

MINT NOTES

By R. A. GRAHAM

VIII. A NEW MINT FROM SCOTLAND

In 1912, G. C. Druce submitted to Briquet, in Geneva, a mint which he had collected in Glen Ogilvy, Forfar, v.c. 90. This was returned with the name *M. villosa* Huds. var. *sapida* (Tausch) Briq. *forma valde lanigera*, and this varietal epithet was accepted without question as applicable to the Scots mint. The exactitudes of nomenclature are irrelevant, but Briquet apparently adopted this combination as a later substitute for his earlier (1891) *M. × niliaca* Juss. ex Jacq. var. *sapida* (Tausch) Briq., and Fraser continued acceptance of the epithet *sapida* in the latter, more correct, combination. *M. sapida* Tausch was itself originally published as *nomen nudum*, being later validated by Braun (1890, 377). My suspicions of the correct application of *M. sapida* Tausch ex H. Braun, in any grade, to our Scots mint (Graham, 1953, 109; 1955, 281) were recently confirmed when Tausch's original specimen—apparently the holotype—was received on loan from Brussels. Tausch's mint has little resemblance to our plant: it is perhaps *M. × niliaca* var. *villosa* (Huds.) Fraser (*M. longifolia* × *rotundifolia*) to which Briquet in due course referred it (1896, 679).

It is possible that Briquet did not intend *sapida* to apply to the Glen Ogilvy mint. During a visit to the Geneva Conservatoire in 1947 I was able, due to the kindness of Professor Bæhni, to examine many of Briquet's mints, and amongst them was a duplicate of the Glen Ogilvy plant, named by Briquet *M. villosa* var. *nemorosa* (Willd.) Briq. On the other hand, another mint, from Wolvercote, Oxon, (v.c. 23), named by Briquet as *sapida* in the Conservatoire, is given by him, on its returned duplicate, the name *M. × niliaca* var. *halleri* Briq. (this Wolvercote mint is in fact *M. × niliaca* var. *villosa*). The possibility of a muddle in returning the names is, however, rather dispelled by the fact that Briquet applied Tausch's epithet to yet another mint, from Haute Savoie, and this latter, although unlike Tausch's specimen, is reasonably close in characters to the Glen Ogilvy plant, differing chiefly in having far more leaf serratures and a greener upper leaf surface. But here again, the tangle is largely irrelevant to the issue at hand: *M. sapida* is wrongly applied to the Scots mint, and in view of this it seems desirable to provide a new name to replace the erroneous, existing one. Extensive consultation in continental literature and among continental specimens has failed to produce a name (in any grade) that seems safely applicable to our plant, and although a name may possibly be one day found among the remoter recesses of the mass of continental mint nomenclature, it is best that a new name be provided whereby our mint may be immediately known. Apart from a rather unsatisfactory specimen, apparently from Kent (1820, Blake (OXF)), I cannot remember seeing an example from anywhere other than Scotland, therefore the specific epithet offered below would seem to be apposite.

Mentha scotica R. A. Graham, *species nova M. longifoliae* (L.) Huds. *affinis sed foliis latioribus oblongioribus minus acutis, serraturis minus altis et minus acutis valde distinguitur*. *Holotypus*: Glen Ogilvy, near Glamis, Forfar, v.c. 90, 2 Oct. 1926, R. & M. Corstorphine (K).

Mentha venusta, *facie ± grisea, odore ingrato*. *Caulis molliter tomentosus infra glabrescens; ramosus. Folia oblongo-elliptica vel oblonga vel ovato-oblonga, 3.2 — 8.7 × 1.7 — 4.2 cm., sessilia vel ad 2 mm. petiolata, erugosa, apice ± obtusa, basi*

truncata vel subcordata, supra griseo-viridia vel ± caeruleo-viridia pilis mollibus brevibus appressis vestita, infra griseo-alba dense et molliter tomentosa pilis simplicibus, dentibus parvis non salientibus ± irregularibus ad 1 mm. sed plerumque c. 0.5 mm. (vel minus) altis serrata. Inflorescentia spiciformis racemosa terminalis densa, 2 — 5 cm. longa c. 1 cm. crassa. Calyx campanulatus 2.25 — 2.75 mm. longus dentibus apice ± setaceis plumoso-ciliatis 0.75 — 1 mm. longis auctus. Corolla punicea vel puniceo-lilacina 3 — 3.25 mm. longa lobis apice ± rotundatis 1.25 — 1.5 mm. longis. Stylus exsertus c. 4 mm. longus. Stamina inclusa.

This attractive mint is characterised by its greyish-white leaves with a bluish tinge on the upper surface, whiter below, by their breadth, by their small and shallow serratures, by the soft indumentum which clothes the whole plant, and by its unpleasant smell which is somewhat reminiscent of cats. The leaves attain 11×4 cm. in strong examples, the petioles may be as much as 4 mm. long (though usually much less), and the length of the corolla may be as much as 4 mm. with lobes 2.25 mm. Otherwise it is a markedly unvarying mint. Despite Fraser's description (Fraser, 1927), I have been unable to detect a single branched hair on any part of the plant. The primordial leaves are, rather surprisingly, glabrous and green on both surfaces.

The origin of our new species has yet to be deduced. It is presumably a clone that may have arisen locally. Briquet and Fraser were content to include it in the *M. × niliaca* (*M. longifolia* × *rotundifolia*) group of hybrids, but it is difficult, especially in the absence of leaf rugosity and branched hairs, to see any influence of *M. rotundifolia* in it. Professor Tutin, to whom I am indebted, arranged for the chromosomes to be counted, and the resulting figure of $2n = 44$ is a little difficult to account for unless (as Dr. Morton has suggested to me) it represents an error for $2n = 42$ —which might be taken to suggest a backcross of an F1 offspring of *M. longifolia* ($2n = 48$) × *rotundifolia* ($2n = 24$) with the former parent. Aneuploidy is also a possibility. It is clearly advisable to await further cytological investigation, and for the time being the only possible grade is that of *species*. It is worth noting that despite reproduction by readily-spreading subterranean runners, fertile seed is produced and has been germinated.

M. scotica is recorded from low-lying parts of E. Perth (v.c. 89); from Forfar (v.c. 90); and from Elgin (v.c. 95). It is by no means uncommon along burns in Angus, the locality by the road-bridge at Glamis being well-known. Further collecting will establish its exact distribution and frequency, but it probably extends from Perth to Angus, continuing through the Mearns to coastal Aberdeenshire, and thence westwards along the southern side of the Moray Firth. It has been distributed on several occasions through the Botanical Exchange Club (1912, 1937, 1952 cult., 1954), and has been variously named as *M. longifolia*, *M. sylvestris* L., *M. candicans* Crantz and *M. mollissima* Borkh. As a result, specimens are fairly widespread among our national herbaria and in private collections. Records checked during preparation of this paper are as follows:—

Mid Perth, v.c. 88; Dunbarney, 1906, Wilson (K; OXF; herb. R. A. Graham 5064); Banks of R. Tay below Perth, 1871, Drummond-Hay 803 (OXF); Banks of R. Tay, 1865, Sim (K).

Forfar, v.c. 90; Glen Ogilvy, 1926, Corstorphine (K); 1912, G. C. Druce (K; OXF; herb. R. A. Graham 5107); 1924, Wilmott (BM); Glamis, 1937, Still (BM; herb. R. A. Graham 3976); 1937, Wallace (K; OXF); 1876, Drummond (K); 1947, Reehinger (BM); 1957, Graham & Harley (herb. R. M. Harley); near Parkhill, Arbroath, 1951, Duncan (herb. R. A. Graham 3978); McClintock (herb. R. A. Graham 3977); 1954, Duncan (BM); Netherton, by the South Esk, 1926, Corstorphine (K); by Meikle Coull, near Tannadice, 1957, Graham & Harley (herb. R. A. Graham 5176 A and B).

Elgin, v.c. 95; Forres, 1898, E. S. Marshall (BM); Brodie Burn, Forres, 1898, Shoolbred & E. S. Marshall (OXF; herb. R. A. Graham 5065); Moy Burn, Forres,

1953 *McCallum Webster* (herb. R. A. Graham 3973) : Muckle Burn, above Whitebridge, 1957, *McCallum Webster* (herb. R. A. Graham 5427). In Angus I have also seen this mint near Noranside, and by Maulsden, near Brechin.

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It is not proposed to supply a full and lengthy list of literature references. The following are, however, among the more important works consulted, together with other references immediately relevant to the foregoing text.

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