EDITORIAL

History of the series on the Biology of Canadian Weeds

Paul B. Cavers1, Stephen J. Darbyshire2, and Gerald A. Mulligan2

1Department of Biology, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada N6A 5B7
2Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Eastern Cereal and Oilseed Research Centre, Wm. Saunders Bldg #49, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0C6.

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In the mid-1960s the founding of the Canadian Botanical Association provided a forum for the discussion of new botanical initiatives in Canada. At that time there was, coincidentally, a much increased interest in several areas of botany that had previously been little studied or ignored (e.g., plant autecology, plant population biology). As a result, many research projects became focused on individual species or small groups of closely related species. Botanists studying the native flora as well as those working with weed species became aware of the need for the compilation of all available information on important species, essentially in the format pioneered in Great Britain in the “Biological Flora of the British Isles”.

Botanists from the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa (the Plant Research Institute) and the Botany Department at the University of Western Ontario in London decided to prepare a manuscript format for a Canadian version of the Biological Flora. Gerald Mulligan and Paul Cavers agreed to undertake this work. The initial plan was to ask the Editorial Board of the Canadian Journal of Botany to initiate a series with a tentative title “The Biological Flora of Canada”. However, the Editor of the Canadian Journal of Botany did not accept this proposal.

When we re-examined all the letters and other material received while the original proposal was being prepared, it was evident that by far the greatest support had come from scientists studying weeds and invasive plant species. In particular, many members of the Canada Weed Committee (later known as the Expert Committee on Weeds and currently as the Canadian Weed Science Society) enthusiastically recommended that this series be established. The Agricultural Institute of Canada, publishers of the Canadian Journal of Plant Science, agreed to publish the series under the title “The Biology of Canadian Weeds”. We quickly revised the manuscript format to include aspects of weed biology not featured in the original proposal and published it in July 1972 (Cavers, P. B. and Mulligan, G. A. 1972. A new series – The Biology of Canadian Weeds. Canadian Journal of Plant Science 52: 651–654). Gerry Mulligan was the first Editor of the series and Paul Cavers took the lead in finding authors and maintaining a list of Accounts in Preparation.

The first account, published in October 1973, dealt with sheep-laurel (Kalnla angustifolia L.), a native species that is a weed of lowbush blueberry fields and pastures in eastern Canada. Since then, more than 150 accounts have been published, many on two or more species. In recent years, updates of several of the early accounts have been published. These updated accounts incorporate information on well-studied species published after the original account appeared. The series was popular from the outset, in fact there was such a great demand for many articles that the authors’ stocks of reprints soon were exhausted. In 1979, a book containing the first 32 accounts in the series was published by Agriculture Canada. Gerald Mulligan was the Editor and Compiler. In 1984, a second volume containing the next 29 accounts, with the same Editor/Compiler and publisher, was printed. Volumes 3, 4 and 5 were published with Paul Cavers as the Editor/Compiler by the Agricultural Institute of Canada in 1995, 2000 and 2005. In total, 129 original accounts plus three updated accounts were published in these five volumes (Table 1).

In 2003, a new complimentary series was started, “The Biology of Invasive Alien Plants in Canada”, in response to an expanding need for information on plants newly established or showing increased expansion in Canada, but for which there may be relatively little information available in a Canadian context. This series was intended to be similar in style and scope, but to concentrate on non-native plant species that have been more recently introduced into Canada than many of our common agricultural weeds, and for which there is substantial evidence that they may generate adverse economic impacts and management difficulties in agricultural systems or a broader landscape.

The format for the Biology of Canadian Weeds has changed little over the years. Each contribution consists of 13 sections. The first section lists the currently accepted scientific name and the English and French vernacular names plus any synonyms that appear in the weed literature. The second section begins with a brief