION OF *MONTBRETIA CROCOSMIIFLORA*

de Vos (1984) designated the illustration published in *La Belgique Horticole* **31** (tab. 14) as the lectotype of *Montbretia crocoshmiiflora* Lemoine ex Morren, but this is not acceptable (see *I.C.B.N.* Art. 7) and must be rejected. In this instance the published illustration cannot be a lectotype but could be selected as a neotype, as long as there are no herbarium specimens preserved of the original materials received from Lemoine by Robinson in August 1880. However, better candidates for selection as neotypes would be herbarium specimens prepared from the material displayed at the Royal Horticultural Society in July 1881.

ORTHOGRAPHY

The earliest notes used either 'crocoshmaeflora' or 'crocoshmaeflora'. These are improperly formed compounds; under the *I.C.B.N.* (Art. 73), the epithet should be corrected to 'crocoshmiiflora', as is standard practice.

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