

Taxonomic And Nomenclatural Notes On Malesian Araceae I — Resolving *Homalomena ovata*, and a new name in *Homalomena* for *Chamaecladon ovatum*

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ABSTRACT

Corrections and updates are made to the taxonomy and nomenclature of *Homalomena ovata* Engl., *Homalomena borneensis* Ridl, and *Chamaecladon ovatum* Schott. *Homalomena hostifolia* Engl. is treated as a homotypic superfluous name for *H. ovata* Engl. *Homalomena ovatum* (Schott) Hook.f., an illegitimate name, is renamed *Homalomena nathanielii* and treated as a Singapore endemic in the *Homalomena Griffithii* complex.

Keywords: *Homalomena*, *Chamaecladon*, Singapore, Sarawak, Borneo.

***Chamaecladon ovatum* Schott, *Homalomena ovata* Engl. (1879) and *Homalomena ovata* (Schott) Hook.f. (1893).**

When transferring Schott's *Chamaecladon ovatum* (Schott, 1859), based on a Nathaniel Wallich collection from Singapore, to *Homalomena*, Hooker (1893: 536) was apparently unaware of Engler's earlier *Homalomena ovata* (Engler, 1879), based on an Odoardo Beccari collection from Matang, Kuching, Sarawak, with the consequence that *H. ovata* (Schott) Hook.f. is illegitimate. However, Engler evidently took the view that the earlier date of the basionym in *Chamaecladon* of Hooker's combination conferred on it priority in *Homalomena*. He therefore renamed his *Homalomena ovata* Engl. as *H. hostifolia* Engl. (Engler, 1912: 70), thereby creating a superfluous homotypic name under modern nomenclatural rules. *Homalomena ovata* Engl. therefore stands, as follows:



Figure 1. Holotype of *Homalomena ovata*. O. Beccari p.b. 1780 in the Herbarium Beccarianum-Malesia (FI-B), of the Natural History Museum of the University of Florence

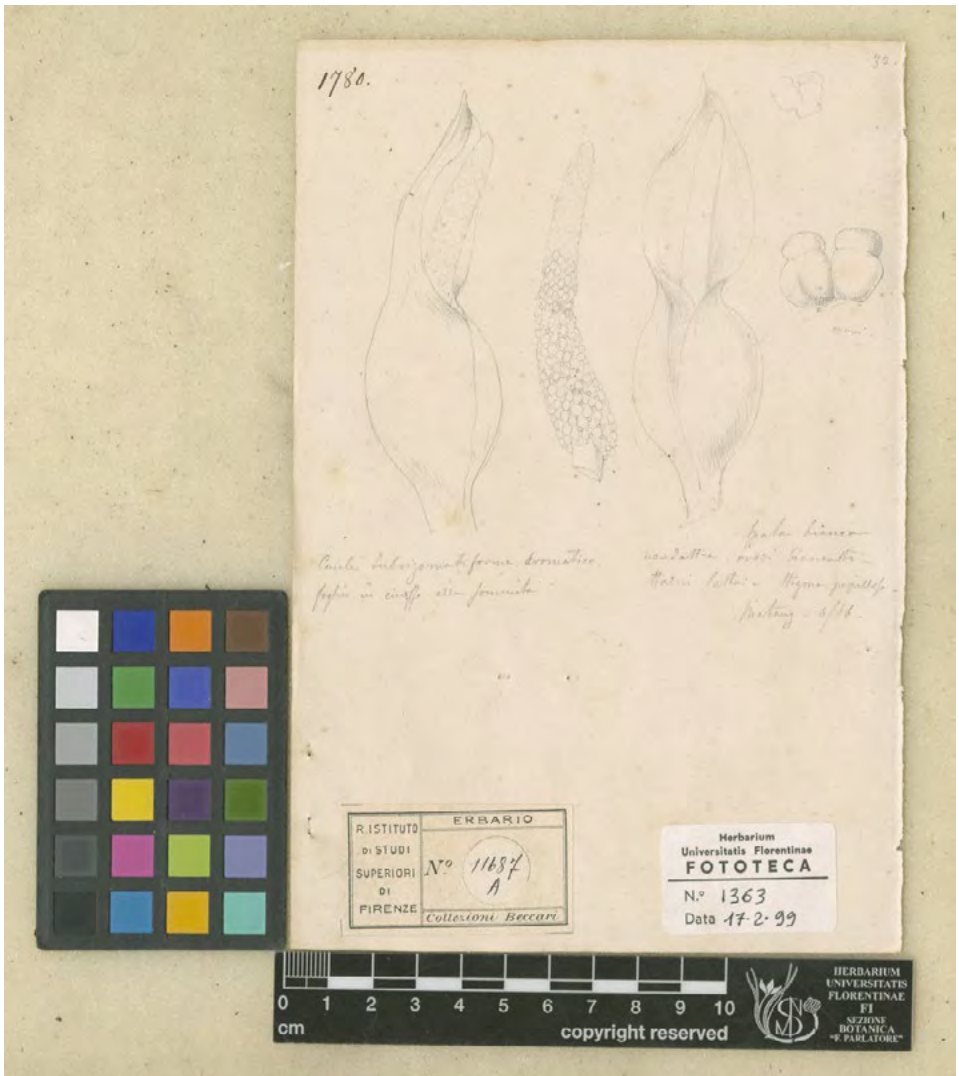


Figure 2. Beccari's field sketch of the bloom on the holotype of *Homalomena ovata*. O.Beccari p.b.1780 in the Herbarium Beccarianum-Malesia (FI-B), of the Natural History Museum of the University of Florence



Figure 3. Spadix of (A) *Homalomena ovata* & (B) *Homalomena borneensis* compared, each 9.5 cm long.



Figure 4. Holotype of *Homalomena borneensis*. H.N.Ridley s.n. in the Singapore Herbarium Holotype SING. — Reproduced with the kind permission of the Singapore Herbarium, Singapore Botanic Gardens.

Homalomena ovata Engl., Bull. Reale Soc. Tosc. Ort. 4: 296 (1879). — [*Homalomena hostifolia* Engl., Pflanzenr., IV, 23Da: 70 (1912), nom. superfl. (*H. ovata* Engl. in synonym.)]. — Type: MALAYSIAN BORNEO. “Ragiato di Sarawak., Mte Mattang”, June 1866, O. Beccari p.b. 1780 (holotype, FI!). **Figures 1–3A.**

Comments — Govaerts et al. (2002: 333) treats *Homalomena ovata* Engl. and *H. hostifolia* as synonyms of *Homalomena insignis* N.E.Br. (a distinct species in a different clade – Wong et al., 2013) while accepting *H. borneensis* Ridl. (Ridley, 1905) (**Figure 4**) but wrongly attributing it to Jawa (and Borneo) and with a spurious synonym, *H. submarginata* Alderw, a species allied to *H. insignis*. In “The World Checklist of Selected Plant Families (WCSP)” *Homalomena borneensis* is included in the synonymy of *H. ovata* Engl. — https://wcsp.science.kew.org/namedetail.do?name_id=99910, although *Homalomena borneensis* and *H. ovata* are distinct species separable not only by the spadix morphology (**Figure 3**) but also by ecology, with *H. borneensis* a NW Bornean Karst limestone obligate while *H. ovata* is restricted to the Matang Massif of Kuching Division on Palaeogene sandstone-derived soils.

Chamaecladon ovatum Schott still lacks a legitimate species name in *Homalomena*. Engler (1912: 44) reduced the illegitimate *Homalomena ovata* (Schott) Hook.f. to varietal status as *Homalomena griffithii* (Schott) Hook.f. var. *ovata* (Schott) Engl. However, he did not adequately address the circumscription of *Homalomena griffithii* which was based on three syntypes, of which two from Melaka in Peninsular Malaysia are possibly conspecific with each other, and the other from Labuan, NW Borneo is most certainly of a different species. Wong & Boyce (2020) noted that the taxonomy of *Homalomena griffithii* and its allies has been historically poorly served and is furthermore burdened with an unwieldy infraspecific taxonomy imposed by Furtado (1939) wherein species’ delimitation appears to have been reached solely by examining the nomenclatural types. Uncritically merging taxa is undesirable until the Griffithii species complex is properly studied throughout its range in the wild, since it is now very clear to us that there are numerous locally restricted taxa, many yet to be described, which are next to impossible to resolve when examined from preserved specimens alone despite being clearly distinct when observed living. The ecology of the Singapore plant is unique for any described species of the Griffithii complex and combined with the below-noted leaf blade characteristics leaves us confident to transfer *Chamaecladon ovatum* to *Homalomena* with a new species name.

Homalomena nathanielii S.Y.Wong & P.C.Boyce, **nom. nov.**

Chamaecladon ovatum Schott, Bonplandia (Hannover) 7(3): 30 (1859). — [*Homalomena ovata* (Schott) Hook.f., Fl. Brit. Ind. 6 (1893) 536, nom. illeg., non *H. ovata* Engl.]. — *Homalomena griffithii* var. *ovata* (Schott) Engl., Pflanzenr., IV, 23Da: 44 (1912). — Type: SINGAPORE. 1822, N. Wallich 8964 (holotype, K – K000675798!; isotype, K-W – K001131933!). **Figures 5 & 6.**

Distribution and ecology — So far known with certainty only from Singapore and there restricted to drier portions of the last fragment of the once extensive Nee Soon freshwater swamp forest (Corner, 1978; Turner et al., 1996; Chong et al., 2018; Clews et al., 2018).



Figure 5. Holotype of *Homalomena nathanielii*. N.Wallich 8964, in the Kew Herbarium (K), (<http://specimens.kew.org/herbarium/K000675798>). — © copyright of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.



Figure 6. Isotype of *Homalomena nathanielii*. N.Wallich Cat. no 8964, in the East India Company Herbarium at Kew (K-W), (<http://specimens.kew.org/herbarium/K001131933>). — © copyright of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Eponymy — For Nathaniel Wallich (1786–1854), surgeon and botanist who started his professional life in 1807 as the Danish Medical Attaché at Serampore in Bengal and was from 1815–1846 Superintendent of the East India Company’s Garden at Calcutta. He laid out the first, later abandoned, Botanic Garden in Singapore in 1822.

Comments — As noted, *Homalomena nathanielii* belongs to the Griffithii complex, species of which are often highly similar in external appearance, separated largely on characteristics of the spadix. However, *H. nathanielii* is distinct on Singapore by the deep green glossy leaves with rounded bases — See <https://singapore.biodiversity.online/species/P-Angi-000037> and <https://www.nparks.gov.sg/florafaunaweb/flora/7/2/7232>

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