

A NEW VARIETY OF *VALERIANELLA LOCUSTA* (L. BETCKE

By D. E. ALLEN

VALERIANELLA LOCUSTA var. *dunensis*, var. nov. *A typo habitu humiliore compactiore acaulescente et foliis brevioribus differt. Holotypus in Herb. Mus. Brit.: v.c. 71, Isle of Man; dunes ('The Ayres') near Ballaghennie, parish of Bride, April, 1957, M. B. Bing; ex hort. Sanderstead, Surrey, July 1, 1959, D. P. Young no. 6724.*

Differs from the type in the much dwarfer (1–3 cm), more compact, acaulescent and cushion-like habit, with leaves only up to 3.5 cm long compared with up to 7 cm in the type.

This rather striking variety of *Valerianella locusta* has been known on the dunes at Freshfield, South Lancashire, for over fifty years. It has always seemed probable that it is a distinct dune ecotype, reproducing its characteristic habit from seed, but until 1957 no attempt, as far as is known, had been made to test whether this impression was correct.

In the course of the B.S.B.I. Field Meeting in the Isle of Man in June, 1950, what was clearly the same variety (even though by then well over) was noted on the dunes on the island's north coast, and in the report on that meeting (Allen, 1954) attention was drawn to its distinctness and apparently quite wide distribution. In the spring of 1957 Miss M. B. Bing happened to send me a parcel of fresh material of various species collected on another part of these Manx dunes further to the east, and included in this were one or two specimens of the same *Valerianella*, this time in good fruit. Having no garden of my own, I took the opportunity of sending the specimens to Dr. D. P. Young and requesting him to sow the seeds in his garden in Surrey. This he very kindly did, and after two summers' observation he was able to satisfy himself that the variety fully retains its characteristics under cultivation. I can find no description of any taxon corresponding to this in the literature and accordingly now provide it with a name.

The variety is characteristic of the therophyte community of grey dunes, associated with other spring annuals such as *Erophila verna* (L.) Chevall., *Myosotis ramosissima* Rochel, *Cerastium semidecandrum* L. and *Saxifraga tridactylites* L. An interesting parallel is provided by *Spergula arvensis* var. *nana*, a similarly low-growing variety described by Linton (1907) from dry places near the shore in Jersey and Guernsey. This, according to Linton, also comes true from seed.

I have seen material of var. *dunensis* from the following localities :

- v.c. 1. W. CORNWALL : Quarry, Gannel, Newquay, 1922, *E. Thurston* (K); Keen Sands, near Perranporth, 1926, *B. T. Lowne* (K).
52. ANGLESEY : Newborough Warren, 1953, *B. Welch* (BM).
59. S. LANCS. : Freshfield dunes, 1910, *W. G. Travis* (K); 1949 and since, *D. E. Allen*.
71. MAN : dunes near Rue Point, Andreas, 1950, *B.S.B.I. Field Meeting*; dunes near Ballaghennie, Bride, 1957, *M. B. Bing* (BM).
110. OUTER HEBRIDES : Clachan dunes, near Newton, North Uist, 1937, *M. S. Campbell and A. J. Wilmott* (BM).

Hart (1891, 1898) has recorded what sounds like this variety as plentiful on dunes in Co. Donegal, and a dwarf form is mentioned as occurring on dunes in Brittany by Le Gall (1852). Although the variety is to be expected in these areas, caution must be exercised in the absence of material in view of the fact that the typical plant also occurs on dunes, often in a stunted condition. I have seen material referable to the latter from dunes in Cornwall and Norfolk. Such plants are quite without the characteristic cushion-like habit of var. *dunensis*. A gathering from dunes at Bude, Cornwall, made by E. Thurston in 1925 and now in Herb. Kew, appears to consist of a mixture of the typical plant, var. *dunensis* and inter-

mediates between the two. This suggests that in some places hybrid populations may have arisen, possibly resulting in either the variety or the typical plant locally losing its distinctiveness through extensive interbreeding.

REFERENCES

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