

BOOK REVIEW

A taxonomic revision of *Lamium* (Lamiaceae). Mennema, J. (1989). Leiden Botanical Series, Volume 11. Leiden University Press. c.US\$46.00

It is always welcome to see some of the north temperate genera under taxonomic scrutiny — here the temperate Eurasian (holarctic) genus *Lamium* L. This continues the work on the Lamiaceae in the Leiden Botanical Series following a similar format to the volume 4 revision of *Origanum* in 1980.

This is a fairly extensive work of 198 pages. The citation (in small print) of the c.10000 specimens examined (extending over sixty pages of text) is a publication luxury few Herbaria can now afford and there is quite lengthy citation in the synonymy.

The treatment includes one new section and nine new combinations below specific rank. With about 40–50 species usually attributed to the genus, many have obviously been reduced to lower rank or synonymy in the description of 16 species, 11 subspecies, 13 varieties and one hybrid. It is pointed out that the concept of *Lamium* ‘... is mainly not characterised by the presence of certain characters but by their absence’ and has traditionally been ‘... a repository of *insertae sedis Labiatae*’. In spite of this, *Lamium* is diagnosed polythetically and the original concept ‘... from Linnaeus (1759) to Briquet (1897)’ retained, the characters used being essentially those of gross morphology with the dimensions of various structures extensively graphed.

In our current era of phylogenetic systematics I do not think the section *An Intuitive Phylogenetic Reconstruction* beginning ‘... I start from the axiom, that species with a large, disjunct distribution area are older than species with a small and continuous area’ would be likely to impress with its methodology. A tree illustrating the intuitive phylogenetic relationships of the species clearly shows the subgenus *Lamium* as a paraphyletic group.

Only one species of *Lamium* is widely cultivated in Australia, a silvery-leaved variant of *L. galeobdolon* (L.)L.f. sometimes listed under *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* (L.)Ehrend. & Polatschek and called Aluminium Plant (*Pilea cadierei* Gagnep. & Guillaum. is perhaps better known under this common name). Evidently this garden plant has become an important garden escape in various parts of Europe over the last decade. Anticipating more publication of naturalisation it has been given formal botanical status as *Lamium galeobdolon* (L.)L.f. f. *argentatum* (Smejkal)Mennema. It has not, so far as I am aware, become weedy in Australia. Two species are naturalised on cultivated land in Australia and New Zealand, *L. amplexicaule* L. and *L. purpureum* L. These remain essentially unchanged except for cleistogamous plants of the former found in South Australia: sometimes placed in *L. amplexicaule* L. var. *clandestinum* Reichb. they are now in synonymy under var. *amplexicaule*.

Unfortunately the English is occasionally rather stilted and with unusual punctuation. There are also occasional unnerving semantic shifts where related but inappropriate English words have (presumably) been substituted for the Dutch. This is noticeable for instance in the key to all taxa except hybrids. Couplet 5(2) reads ‘Leaves at the utmost as long as broad, usually shorter than broad’, couplet 6(1) ‘Plant larger, 10 cm or longer, with larger leaves, 1 cm or longer.’

This is a solid piece of work in a genus clearly needing attention. The plant illustrations are of a high standard.

R. SPENCER