

***Erica* × *stuartii*: the authorship reconsidered**

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ABSTRACT

The author of the epithet *stuartii* for the naturally-occurring hybrid *Erica* × *stuartii* (*E. mackaiana* × *tetralix*) (Ericaceae) was J. Muirhead Macfarlane, and the combination at specific level was made by the editor of *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, Maxwell T. Masters; the binomial's correct form is *Erica* × *stuartii* (Macfarl.) Mast.

KEYWORDS: Ericaceae, Ireland, nomenclature.

INTRODUCTION

This paper does not propose a radical name-change for a plant that is relatively common in western Ireland (W. Galway (Connemara), W. Mayo and W. Donegal; v.cc. H16, H27, H35), and (as named cultivars) in gardens. Its purpose is to establish the authority for the established name *Erica* × *stuartii*.

An essential principle of the *International code of botanical nomenclature* (*I.C.B.N.*) is that a name is validly published when it is accompanied by a diagnosis that "in the opinion of its author distinguishes the taxon from others" (*I.C.B.N.* 1988; Art. 32.2). For nomenclatural precision, therefore, it is crucial that the first place of valid publication of a Latin name and the author's name are exactly established and clearly stated. After 1 January 1935, the diagnosis must be in Latin (*I.C.B.N.* 1988; Art. 36); before 1935 a diagnosis in any language is sufficient to validate a Latin name.

Even today plants grown in gardens may be dubbed with names which are not validly published – or not published at all. Sobriquets of this kind can seep into print through horticultural periodicals and nurserymen's catalogues. Such seepage has no consequences nowadays – after 1 January 1953 publication of names in trade catalogues and non-scientific newspapers does not constitute valid publication (*I.C.B.N.* 1988; Art. 29.4), and the inadvertent or unintentional printing of a name is not effective.

STUART'S HEATHER: DISCOVERY AND NAMING

Erica × *stuartii*, a naturally-occurring hybrid between *E. mackaiana* Bab. and *E. tetralix* L., is an example of a wild plant taken into cultivation, informally named by gardeners, and the garden sobriquet subsequently was effectively published in the horticultural press.

The principal modern accounts (e.g. McClintock 1979, 1980) report that this binomial was published by the Rev. E. F. Linton in *The annals of Scottish natural history* in July 1902. But Linton (1902a) was not the first author to publish a valid Latin name for this heather.

On 11 August 1890, Dr Charles Stuart, a Scottish naturalist of some renown who was visiting Connemara (Co. Galway, western Ireland, v.c. H16) with other members of the Scottish Alpine Botanical Club, collected an unusual heather with a strikingly coloured and constricted corolla (Nelson 1979) in the peatlands near Craiggamore. Other club members also gathered specimens, and some brought cuttings to Edinburgh, where, because several were skilful gardeners, this peculiar plant was soon established in cultivation including at the Royal Botanic Garden.

The heather's discovery was reported at a meeting of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh, chaired by Robert Lindsay, held on 11 December 1890. At that time Dr J. Muirhead Macfarlane agreed "to

examine its microscopic structure with a view to assist in its identification" (Craig 1891), but already was inclined to the view that it was "no hybrid but only a form, like *E. Mackayi* [i.e. *E. mackaiana*], of *E. Tetralix*."

Macfarlane (1893), having examined Stuart's heather, decided that it was a subspecies of *E. tetralix* and that it deserved a name. Thus, in *Transactions and proceedings of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh*, he published the name *E. tetralix* subsp. *stuarti* accompanied by a good formal description to diagnose it from three other subspecies recognized by him. Macfarlane's name is valid, even though it is now considered that Stuart's heather represents a unique clone – in cultivation it may be deemed a cultivar.

SUBSEQUENT PUBLICATIONS

Eight years later, in *The gardeners' chronicle* of 13 July 1901, the editor noted that a Mr Lindsay – evidently Robert Lindsay, one of the Scottish Alpine Botanical Club members who had been on the Connemara tour – had sent specimens of *E. stuarti* (sic); the editorial ([Masters] 1901) included a precise description of the specimen. Under the *I.C.B.N.* this paragraph constitutes a valid publication of the binomial *E. stuarti*, even though the orthography is not in accord with modern practice. Who was the author; Robert Lindsay, or the editor of *The gardeners' chronicle* (Maxwell T. Masters)? And, was Masters publishing a new name or merely repeating Macfarlane's name at species level?

A few weeks later, on 7 September, a second notice of the plant appeared in *The gardeners' chronicle*, this one signed by R. Lindsay (Kaimes Lodge, Murrayfield, Midlothian) and retrospectively dated 4 July (Lindsay 1901).

In April 1902 an obituary of Dr Charles Stuart, who died on 12 February 1902, was published in *The annals of Scottish natural history*: Evans (1902) wrote that:

"*Aquilegia stuarti* [sic] commemorates his work in this direction [i.e., crossing species], as does *Erica tetralix stuarti* [sic] his discovery of a very distinct subspecies of heath in Connemara."

Other obituaries (e.g. in *The garden* (R. D. 1902)) also included explicit references to the heather.

Several months after Stuart's death, Linton (1902a) published his article, entitled '*Erica stuarti*, nov. hybr.' There is no sense in stretching the interpretation of the *I.C.B.N.* to confirm Linton's (1902a) paper as the original publication of a valid name for the plant found by Dr Stuart. Indeed, any attempt to promote such an argument would be in error because Linton's name then becomes an illegitimate homonym. Thus Linton's claim to authorship is spurious.

ERICA × STUARTII: AUTHORSHIP

To whom should the name be credited? I have no doubt that Scottish gardeners affectionately dubbed Dr Stuart's heath *Erica stuarti* soon after its discovery and propagation. Furthermore, I conclude that Macfarlane should be credited with publication of the epithet '*stuartii*' – the fact that he identified the plants as a subspecies of *E. tetralix* reflects only the general state of knowledge of indigenous heathers during the 1890s. The subsequent use of the epithet at species level – as *E. stuarti* – by M. T. Masters in *The gardeners' chronicle* does not indicate anything other than that the name was currently in use. To suggest, as one interpretation of the *I.C.B.N.* might require, that Masters's binomial is a distinct new name is unhelpful, but he did raise the epithet to specific level.

As noted above, Stuart's Connemara heather is now identified as a mutant clone of the hybrid between *E. tetralix* and *E. mackaiana*, also formerly called *E. × praegeri* Ostenf. '*Stuartii*' (McClintock 1979) but correctly (following a change in the *I.C.B.N.*) *E. × stuartii* '*Stuartii*' (and not, as recently proposed, *E. × stuartii* '*Charles Stuart*' (Clarke 1988, [Coombes] 1991). Following is an expanded bibliographic summary:

Erica × stuartii (Macfarl.) Mast., *The gardeners' chronicle* 30 (ser. 3): 34 (13 July 1901).

Basionym: *Erica tetralix* L. subsp. *stuartii* ('stuarti') Macfarl., *Transactions and proceedings of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh* 19: 63–64 (1893).



FIGURE 1. Type specimen of *Erica tetralix* L. subsp. *stuartii* Macfarl.; designated here as neotype of *Erica* × *stuartii* (Macfarl.) Mast. (Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh).

NEOTYPUS (here designated): “*Erica* sp. – Near Roundstone Connemara [Co. Galway v.c. H16] . . . *E. Tetralix* sub-sp. *Stuarti*, Macf. . . .”, 9 August 1890, *anon.* (E).

Synonym: *Erica* × *praegeri* Ostenf., *New phytologist* 11: 114–127 (1912).

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