

A contorted tale - the trials and tribulations of *Coprosma autumnalis*

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Ewen Cameron (2020) briefly notes the replacement of the familiar name *Coprosma grandifolia* with *C. autumnalis*. It took me quite a while and much delving to clarify the status and reasons for that change.

Coprosma autumnalis was first collected by Banks and Solander on Cook's first voyage in 1769 and specimens of that species, *C. lucida*, *C. robusta*, and three other species of *Coprosma* were illustrated by Parkinson and described by Banks and Solander during the voyage. Solander created a new genus for what we now know as *Coprosma*, calling it *Pelaphia*. The type specimens are contained in the Banksian herbarium now at Kew. Manuscripts were prepared for publication and the plates cut, but work ceased when Solander died in 1782 and Banks had become heavily involved in other duties. The text of the Florilegium and proofs of the plates were available at Solander's house until his death in 1782 and then transferred to the British Museum. But this did not constitute publication (although this has been debated over the years).

The Forsters travelled on Cook's second voyage in 1771 and collected two *Coprosmas*. In 1776 they established the appropriate name: *Coprosma* for the genus, naming the new species *C. foetidissima* and *C. lucida*. In 1827 Lesson, based in France, visited New Zealand on the *Astolabe* under Dumont D'Urville. He collected *Coprosma lucida* and several other *coprosmas* but not *C. autumnalis*. These were subsequently described under *Ronabea* by Richards (1832) with *Coprosma lucida* acquiring the name *R. australis*. Communications were not that great at that time.

In 1844-5 Joseph Hooker visited New Zealand and from 1850, as curator at Kew, compiled the first flora of New Zealand, publishing it in 1853. He described *Coprosma grandifolia* and *C. lucida* amongst some 39 other species. In doing that he accepted the Forster's earlier name for *Coprosma lucida*, aligning it with the manuscript name *Pelapia laurifolia* of Banks and Solander.

But he bases *Coprosma grandifolia* on *Pelaphia grandifolia* of Banks and Solander and includes Richard's *Ronabea australis*. Hooker's brief description notes that *C. grandifolia* is:

"closely allied to the preceding species [*C. lucida*], but very distinct, and to be recognized by the very large, broader, more membranous leaves ... "

Hooker does not separate *C. robusta* (described later by Raoul, 1844) but rather includes it in *C. grandifolia* as *P. laeta*.

Colenso (1877) added *Coprosma autumnalis*, but in the same issue Cheeseman provided a monograph on the genus subsuming *C. autumnalis* within *C. grandifolia*. These names and synonymies were used in 1890 by Kirk in his Student Flora and Cheeseman in his two editions of his Flora in 1905 and 1925.

However, Robinson (1910), in reviewing the Rubiaceae, published the name *Coprosma australis* (from *Ronabea australis*) to replace *Coprosma grandifolia*, as Hooker's name was regarded as illegitimate, being based on a manuscript name. The type was not located. When Volume One of the Flora was published (Allan 1961), that change was accepted .

A.P. Druce (1987), in a summary of name changes in the New Zealand Flora since 1961, notes:

"The use of *C. australis* as in Allan (op. cit.) is incorrect because the type of *C. australis* (A. Rich.) Robinson, is based on *Ronabea australis* A. Rich. at M, which matches *C. lucida* Forst. et Forst. f. The next available name for the plants known here as *C. australis* is *C. grandifolia* Hook. f."

as it fitted Hooker's description. That became the current accepted name. However, when the Bank and Solander Florilegium was published (Gooding et al., 2015) the plate of *Pelaphia grandifolia* bears the name *Coprosma autumnalis* Col., and Mabberley states that the name *C. grandifolia* is a synonym of *C. lucida*.

From the tone of Ewen Cameron's note in the Auckland Botanical Society News Sheet May 2020, it seems that there has always been some doubt over the acceptance of the name *C. grandifolia*. The problem is that Hooker effectively included *C. lucida* (as *Ronabea australis*), *C. robusta* (as *P. laeta*) and *C. autumnalis* (as *P. grandifolia*) in his *C. grandifolia*. Of these only *R. australis* was a validly published name, hence regardless of the description, *C. grandifolia* becomes a synonym of *Coprosma lucida*. At worst the usage is confusing. Hence Mabberley has chosen to accept the much later Colenso name of *Coprosma autumnalis* for the taxon.

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Editorial Note: As the article was about to be printed it was noted that moves are afoot to conserve the name *Coprosma grandifolia* (Rubiaceae) against *C. autumnalis* with a conserved type. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/tax.12437>

Proposals are considered by the Nomenclature Committee of the International Association for Plant Taxonomy.