

Nomenclatural notes on *Rhododendron sparsifolium* (Ericaceae)

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Based on examination of original material, we demonstrate that the name *Rhododendron sparsifolium* W. P. Fang was indeed validly published when first published in 1983. Meanwhile, we correct the collectors of two of the three type gatherings listed in the protologue, including the holotype. Furthermore, we propose to reduce *R. hejiangense* to the synonymy of *R. sparsifolium* on the basis of morphological comparisons.

The typification of *Rhododendron sparsifolium*

For over half a century, the type has been an essential part of a validly published name. In particular, a name of a new taxon at the rank of genus or below published on or after 1 Jan 1958 is valid only when the type of the name is indicated in accordance with Article 37.1 of the ICBN (McNeill et al. 2006). During the revision of valid publication dates of 41 names of Chinese seed plants (Yu et al. 2011), we recognized that the type designation of *Rhododendron sparsifolium* W. P. Fang (1983) in the protologue was confused, i.e. the type is indicated as follows (with correction of typographic errors such as missing spaces and commas used in place of full stops): “Sichuan (四川): Hejiang (合江), Fubaolinchang (福宝林场), alt. 800–1000 m, 19–22 May 1981, Q. G. Tian et al. (田启光等), 2-38, 3-14, 1-21 (Typus, SCFI).” Subsequent researchers may interpret this as if either all three gatherings were simultaneously indicated as the type (Jin et al. 2009), or that the last gathering only (‘Q. G. Tian et al. 1-21’) was indicated as the type (Jin and Chen 1994). Based on examination of the original material conserved at SCFI, we are able to revise the actual information of three of the cited gatherings as follows: “22 May 1981, Qi-Guan Tian et al. 2-38; 19 May 1981, Long-Yun Li et al. 3-14; 20 May 1981, Xi-Quan Luo et al. 1-21”. Most importantly, only the collection ‘Xi-Quan Luo et al. 1-21’ is annotated as the “原種標本” (Type in Chinese) on the herbarium sheet (Fig. 1), while the other two gatherings are not annotated (Fig. 2). In addition, the line drawing in the protologue seems to be drawn from the right branches of ‘Xi-Quan Luo et al. 1-21’. This evidence demonstrate that the holotype intended in the protologue was ‘Xi-Quan Luo et al. 1-21’ alone. Thus, the name *R. sparsifolium* was validly

published in 1983 (Fang 1983) and the subsequent ‘validation’ of the name by Jin et al. (2009) create an later isonym.

Relationship between *R. sparsifolium* and similar species

Rhododendron hejiangense M. Y. He (He 1985) has been found close to the type locality of *R. sparsifolium*. He (1985) indicated that *R. hejiangense* is similar to *R. chunii* W. P. Fang, however, the morphological description of it fits very well to the type of *R. sparsifolium*. Unfortunately, we failed to find the type of *R. hejiangense* (‘Agricultural Expedition 44’), indicated to be kept in SZ. During the preparation of ‘Flora Reipublicae Popularis Sinicae’, He (1994) also mentioned that he had not seen the type of *R. sparsifolium*, and the Chinese description of *R. sparsifolium* he just translated from the original Latin description. It is noteworthy that the line drawing of *R. hejiangense* is very similar to the gathering ‘Qi-Guan Tian et al. 2-38’ of *R. sparsifolium*. In the diagnostic key, He (1994) emphasized that length of the style was longer than that of the filament in *R. sparsifolium*, while in the opposite was indicated for *R. hejiangense*. Actually, the description of this character is not correct as far as *R. sparsifolium* is concerned. In the holotype, we found that the filament is slightly longer than the style (Fig. 1). Moreover, in two of the paratypes the filament is conspicuously longer than the style (Fig. 2). The filaments of *R. sparsifolium* and *R. hejiangense* are glabrous. However, in the diagnostic key of ‘Flora of China’, He and Chamberlain (2005) misplaced *R. sparsifolium* in a group with partly pubescent or puberulous filaments. After having resolved this confusion, we conclude that *R. hejiangense* is indistinct

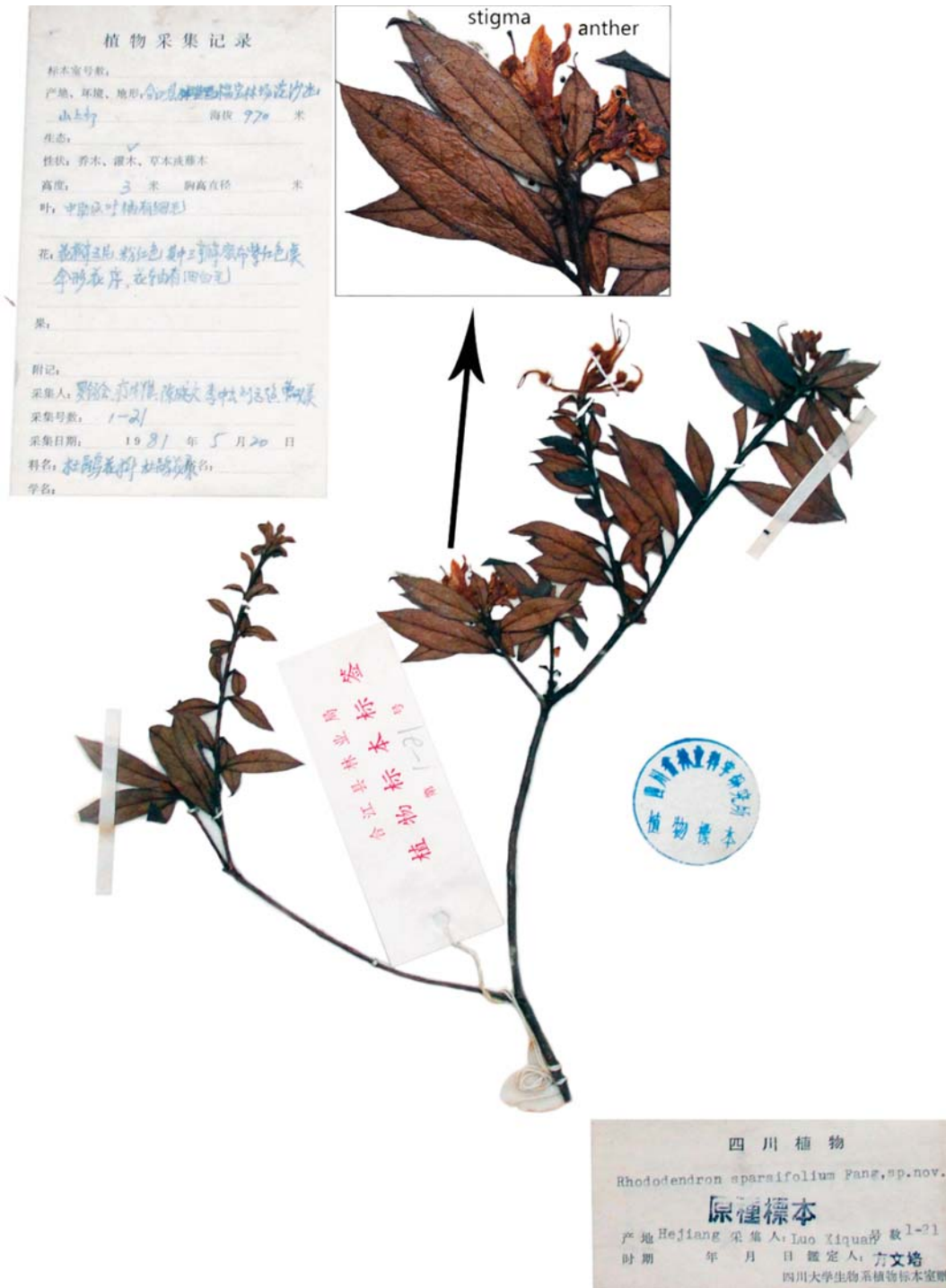


Figure 1. Holotype of *Rhododendron sparsifolium* W. P. Fang (Xi-Quan Luo et al. 1-21), kept in SCFI.

from *R. sparsifolium* using other characters. Therefore, we propose to reduce *R. hejiangense* to the synonymy of *R. sparsifolium*.

Nomenclatural synopsis

Rhododendron sparsifolium W. P. Fang (1983, p. 462, f. 7).

Isonym: *Rhododendron sparsifolium* W. P. Fang in Jin et al. (2009, p. 370).

Type: China. Sichuan: Hejiang County, 20 May 1981, Xi-Quan Luo et al. 1-21 (holotype: SCFI!); *ibid.*, 22 May 1981, Qi-Guang Tian et al. 2-38 (paratype: SCFI!); *ibid.*, 19 May 1981, Long-Yun Li et al. 3-14 (paratype: SCFI!).

Taxonomic synonym: *Rhododendron hejiangense* M. Y. He (1985, p. 118).

Type: China. Sichuan: Hejiang County, 23 May 1980, Agricultural Expedition 44 (holotype: SZ, not seen).



Figure 2. Paratypes of *Rhododendron sparsifolium* W. P. Fang, kept in SCFI. (A) Qi-Guang Tian et al. 2-38. (B) Long-Yun Li et al. 3-14.

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