

## Names associated with *Aloe speciosa* Baker (Asphodelaceae), a common species in the Western and Eastern Cape Provinces of South Africa

Gideon F. Smith<sup>1,2,3</sup> & Estrela Figueiredo<sup>2,4</sup>

1 Biosystematics Research and Biodiversity Collections Division, South African National Biodiversity Institute, Private Bag X101, Pretoria, 0001 South Africa (email: G.Smith@sanbi.org.za).

2 Centre for Functional Ecology, Departamento de Ciências da Vida, Universidade de Coimbra, 3001-455 Coimbra, Portugal.

3 H.G.W.J. Schweickerdt Herbarium, Department of Plant Science, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 0002 South Africa.

4 Department of Botany, PO Box 77000, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, 6031 South Africa (email: estrelafigueiredo@hotmail.com).

**Summary:** We argue that the names *Aloe hexapetala* Salm-Dyck, *A. drepanophylla* Baker, *Aloe chloroleuca* Baker and *Aloe platylepis* Baker should not be regarded as competing with the name *Aloe speciosa* Baker. The latter name is well-known, widely used, and can be easily linked to natural populations of an aloe that is widespread in South Africa's Western and Eastern Cape Provinces. The other names are to be regarded as insufficiently known.

**Zusammenfassung:** Wir sind der Meinung, dass die Namen *Aloe hexapetala* Salm-Dyck, *A. drepanophylla* Baker, *Aloe chloroleuca* Baker und *Aloe platylepis* Baker nicht derart zu interpretieren sind, dass sie den Namen *Aloe speciosa* Baker konkurrenzieren. Dieser letzt-genannte Name ist gut bekannt, wird weiterhin verwendet, und kann leicht mit natürlichen Populationen einer Aloe in Verbindung gebracht werden, die in den südafrikanischen Provinzen Western Cape und Eastern Cape weit verbreitet ist. Die übrigen Namen sollten als "ungenügend bekannt" betrachtet werden.

### Introduction

It has been stated by Govaerts (<http://apps.kew.org/wcsp/>) that the name *Aloe hexapetala* Salm-Dyck (Salm-Reifferscheid-Dyck, 1817) should be adopted as the earliest one known to have been validly published for *Aloe speciosa* Baker (Baker, 1880), with *Aloe drepanophylla* Baker (Baker, 1875), *Aloe chloroleuca* Baker (Baker, 1877b) and *Aloe platylepis* Baker (Baker, 1877a) as synonyms. This statement was followed by The Plant List (<http://www.theplantlist.org>)

and the Encyclopedia of Life (<http://eol.org>) where *A. hexapetala* is listed as the accepted name for this taxon. We disagree with this point of view.

### Names associated with *Aloe speciosa*

Salm-Dyck (Salm-Reifferscheid-Dyck, 1817) described a plant growing in his private garden as *A. hexapetala*, noting that he had seen it in flower in "horto Schoenb." (Schoenbrunn Garden, Vienna, Austria). There is no type designated for this name and the description is inadequate for linking it to known populations of a species of *Aloe* L. Glen & Hardy (2000) considered this plant to be a hybrid (see Table 1). Jacobsen (1960: 168) appears to be the only author who suggested ("...perhaps identical with this species" [*Aloe speciosa*]) that *A. hexapetala* could be the same as *A. speciosa*.

Baker (1875) described a plant brought to England from the Zuurberg mountain range (in the present-day Eastern Cape Province of South Africa) by Thomas Cooper that flowered in his garden, as *Aloe drepanophylla* (Type: From South Africa, cultivated in England, *Cooper s.n.* K000256690, K000256689). In the description included in *Flora capensis* for *A. drepanophylla*, Baker (1896: 324) states that the flowers are "...red-tinted only at first, whitish when mature;..."; open flowers of *A. speciosa* are indeed white and the buds are a deep pinkish red. However, from the type specimen, it is evident that this name is applied to an aloe that has leaves that are much narrower than those of *A. speciosa*. Two years later, Baker described two further species (Baker, 1877a, b) based on plants that flowered at Kew, presumed to have also origi-

Name	Reynolds (1950)	Glen & Hardy (2000)	Newton (2001)
<i>Aloe hexapetala</i> Salm-Dyck (1817)	p. 427: “imperfectly known...” “...name should be dropped...”	p. 148: Under ‘Species insufficiently known’, “This is a hybrid, probably with <i>A speciosa</i> as one parent.”	p. 105: “...unresolved application.”
<i>Aloe drepanophylla</i> Baker (1875)	p. 427: “...Baker’s plant was a hybrid with <i>Aloe speciosa</i> one possible parent.”	p. 148: Under ‘Species insufficiently known’, “This is a hybrid, probably with <i>A speciosa</i> as one parent.”	p. 105: “...unresolved application.”
<i>Aloe chloroleuca</i> Baker (1877b)	p. 427: “...hybrid with <i>Aloe speciosa</i> one possible parent.”	p. 148: Under ‘Species insufficiently known’, “This is a hybrid, probably with <i>A speciosa</i> as one parent.”	p. 105: “...unresolved application.”
<i>Aloe platylepis</i> Baker (1877a)	p. 427: “...possibly a cross between these two species [ <i>Aloe ferox</i> and <i>Aloe speciosa</i> ].”	Not mentioned.	p. 105: “...unresolved application.”

Table 1. Treatments of the names *Aloe hexapetala*, *A. drepanophylla*, *A. chloroleuca* and *A. platylepis* by recent authors working on the genus *Aloe*.

nated from South Africa, but without any information on the places where they occur: *Aloe platylepis* (Type: South Africa, s.c. s.n. K000256692, K000256693) and *Aloe chloroleuca* (Type: South Africa, s.c. s.n. K000256688). On the specimen label of *Aloe platylepis* the species is stated to have orange flowers with the tips of segments “marked with a dorsal green stripe which on the three outer segments is more distinctly seen to be composed of three lines”, while the description included in *Flora capensis* for it (Baker 1896: 324) states that the flowers are pale-red or yellow; open flowers of *A. speciosa* are white and the buds are a deep pinkish red, never orange. In the case of *Aloe chloroleuca*, the teeth on the margins of the leaves are much larger than are found in *Aloe speciosa*; in *Aloe speciosa* the leaf marginal teeth are characteristically very small. Reynolds (1950) and Glen & Hardy (2000) considered these three plants to be hybrids, with *A. speciosa* probably being one of the parents. We agree with these authors.

In 1880, Baker established the name *Aloe speciosa* (Type: South Africa, MacOwan 1922 K000256687) for an aloe that is widely distributed in the Western and Eastern Cape Provinces of South Africa (Figure 1).

The three older names established by Baker (*Aloe drepanophylla*, *Aloe chloroleuca* and *Aloe platylepis*) that have been associated with *Aloe speciosa*, should not be included in its synonymy as, based on the type specimens and descriptions that are associated with, and accompanied, all of them, it is impossible to positively link them to material known in the wild.

Since the names cannot be linked to known aloe populations, we propose that they be regarded as insufficiently known. This approach will be in the best interests of nomenclatural stability as it will retain the use of a name that has been widely and consistently used in South Africa for over 100 years for a conspicuous and well-known species (Figure 2), and prevent the preparation of a conservation proposal for consideration by the General Committee of the International Association of Plant Taxonomists.

### Conclusion

The nomenclature of the species resolves as follows:

*Aloe speciosa* Baker (1880) in *The Journal of the Linnean Society, Botany* 18: 178.

No known synonymy.



**Figure 1.** The dense, impenetrable thicket vegetation north of Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa is a natural habitat of *Aloe speciosa*. Photograph: Gideon F. Smith.

Names insufficiently known:

*Aloe hexapetala* Salm-Dyck (1817)

*Aloe drepanophylla* Baker (1875)

*Aloe chloroleuca* Baker (1877b)

*Aloe platylepis* Baker (1877a)

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**Figure 2.** The name *Aloe speciosa* has been consistently applied to a distinctive, tall-growing South African species of aloe that carries bi-coloured inflorescences in mid-winter.

Photograph: Gideon F. Smith.

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