

## Request to Avoid Unpronounceable Epithets for New Plant Names

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**Abstract:** Naming of a new taxon using word that is difficult to pronounce should be avoided.

**Keywords:** Plant names, specific epithet, pronunciation, ICN

### INTRODUCTION

A name helps us to perceive the mental picture of an object / organism. Names are just labels we use to ensure for understanding and communication. A botanical name is a unique identifier to which information of a taxon can be attached, thus enabling the movement of data across languages, scientific disciplines, and electronic retrieval systems. Botanical Nomenclature, i.e. naming of plants deals with application of scientific names to plants according to some set of rules of the 'Code', the latest version of which is the Shenzhen Code (Turland *et al.* 2018) or 'International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants' (ICN). The Rec. 23A.3 (b) under Art. 23 of ICN suggests not to make specific epithets that are very long or difficult to pronounce in Latin. The similar recommendation [Rec. 20A.1(c) under Art. 20 (Turland *et al.* 2018)] is also there in 'Code' for coining new generic names.

We have recently come across two plant names of new species described from India viz. *Kobresia rcsrivastavae* Jana, *Cycas pschannae* R.C. Srivast. & L.J. Singh where the specific epithets are difficult to pronounce as these start with four consecutive consonants. Though the Indian taxonomists may pronounce '*rcsrivastavae*' (as 'ar-cee-srivastavae') or '*pschannae*' (as 'pee-es-channae') as they may be familiar with the names or surnames of the persons (Ramesh Chandra Srivastava, Paramjit Singh Channa) based on which the epithets are coined, but it is very difficult for the taxonomists of other parts of the world to pronounce these epithets.

We took the opinion of Dr. K.N. Gandhi, Senior Nomenclatural Registrar of the Harvard University Herbaria, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA on the coining of the specific epithet '*rcsrivastavae*' in *Kobresia rcsrivastavae* and he informed us that though 'Code' does not resist the formation of epithets in an arbitrary manner, but very rarely people coin epithets arbitrarily. So, '*rcsrivastavae*' is technically alright but should have been avoided as per the existing recommendation [Rec. 23A.3 (b)] of the ICN (Turland *et al.* 2018).

Thus, we urge the authors to follow the aforesaid recommendation of ICN while coining specific epithets of new plant species.

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