

## **Cleome sect. Physostemon (Cleomaceae) in Cuba**

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ROSA RANKIN RODRÍGUEZ

*Cleome* sect. *Physostemon* (*Cleomaceae*) in Cuba**Abstract**

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The forthcoming *Cleomaceae* treatment for the Flora de la República de Cuba will recognise three species in *Cleome* sect. *Physostemon*, one of them endemic and one with two endemic subspecies, instead of the nine species (seven endemic) that had been previously described. Four new combinations, two at subspecies level and two varietal, are made. A key for all recognised taxa is presented and their distribution is mapped.

**Introduction**

Bremer & al. (1998: 534) have recently proposed to merge the families *Capparaceae* and *Cruciferae* under the common name *Brassicaceae*. Undoubtedly, if one takes into account the new results of molecular systematics (see Kubitzki 2002 and literature there cited), it is inappropriate to maintain the two former families as they are traditionally defined. Hall & al. (2002), recognising that a family *Capparaceae* inclusive of *Cleomoideae* would be paraphyletic, recommend the recognition of smaller, monophyletic family units instead. I follow Hall & al.'s approach and will accept *Cruciferae* Adans., *Capparaceae* Adans. and *Cleomaceae* Horan. as separate families.

*Cleome*, with about 425 binomials listed in the database version of Index Kewensis (1997), is a large genus of almost cosmopolitan spread. It is the sole Cuban representative of *Cleomaceae* when *Gynandropsis* DC., rather than at generic level, is treated as its section. In the New World, the majority of *Cleome* (c. 65 species) are robust herbs, over 50 cm tall, characterised by (1-)3-13-foliolate leaves and with petals totally enveloping the stamens and pistil until anthesis ("closed aestivation" of Iltis 1958). A deviating group of c. 15 species was included by Iltis (1959) in *C.* sect. *Physostemon* (Mart. & Zucc.) Benth. & Hook. f.: these are slender plants less than 50 cm tall, with mostly simple or more rarely 1(-5)-foliolate leaves and flowers with an "open aestivation". The section is endemic to the New World, where it ranges from subtropical Mexico and the Antilles to Paraguay and northern Argentina. Iltis in his revision subdivides it into three series, of which the presumed most basal one, with the single species *C. tenuis* S. Watson, is endemic to Mexico and characterised by (still) 3-5-foliolate leaves. The two others, each





Fig. 1. Map of the Cuban distribution of *Cleome guianensis*.

**Distribution.** – From S Mexico (Baja California to Chiapas) and Belize through Mesoamerica to Colombia, British Guiana and Brazil. In westernmost Cuba it grows in pinelands on white sand (Fig. 1).

**Notes.** – In addition to the key characters, the species is characterised by largish (1.5–2 mm in diam.), strongly tuberculate to transversely ridged seeds with 0.4–0.5 mm high tubercles or ridges.

***Cleome macrorhiza*** C. Wright in *Anales Acad. Ci. Méd. Habana* 5: 199. 1868. – Lectotype (designated here): “Wet pine woods Pinar del Río”, 1865, Wright [3495] (GH 42323!; isolectotypes?: B!, BREM!, GOET [p.p!], K!, NY 22653!, 74436!, 74437!, S [2×, one sheet mixed with *C. procumbens*]!).

**Distribution.** – Endemic in westernmost Cuba (prov. Pinar del Río), growing in pineland and grasslands on white sand (Fig. 2).

***Cleome procumbens*** Jacq., *Enum. Syst. Pl.*: 26. 1760. – Neotype (designated here): [icon in] Jacquin, *Select. Stirp. Amer. Hist.*: t. 120. 1763.

**Note.** – There is no evidence that Jacquin had the plates, published in 1763, at his disposal before he published his 1760 “Enumeratio”. The original artwork on which the plates were based must logically be assumed to have been used by him, but according to information kindly provided by Prof. H. W. Lack, Berlin, only fragments appear to have survived. Iltis (1959: 141) gives the type of *Cleome procumbens* as “Jacquin s.n.” but does not claim to have seen the corresponding specimen, which is not known to exist.

***Cleome procumbens*** Jacq. subsp. ***procumbens***

**Distribution.** – Jamaica, Hispaniola and southeastern Cuba, where it is frequent on coastal rocks (Fig. 2).

***Cleome procumbens*** subsp. ***obtusa*** (Urb.) R. Rankin, **comb. & stat. nov.** ≡ *Cleome obtusa* Britton in *Bull. Torrey Bot. Club* 44: 2. 1917 ≡ *Cleome obtusa* var. *obtusa* (Urb.) Iltis in *Brittonia* 11: 147. 1959. – Holotype: [Cuba], “Province of Camaguey, savannas near Camaguey, rocky soil”, 2.4.1912, Britton & al. 13165 (NY 74438!).

= *Cleome gamboensis* Urb. in *Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg.* 22: 36. 1925 ≡ *Cleome obtusa* var. *gamboensis* (Urb.) Iltis in *Brittonia* 11: 147. 1959. – Holotype: [Cuba, prov. Las Tunas], “Oriente prope Gamboa in savannas, generally in bare spots in somewhat alkaline places”, 26.8.1922, Ekman 14937 (B!; isotypes: K!, S [3×]!).

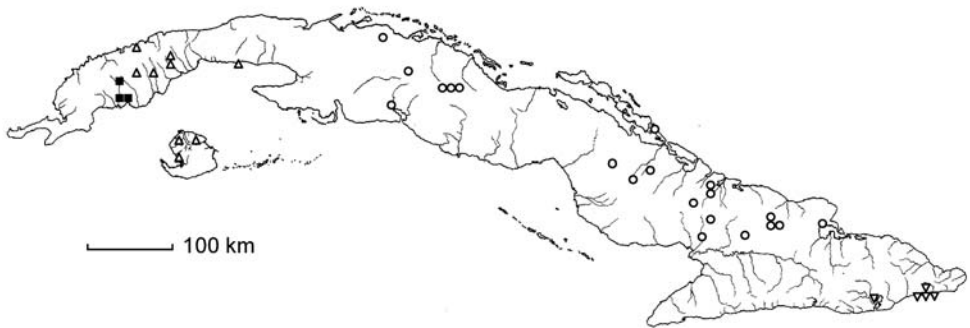


Fig. 2. Map of the Cuban distribution of *Cleome macrorrhiza* (■), *C. procumbens* subsp. *procumbens* (▽), subsp. *obtusa* (○), and subsp. *wrightii* (△).

= *Cleome tenuicaulis* Urb. in Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. 22: 37. 1925. – Holotype: [Cuba, prov. Camagüey], “Oriente (ad limitem prov. Camagüey) prope Galbis in savannis locis uliginosis”, 16.8.1916, *Ekman* 7458 (B!; isotype: S!).

**Distribution.** – Endemic to central Cuba (prov. Villa Clara, Camagüey, Las Tunas and Holguín), where it is common on serpentine or non-ophiolithic soils, in sandy or waterlogged grassland (Fig. 2).

*Cleome procumbens* subsp. *wrightii* (Urb.) R. Rankin, **comb. & stat. nov.** ≡ *Cleome wrightii* Urb., Symb. Antill. 5: 346. 1907. – Holotype: “*Cleome procumbens* Jacq.”, [Cuba], *Wright* 1868 (B ex herb. Krug & Urban!; isotypes?: BM 629052!, BREM!, F 163539 [negative 51631]!, GH 42325!, K!, MA 608769!, NY 22654!, 74440!, S!). – Fig. 2.

*Cleome procumbens* (subsp. *wrightii*) var. *wrightii* (Urb.) R. Rankin, **comb. & stat. nov.**

**Distribution.** – Endemic to western Cuba (prov. Pinar del Río, South of prov. La Habana), in moist grassland and sandy places.

*Cleome procumbens* (subsp. *wrightii*) var. *arenaria* (Urb.) R. Rankin, **comb. & stat. nov.** ≡ *Cleome arenaria* Urb. in Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. 22: 36. 1925. – Holotype: [Cuba, Isla de la Juventud], “Isla de Pinos prope Santa Bárbara in alkali flats in arena albida”, 3.11.1920, *Ekman* 12064 (B!; isotypes: S! [2×]).

**Distribution.** – Endemic to western Cuba (Isla de la Juventud), in sandy places.

## Discussion

In his revision, Iltis (1959: 146) already expressed considerable uncertainty, not to say puzzlement, as to the appropriate taxonomic classification of the *Cleome procumbens* complex. He wrote: “Of all the species treated in this study, the group centring about *C. wrightii* caused the most difficulties. Although *C. procumbens*, *C. wrightii*, and *C. obtusa* are here treated as species, the temptation was great to treat all as subspecies of *C. procumbens*. Many of my earlier annotations were to that effect, and further work may bring other workers to this, for the present rejected, solution.”

Looking at the treatment above you will find that Iltis’s remark was exactly prophetic, which is why I could not withstand the temptation to quote it in full. The fact is that with increasing material at hand the boundaries between the species recognised, albeit reluctantly, by Iltis tended to blur. In particular, it was increasingly hard to make an objective distinction between the nar-

row-fruited *C. wrightii* and the taxa bordering the area of *C. obtusa* to the east, which Urban had distinguished as *C. gamboensis* and *C. tenuicaulis*. Were it not for the additional character of stem papillosity, which appears to offer a fairly safe means to distinguish between the western and central Cuban plants, I might well have given up in despair.

Whereas stem indumentum at least enables a reasonably secure way to tell apart *C. procumbens* subsp. *wrightii* and subsp. *obtusa*, other characters advocated by previous authors to discriminate between subsp. *obtusa* and “*C. gamboensis*” and/or “*C. tenuicaulis*”, at any level, just do not work out. True, in the fragmented central Cuban area of subsp. *obtusa* just about every discrete population tends to have its own peculiar look and combination of quantitative features, but it is certainly neither practical nor in any way useful to give formal recognition to individual local populations. Furthermore, it is easy to foretell that minute quantitative differences that appear to be tangible when a small number of individuals gathered simultaneously in a single spot are considered will not hold when additional collections from the same place but made independently at some other moment become available. I therefore refrain from recognising any such variant, even at varietal level.

The situation is slightly different in the west, where plants from the Isla de la Juventud, formerly “Isle of Pines”, stand out by their small leaves and low-growing habit against the mainland representatives of *Cleome procumbens* subsp. *wrightii*. This did not escape Iltis’s notice, who conceded that the type gathering of “*C. arenaria*” as well as a second collection he saw from the same island differed by their “somewhat smaller and narrower leaves ... and more strongly tubercled seeds”. But then, he goes on, “The third collection from the Isla de Pinos (*Blain 49*) agrees in every respect with Cuban collections.” He was right, as usual, yet his conclusion I believe is wrong. What I doubt is not the (slight) difference of the plants from the Isla with respect to those from the Cuban mainland, but much rather, the stated provenance of the *Blain* specimen. As Millspaugh (1900) made clear, José Blain did collect on the Isle of Pines, and a parcel with duplicates of his collections was sent by Sauvalle to Charles Wright, to end up, some time after the latter’s death, at the Field Museum in Chicago. There are no labels associated with these collections and the numbering obviously was Sauvalle’s [who, as it happens, was Blain’s brother-in-law – H. Manitz, pers. comm.]. In Sauvalle’s own herbarium, now at HAC, there are no *Cleome* specimens from the Isla de la Juventud, but at least two sheets of Wright’s type collection of *Cleome wrightii* from Pinar del Río (*Wright 1868*, numbered “48” by Sauvalle), which are indeed identical in every detail with “*Blain 49*” at F. It is therefore most likely that, some way or other, non-Blain material from the Sauvalle herbarium, including a duplicate of *Wright 1868*, got mingled with the Blain collections in the parcel that Sauvalle sent to Wright.

The bottom line is that the plants from the Isla de la Juventud are, if feebly, distinct from genuine *Cleome procumbens* subsp. *wrightii* of the main island of Cuba, which prompted me to accept “*Cleome arenaria*” as a separate variety within that subspecies.

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