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Abstract

All Cuban representatives of Myricaceae, formerly treated under Myrica sensu lato, pertain to the segregate genus Morella. For two of the four Cuban species, Myrica cacuminis and M. shaferi, the required combinations do not exist as yet and are validly published here; a lectotype is designated for the latter name.

Additional key words: Myrica, taxonomy, Greater Antilles

Myricaceae is a small family, which has traditionally been considered to be monogeneric. Macdonald (1989) has summarised the reasons for dismembering the Linnoean genus Myrica and his arguments have gained increased acceptance in the following years. Recent studies (Wilbur 2001; Herbert 2005; Mabberley 2008) treat the family with four genera: Myrica L. (temperate North America and Europe), Morella Lour. (pantropical), Comptonia L’Hér. (northeastern North America) and Canaomyrica Guillaumin (New Caledonia).

Several former species of Myrica from North America (Wilbur 1994), Africa (Killick & al. 1999), Malesia (Turner 2001), South America (Parra-O. 2002) and some from Central America and the Caribbean (Wilbur 2001; Knapp 2002) have already found their place in Morella. As characterised by e.g. Herbert (2005), Morella comprises evergreen shrubs or trees with inflorescences borne on the present year’s growth and fleshy, papillose fruits; whereas Myrica consists of deciduous small shrubs with inflorescences borne on the previous year’s growth and dry fruits with adherent spongiose bracteoles.

For the Cuban flora, León & Alain (1951) reported four species of Myricaceae, which they placed in Myrica, but which under the above criteria clearly belong in Morella. Two of them have already been transferred to that genus, as M. cerifera (L.) Small and M. punctata (Griseb.) J. Herb. For the two others, the required combinations do not as yet exist. They are here proposed, as follows.


Morella cacuminis can be recognised by its small elliptic, rounded to obtuse, bullate leaves with obtuse base and irregularly toothed margin, the venation being strongly impressed adaxially and prominent abaxially. It is endemic to the high mountain peaks of SE Cuba (Sierra Maestra).


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Morella shaferi can be recognised by its obovate, truncate to apiculate leaves with cuneate to acute base and strongly revolute margin with but few teeth toward the apex. It is endemic to the serpentine mountains of NE Cuba.

Altogether, the Cuban species of Morella are four: three endemic to E Cuba (M. cacuminis, M. shaferi and M. punctata (Urb. & Britton) J. Herb.) and one neotropical, widely spread in the island (M. cerifera (L.) Small).

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References


