Biarum mendax (Araceae: *Areae*) a New Species from Southwest Spain

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ABSTRACT

Biarum mendax, a new species related to the *B. kotschyi* complex is described from southwest Spain.

INTRODUCTION

The genus *Biarum* consists of 24 species of dwarf tuberous-stemmed herbs occurring in semi-arid and seasonally dry areas of southern Europe, North Africa, and the Near and Middle East. The centre of diversity is the Middle East, where 75% of the species occur.

All *Biarum* species display a strongly seasonal growth regime, the plants beginning growth in late summer or early autumn with the onset of winter rains, and continuing into late spring when the plants become dormant at the start of summer heat and drought. The majority of species blossom in autumn and early winter and this, combined with the ephemeral nature of the inflorescences has resulted in numerous distinct undescribed species being overlooked, even in areas hitherto well botanized, until rather recently, e.g. *B. davisii* (Turrill 1938), *B. auraniticum* Mouterde (Mouterde 1966), *B. allepicum* Thiébaut (Thiébaut 1948), *B. galianii* (Talavera 1976), *B. davsiii* subsp. *marmarisense* P.C. Boyce (Boyce 1987), *B. ditschianum* Bogner & P.C. Boyce (Bogner & Boyce 1989), *B. tenuifolium* (L.) Schott subsp. *idomenaeum* P.C. Boyce & Athanasiou (Boyce & Athanasiou 1991). The species described here is another example of this phenomenon, and is perhaps most remarkable in that *B. mendax* has the largest inflorescence of any species in the genus.

The majority of *Biarum* species blossom in autumn and early winter and this, together with the often striking appearance of the inflorescence, had resulted in a growing popularity of *Biarum* species amongst plant enthusiasts. Mayo (1983) and Mathew (1987) have covered further aspects of this horticultural popularity.

Biarum mendax P.C. Boyce **sp. nov.** ab aliis specibus *Biarii,* spatha lamina magna late lanceolata, spathii tubo profunde stamnoforme distinguitur. Typus: Spain. Badajoz: Between Hobrón and Solana des los Barros, 15 October 1976, *Cabezudo et al.* 2201/76 (holotypus SEV 25005; isotypus G).

Tuber globose-discoid, 4 × 3.5 cm, mid-brown. *Leaves* not seen. *Inflorescence* appearing in late summer to autumn. *Peduncle* 12 cm × 5 mm, clothed by few to many 5–13 cm × 7–15 mm papery, pale yellowish white cataphylls. *Spathe* 16–24 cm long; *spathe limb* lanceolate, 18–20 cm × 15–18 mm, apex long acuminate, exterior green ± heavily blotched and stained purple-brown, interior deep purple-brown; *spathe tube* globose, strongly inflated, 4–5 × c. 3 cm wide, margins fused for their entire length, exterior pale green stained purple-brown especially towards the opening, interior off-white distally, deep purple proximally. *Spadix* sub-equal to exceeding the spathe limb, 16–21 cm long; *spadix appendix* slender fusiform-cylindric, 14–16 cm × 6–8 mm, deep purple-brown. *Staminate flowers* in a zone 11–13 × 6–9 mm, deep purple. *Interstice* 23–25 × 5–6 mm, deep purple. *Pistillodes* situated at the base of the interstice, few, filiform, 5–14 mm long, deep purple. *Pistillate flowers* in a hemispherical cluster 4–5

× 7–13 mm wide; ovary 2–3 mm long, cream; style 1 × 0.33 mm, purple, stigma capitate, c. 0.5 mm in diam., purple. *Infructescence* not seen. Chromosome count not recorded.

DISTRIBUTION & ECOLOGY

To date *B. mendax* is known only from a few gatherings all originating from Badajoz in southwestern Spain, where it occurs in fairly close proximity to *B. dispar* on rocky hill slopes of limestone-derived terra rossa at altitudes of 50–75 m.

ETYMOLOGY

The specific epithet is from the Latin *mendax,* deceitful, in allusion to the similarity in the dried state between the new species, *B. bovei,* and *B. dispar* that has resulted in it being hitherto overlooked.

NOTE

In herbaria, *B. mendax* has been assigned to *B. bovei* Blume, or *B. dispar* (Schott) Talavera, on the basis of its overall similarity to them. However, *B. mendax* is readily separable by its greater size, exceeding that attained by *B. pyrami.* From all three species it can be distinguished by the completely fused spathe tube. *Biarum mendax* belongs to a group of species defined by spadices bearing sterile flowers only between the male and female flower zones, and in the inflated lower spathe, This is a group, equivalent the generic synonym *Ischarum* Schott, to which a number of horticulturally important species belong, including, aside from those mentioned above, western Mediterranean *B. carratracense* (Haenseler) Font Quer, and eastern Mediterranean, Near Eastern *B. pyrami* (Schott) Engl., and *B. kotschyi.* (Schott) B. Mathew.

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