

generations, caused the prompt withdrawal of the proposition. Those who earnestly wish conservation of really very important names of economic plants should proceed with care, looking out that their would-be conserved names rest upon undoubted types. The seeking out of types and their conscientious study is an exacting task, neglected by many, but conservation based on accumulated errors, such as surrounded all the early accounts of *Pinus palustris*, is not worth the name. We are not, as scientists, aiming to perpetuate error.

---

THE PROPOSED CHANGES IN ARTICLE 58,  
INTERNATIONAL RULES OF BOTANICAL  
NOMENCLATURE<sup>1</sup>

NORMAN C. FASSETT

The present Article 58 of the International Rules of Botanical Nomenclature provides that “. . . when a group changes its rank, the earliest legitimate name or epithet given to the group in its new rank is valid, . . . ” The proposed changes, originally submitted by Professor Rehder (Journ. Arnold Arb. 20: 275. 1939) and somewhat modified by the Central Committee on Nomenclature of the American Society of Plant Taxonomists, specify that “When no legitimate name exists in the new rank, the earliest existing name or epithet in any rank must be retained . . . For purposes of nomenclatural priority, all subdivisions of species are regarded of the same rank.”

The proposed changes are not retroactive; if they were the mortality might be high. But, to see how this rule might work

<sup>1</sup> For the benefit of such of our readers as have not seen it, the proposal in regard to Article 58, as sent out by the Central Committee on Nomenclature of the American Society of Plant Taxonomists is here reprinted in full.

“Art. 58. Change the basic Article to read as follows and *delete* paragraphs (2) and (3) of Rec. XXXVI:

“When a tribe becomes a family, when a subgenus or section becomes a genus, when a subdivision of a species becomes a species, or when the reverse of these changes takes place, the earliest legitimate name or epithet given to the group in its new rank is valid, unless that name or the resulting association or combination is a later homonym. (see Arts. 60, 61).

“When no legitimate name exists in the new rank, the earliest existing name or epithet in any rank must be retained, unless the resulting association or combination is a later homonym (see Arts. 60, 61); but this applies only to names published after Jan. 1, 1953.

“For purposes of priority, all subdivisions of species are regarded as of the



in the future, we may examine what would have been the result if it had been in force in the past.

The northwestern phase of *Phlox pilosa*, from Wisconsin and Illinois westward to the Dakotas and eastern Kansas, differs from the eastern phase of the species in the lustrous glandless hairs in the inflorescence; it was named *P. pilosa* var. *fulgida* Wherry, *Bartonia*, no. 12: 47. 1931. But the earliest name, as any subdivision of a species, based on a type identifiable with var. *fulgida*, is *P. pilosa* f. *albiflora* MacMillan, *Metasp. Minn. Vall.* 432. 1892, founded on one of the rather uncommon white-flowered individuals such as are occasionally found among the mass of purple-flowered plants. Under the proposed rule, all the plants now known as var. *fulgida* would carry a varietal name signifying, not that they have lustrous hairs (true), but that they have white flowers (nearly always false). We could, of course, then coin a quadrinomial for the common phase of the population, following the varietal name (stating that the flowers are white) with a formal name (stating that the flowers are *not* white).

The northern representative of *Epigaea repens* differs from the scabrous-leaved southern plant by having the leaf-surfaces nearly or quite glabrous, and has been described as *E. repens* var. *glabrifolia* Fernald, *RHODORA* 41: 446. 1939. The earliest name, as any subdivision of a species, based on a type from the north, is *E. repens* f. *plena* Rehder, *Journ. Arnold Arb.* 7: 244. 1926, describing an exceptional individual with petaloid stamens.

---

same rank, except as provided for subdivisions containing the type of the species.

"Examples may be retained.

—Argument—

"The practice of changing names or epithets on change of rank was rather common in the past; it is, however, contrary to both the spirit and letter of the present Rules (see Arts. 4 (paragraph 2), 59 and 60 (2)), and Rec. XXXVI shows quite clearly the intent of the Congress to stop it. Nevertheless, some recent authors have changed epithets with change of rank, for no better reason than that they regarded available epithets already existing as inappropriate. The proposed amendment is intended to make perfectly clear that this practice is illegitimate. It cannot be made fully retroactive without causing much confusion in past nomenclature; its application is accordingly fixed with a future date so that there will be no additional confusion.

"Proposed by: This is a proposal combining elements of that submitted by Alfred Rehder (*Journ. Arnold Arb.* 20: 275. 1939—which see for his argument), together with further additions and modifications made by the Committee."

No alternative proposal was received by the Committee.—C. A. W.



Under the amended Art. 58, our northern Trailing Arbutus would carry a name implying double flowers, a phenomenon observed, apparently, but once. Again, a name originally intended to distinguish an exceptional individual from the bulk of the population would be forced upon that entire population. The author of f. *plena* intended, of course, to give the name *plena* to the double-flowered minority, not to the single-flowered majority.

Discovery of the fact that the type of *Streptopus roseus* Michx. represents the rather local southeastern extreme of the species necessitated the coining of a new varietal name for the common *S. roseus* of the eastern United States and Canada. The present writer gave it a name meaning "well-known," calling it *S. roseus* var. *perspectus* Fassett, RHODORA, 37: 109. 1935. It happens that in the far western variety of *S. roseus*, branching stems are rare, and in the middle western variety a majority of plants have simple stems, while in var. *perspectus* the vast majority of plants have branching stems. One of the rare unbranched individuals so impressed Brother Victorin as something unusual that he described it as *S. roseus* f. *simplex* Victorin, Contrib. Lab. Bot. Univ. Montreal, no. 14: 23. 1929. Had the amended Art. 58 been in force in 1935, the most freely branching phase of *Streptopus roseus* would now be bearing a varietal name based on f. *simplex*, and botanists in general would be asking by what logic these taxonomists concoct their names.

Brother Victorin would never have been silly enough to give the name *simplex* to the most freely branching variety of *Streptopus roseus*: what adjective can we apply to a rule that would have forced this unintended application of his name?

The point is, a majority of taxonomists have made a distinction between subspecies, varieties and forms. In the last-named category, there is a vast assemblage of names based on albinos, double flowers, simple stems, and other trivial states, coined to point out something unusual; these would be highly inappropriate and contradictory if forced to embrace the whole population from which the author of each name intended only to differentiate the unusual thing.

The argument for the change in Art. 58 seems to be, mainly, that "... some recent authors have changed epithets with



change of rank, for no better reason than that they regarded available epithets already existing as inappropriate." Is that bad? Admitted, we cannot indulge, as did Rafinesque and C. G. Lloyd, in wholesale rejection of names that do not appeal to our fancy; admitted, consistent application of rules unavoidably results in an occasional inappropriate name. But is this a reason for deliberately changing the rules to force the adoption of inappropriate names in a sense different from that originally intended by their authors?

Art 58 states that the earliest name *in the new rank* is valid; a footnote to Art. 16 states that "the valid name is the binary or ternary combination containing the earliest epithet published with the same rank." To bring Art. 55 into line with these rules, phrase (2) should read:

"that there is available an earlier validly published subdivisional epithet in the same rank." In Art. 60 (2), the phrase "in the correct rank" should be added after the word "epithet." Modification of Art. 59 is not necessary, for that article carries no injunction against a well-chosen name if its adoption is not out of harmony with the rest of the rules.

To Art. 58 the following example might be added: *Peltigera canina* var. *rufescens* f. *innovans* (Körb.) Thomson, Trans. Wis. Acad. **38**: 265. 1947, is based on the earliest valid name as a forma, *Peltigera rufescens* f. *innovans* Körb. Syst. Lich. Germ. 60. 1855, not on *Peltidea ulorrhiza* var. *praetextata* Flk. apud Sommerf. Suppl. Flor. Lappon. 123. 1826.—N. C. F.

DEPARTMENT OF BOTANY,  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN.

*Volume 50, no. 597, including pages 217-240 and plates 1112-1117, was issued 17 September, 1948.*



Fassett, Norman C. 1948. "The proposed changes in Article 58, international rules of botanical nomenclature." *Rhodora* 50, 249–252.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/14520>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/122959>

**Holding Institution**

Missouri Botanical Garden, Peter H. Raven Library

**Sponsored by**

Missouri Botanical Garden

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

Rights: <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.