

## MINT NOTES

By R. A. GRAHAM

### VI. *MENTHA* × *VERTICILLATA* VAR. *TRICHODES* BRIQUET

In 1894 Briquet gave the above name to a mint from Hereford, v.c. 36, which had been sent to him for determination by G. C. Druce, the specimen being now at Oxford. There seems to be no original description of the variety, at any rate in this combination, but a validating text was provided by Fraser (1925, 621), so that the authority for the variety should be corrected to Briquet ex J. Fraser.

During the summer of 1934, Still found a very similar (though not identical) mint in Gower, v.c. 41, and to this, with Fraser's ultimate agreement, he gave Briquet's above name after consulting the Oxford specimen, at the same time giving a full description of the Gower plant (1935, 796-7).

Still, however, was clearly a little uncertain as to the correct status of "var. *trichodes*," and having detected the existence of *M.* × *dalmatica* Tausch var. *trichodes* Briquet [*M. arvensis* L. × *longifolia* (L.) Huds.] he seems to have decided—at any rate for a time—that the Hereford and Gower mints belonged to this hybrid group, indeed his specimens (British Museum, Natural History) are so named. On the other hand he also considered (1938, 663) the possibility of affinity with *M.* × *gentilis* L. (*M. arvensis* × *spicata* L. em. Huds.).

During the autumn of 1956, I visited Gower with Mr. R. M. Harley, and at Park Mill—one of the places where Still recorded it—we refound "var. *trichodes*." As a result the whole matter has been reconsidered.

Firstly, there is no obvious affinity with *M.* × *verticillata* L. (*M. aquatica* L. × *arvensis*), the calyx tube being short and campanulate as opposed to long and tubular as is characteristic of this latter hybrid group. Secondly, insofar as *M.* × *dalmatica* var. *trichodes* is concerned, there is a discrepancy between *folia lanceolata*, . . . *superficie* 4-6 × 1.5-2.5 cm. . . ; *serratura* . . . *dentibus* . . . *raris, dissitis* . . . as described for this mint (Briquet, 1894, 706) and the broadly ovate (fully developed) leaves, 7 × 4.7 cm., with the many, jagged, closely set serratures of the Gower plant (an interesting feature of the latter is that the upper bract-leaves have extremely few serratures), although if *M.* × *dalmatica* var. *trichodes* was described from inadequate material involving upper bract-leaves only (for which there is no textual evidence) its description might be taken to cover the Gower mint.

The affinity is far more with *M.* × *gentilis* through (1) the campanulate calyx tube with narrow, ± subulate teeth, the whole calyx being normal in shape for mints of the *M.* × *gentilis* group; (2) the sharply multiserrated lower leaves, which strongly resemble those of *M.* × *gentilis*; and (3) the general facies which suggests *M.* × *gentilis* at the same time excluding *M.* × *verticillata*. I have seen no certainly authentic specimens of *M.* × *dalmatica*, but neither the Hereford nor the Gower examples show any characters clearly suggesting *M. longifolia* as a parent. (A secondary point is that this latter species does not seem to grow in Gower). Our mint recedes from normal *M.* × *gentilis* in having largely hirsute calyx tubes and pedicels, rather large corollas, and a general degree of hairiness that exceeds that which is normal for this hybrid. Examples showing a similar

aberrance have been collected at Onich, North Ballachulish, v.c. 97 (Graham, 1947, 33-4). And the pungent, spearminty flavour, which characterises the hybrids of *M. spicata*, is largely absent in the Gower plant.

There can, I think, be no doubt that "*M. verticillata* var. *trichodes*" is in fact merely an aberrant form or sport of *M. × gentilis*, and the affinity can be taken even further in that there occurs in the Bishopstone Valley, east of Park Mill, a form of *M. × gentilis* known as var. *vesana* Lej. & Court., which is characterised by jaggedly serrated leaves. We were unable to refind this variety, but herbarium specimens show the lower leaves to be extremely like those of "var. *trichodes*." Still apparently found both growing together in the Bishopstone Valley, and it is significant that he reports difficulty in telling them apart in the field. The most probable status of "var. *trichodes*" is therefore a sport or aberrant form of *M. × gentilis* var. *vesana*. Root of the Gower "*trichodes*" has been taken to grow under observation.

The Gower examples differ from the Hereford plant in having a rather shorter calyx tube and considerably shorter cilia on the calyx teeth: but the two should be regarded as essentially the same sort of mint.

## REFERENCES

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