

(2620) Proposal to reject the name *Poa amabilis* (*Eragrostis amabilis*) (Poaceae)Paul M. Peterson,¹ Robert J. Soreng¹, Sylvia M. Phillips² & John H. Wiersema³¹ Smithsonian Institution, Department of Botany, National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C. 20013-7012, U.S.A.² Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AE, U.K.³ United States Department of Agriculture/Agricultural Research Service, National Germplasm Resources Laboratory, Bldg. 003, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC-West), Beltsville, Maryland 20705-2350, U.S.A.Author for correspondence: Paul M. Peterson, peterston@si.eduDOI <https://doi.org/10.12705/673.25>**(2620) *Poa amabilis* L.**, Sp. Pl.: 68. 1 Mai 1753 [Angiosp.: *Gram.*], nom. utique rej. prop.

Lectotypus (vide Veldkamp in Taxon 49: 254. 2000): Sri Lanka, Hermann (BM barcode BM000621703 [image!], lower left-hand specimen).

Typification of grasses described by Linnaeus has been revisited by many botanists because he hardly ever cited specimens for his species. For *Poa amabilis*, Linnaeus (Sp. Pl.: 68. 1753) identified two elements: (1) part of his own *Flora zeylanica* (1747: 19): “spiculis octifloris linearibus. *Fl. zeyl.* 46 *”, and (2) “Gramen paniculatum ex oris malabaricis, panicula delicatior. *Pluk. alm.* 176. t. 300 f. 3” [error for f. 2] (Plukenet, *Almagastum botanicum* in *Phytographia*, Pars quarta. 1694). Munro (in J. Proc. Linn. Soc., Bot. 6: 43. 1862) attempted to establish the application of *Poa amabilis* and suggested the name applied to: “the plant which is generally called *P. (Eragrostis) plumosa*, Link. It is also Hermann’s species (fide Herb. ii, 59!) from which *Fl. Zeyl.* 46 [p. 19] is described, and is Pluk. t. 300. f. 2, marked in the margin, by Linnaeus himself, *P. amabilis*, and to be found in Plukenet’s Herb. i. 187, from Cape Comorin. The plant generally called *P. amabilis* is *P. (Erag.) unioloides*, and is also to be found in Plukenet’s Herb. l.c.”

Munro (l.c.) also discussed the application of *P. tenella* L. (Sp. Pl.: 69. 1753), noting that “One [specimen] from India, marked *tenella* by Linn.” was the same as *P. amabilis*, as were some of the other elements that Linnaeus later (Sp. Pl., ed. 2: 98. 1762) included under *P. tenella*, including the Plukenet plate (l.c.: t. 300, fig. 2) he had earlier (l.c. 1753) associated with *P. amabilis*. Nicolson & al. (in *Regnum Veg.* 119: 309. 1988) concluded that Munro (l.c.) made an effective choice between the two names of equal priority, *P. amabilis* and *P. tenella*, and chose *P. amabilis*. However, Munro’s statements, “There is no specimen in the [Linnaean] Herb. of what is now considered *tenella*” and “I therefore consider that all above [the LINN specimen and 3 of 4 additional elements Linnaeus (l.c. 1762) had added] belong to *P. amabilis*” only applied to the specimen or elements of *P. tenella* he discussed, not to the name itself. Munro went on to state: “the *P. tenella* ultimately intended by Linnaeus is what is now called *Eragrostis tenuissima*, Schrad.” (Schrad. ex Nees., a name applicable to *Eragrostis japonica* (Thunb.) Trin., a species closely related to *E. tenella* (L.) P. Beauv. ex Roem. & Schult. (Syst. Veg. 2: 576. 1817) s.str.). So, it is by no means clear that Munro adopted one of the competing names, and simultaneously rejected or relegated to synonymy the other, which Art. 11.5 Note 3 (McNeill & al. in *Regnum Veg.* 154. 2012) requires for an effective choice. Nicolson & al. (l.c.) indicated that the next choice (which the authors of this proposal consider the first effective choice) was made by Stapf (in Hooker, *Fl. Brit. India* 7: 315. 1897 [“1896”]), who in adopting *Eragrostis tenella* chose *P. tenella* over *P. amabilis*.

Veldkamp (l.c. 2000) established the lectotype of *P. amabilis* from Hermann’s herbarium now at BM (<https://plants.jstor.org/stable/10.5555/al.ap.specimen.bm000621703>) (this specimen apparently the only original one that could be located). The lectotype of *P. tenella*, also designated by Veldkamp (in *Blumea* 47: 164. 2002), is Herb. Linnaeus No. 87.33 (LINN). As already mentioned, Stapf (l.c.) accepted *Eragrostis tenella* as the correct name for the species. Stapf was followed by subsequent workers such as Bor (*Grasses Burma, Ceylon, India*: 513. 1960), Koch (in *Rhodora* 80: 399. 1978), Peterson (in *Ann. Missouri Bot. Gard.* 94: 750. 2007), and Giraldo Cañas & Peterson (in *Bibliot. José Jerónimo Triana* 24: 154. 2012), among others. Following the lead of Nicolson & al. (l.c.), Judziewicz (*Fl. Guianas*, ser. A, 8: 205. 1991), the *Catalogue of New World grasses* (Peterson & Boechat in *Contr. U.S. Natl. Herb.* 41: 82. 2001), and Veldkamp (l.c. 2002), accepted *E. amabilis* (L.) Wight & Arn. (in Wight, *Cat. Ind. Pl.*: 105. 1834) with *E. tenella* and its basionym *Poa tenella* in synonymy.

Others, apparently confused by Munro’s indication that *Poa amabilis* sensu auct. was *P. unioloides*, including Chen & Peterson (in Wu & al., *Fl. China* 22: 477–478. 2006) and the “Catalogue of the plants of Madagascar” (*Madagascar Catalogue*, 2018, <http://tropicos.org/Project/Madagascar>), accepted *E. tenella*, and treated *E. amabilis* as a synonym of *E. unioloides* (Retz.) Nees (in Steudel, *Syn. Pl. Glumac.* 1: 264. 1854). Application of *P. amabilis* has been problematic in the literature for a long time.

Hoping to clear up the confusion, Sylvia M. Phillips (pers. comm., 1 May 2008) studied the lectotype of *P. amabilis* at BM, and found it (BM000621703) to be a third species, *Eragrostis viscosa* (Retz.) Trin. (in *Mém. Acad. Imp. Sci. St.-Petersbourg, Sér. 6, Sci. Math.* 1: 397. 1830, based on *Poa viscosa* Retz., *Observ. Bot.* 4: 20. 1786), since the specimen has pectinate-ciliate palea keels, oblong spikelets ca. 3 mm long with 7–8 florets, glandular panicle branches, and many glandular spots (rings?) on the culms. *Eragrostis tenella* lacks glands and has shorter spikelets. Glue covering this specimen obscures the diagnostic glands typical of *E. viscosa*, these were apparently missed by Veldkamp (l.c. 2002: 157–204). Veldkamp explicitly placed *E. viscosa* as a taxonomic synonym of *E. amabilis*, but all other accounts we consulted accepted *E. viscosa* as distinct (<http://tropicos.org/Name/25518618?tab=acceptednames>). We agree with Phillip’s assessment of the identity of the lectotype as *E. viscosa*. However, our assessment of Plukenet’s tabula 300, fig. 2 (<http://bibdigital.rjb.csic.es/ing/Libro.php?Libro=5475>), based on the delicate, elongated, oblong panicle with long pedicelled and compact spikelets, is that it is an excellent match for the mature panicle on Linn. 87.33 (<http://linnean-online.org/1411/>, the lectotype of *Poa tenella*), as Linnaeus himself (l.c. 1762) seemingly came to realize.

GBIF.org reported 4381 occurrences of *E. amabilis*, 1753 of *E. tenella* (noted to be a synonym of *E. amabilis*), and 782 of *E. viscosa*

(accessed 5 Apr 2018). On the other hand, Google Scholar returns 1090 results for a string search on “*Eragrostis tenella*”, 406 for “*Eragrostis amabilis*”, and 274 for “*Eragrostis viscosa*”.

To stabilize the nomenclature of these taxa, we have three principal options: (1) formally propose the outright rejection (utique) of the name *Poa amabilis* as based on Veldkamp’s lectotypification, and therefore use both *Eragrostis tenella* and *E. viscosa* as currently applied; (2) accept Veldkamp’s lectotypification of *P. amabilis* and use *E. amabilis* for the long-standing, previously unambiguously applied *E. viscosa*; or (3) propose conservation of *P. amabilis* against *P. tenella* to firmly establish priority, and with a conserved type to match the concept of *E. tenella*. For the last option, we could propose to typify *P. amabilis* on the lectotype of *P. tenella* (LINN No. 87.33), or propose Plukenet’s “t. 300, f. 2”, an original element of the name, as a conserved type, with LINN 87.33 as an epitype. Choosing options 2 or 3 would retain the use of the name *E. amabilis*, although option 2 would change the concept of the name to *E. viscosa*, which would be disruptive of current usage and the historical literature. Option 3 would reduce the name *E. tenella* to synonymy under *E. amabilis*. We feel the best solution is provided by option 1, i.e., outright rejection of *P. amabilis*,

which would also remove any uncertainty over the relative priority of *P. amabilis* vs. *P. tenella*. Although accepted as *E. amabilis*, with *E. tenella* as a synonym, in the published *Catalogue of New World grasses* treatment (Peterson & Boechat, l.c.) the on-line version of this *Catalogue* (<http://www.tropicos.org/Name/25514153?projectid=10>) now treats *Poa amabilis* as a “doubtful or dubious” name, noting: “The lectotype chosen by Veldkamp has proven to be *Eragrostis viscosa* (Retz.) Trin., not *E. tenella* (L.) P. Beauv. ex Roem. & Schult. (fide S.M. Phillips & P.M. Peterson). Formal rejection of *Poa amabilis* L. would resolve the situation. In the meantime, we suggest treating *Poa amabilis* L. as a dubious name.”

Acknowledgements

We thank John McNeill for suggestions and comments on our original draft; National Geographic Society Committee for Research and Exploration (Grant No. 8848-10, 8087-06) for field and laboratory support; the Smithsonian Institution’s Restricted Endowments Fund, the Scholarly Studies Program, Research Opportunities, Atherton Seidell Foundation, Biodiversity Surveys and Inventories Program, and Small Grants Program, all for financial support.