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Pelargoniums that are not P. hermansdorpense

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By David Victor, January 9, 2014 in [Pelargonium](#)[+ Add Tag](#)[Moderation Actions](#)[Start new topic](#)[Reply to this topic](#)**David Victor**

Advanced Member

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320 posts

LocationSomerset, England

Posted January 9, 2014 (edited)

(IP: 86.137.118.255) 

I started this as a new subject to separate it clearly from consideration of *P. hermansdorpense*.

During my investigations into *P. hermansdorpense* I have been sent two plants which the senders thought were that species. However, neither of them turned out to be it. For all that both of them are very interesting plants that seem to be significantly different to any other member of section *Otidia* and both purport to have been collected in the wild. In this posting, I will deal with the first of these.

This plant was generously provided to me for research by Eva Tingstrom of Era Gardens in Sweden. I had heard of the plant from other people who were growing it and the photos that I had seen aroused my

curiosity. This was particularly so as the plant had some similarities to another plant which had previously been collected by Fiona Powrie, then of Kirstenbosch, in the Anysberg Nature Reserve in South Africa. This was reported in *Geraniaceae Group News 59 (1995)*, with photographs. Sadly, those plants had been subsequently lost from cultivation, so no direct comparison could be made.

Here is a picture of the plant sent me by Eva, which for the moment I am calling "Era Otidia" to separate it clearly from any others.



This is a low-growing plant some 4 - 6 inches (10 - 15 cms) tall. It divides from the base and produces a number of semi-succulent stems. The foliage consists of leaves which are dark green in colour and highly succulent. They are roughly oval in shape, with some shallow lobing. They are covered with an indumentum of very short, fine hairs.



The plant flowers for me early in the year - it is just starting into bud now. The first time that this plant flowered from me (from a rooted cutting) it produced an amazing show of flowers - altogether some 1,000 individual flowers on 170 pseudo-umbels, giving an average of over 5 flowers per pseudo-umbel. I think that was extraordinary and it was not repeated last year. However, here is a picture of it:



You will see that the plant here is supported by a mix of sticks and string. The reason for this was that the individual branches could not support the weight of the inflorescences, such is their nature. Here is a closer look at a pseudo-umbel:



Here you can see that the petals are reflexed so far that they lay back between the sepals. These flowers look very similar to the ones on Fiona Powrie's plant referred to above. Taking a closer look at the individual flower shows us that there are five fertile stamens (as there should be for section *Otidia*) and that they are long and straight, projecting forwards from the flower. During anthesis, the stamens roll up and the pistil extends to take their place:



Finally, taking a close look at the base of the individual petal, you can see that there is a distinct "ear", again as there should be for section *Otidia* species:



To me, this is very clearly a member of section *Otidia*, the only question is "what on earth is it?" Eva told me that she had originally had the plant from the late Charles Craib, but without a specific collecting location. It does have many similarities to the plant collected by Fiona Powrie and that might suggest that it is another plant of the Klein Karoo area. The best known other members of section *Otidia* from that area are the members of the *P. laxum* complex and members of the *P. carnosum*/*P. parviflorum* complexes. It is also known that these group hybridise with

each other. So, it is quite possible that this plant is one of those hybrids. However, there is little that this plant shares in morphological terms with individual members of those complexes, so that may not be likely. The other alternative is that somewhere in here is a new species.

Clearly there is a long way to go to solve this conundrum. It would be interesting to investigate the DNA and see what that might tell us. It would be interesting to do more field work to try to find more examples of such a plant in the wild - perhaps that is next year's autumn exercise. However, I think that it is already clear that this is an interesting area of investigation.

Edited January 11, 2014 by David Victor

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David Victor

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LocationSomerset, England

Posted January 10, 2014 (edited)

(IP: 86.137.118.255)



In my earlier posting about *P. hermansdorpense*, I mentioned two plants that had been given to me under that name which turned out not to be that species and I said that I would write them up later. One was written up above, the plant received from Era Gardens, Sweden. Now I will deal with the other.

This plant was collected by a Kirstenbosch collector, Ernst Van Jaarsveld, in the Anysberg Nature Reserve, near a place called Geodehoop. Whilst I am clear that it is not *P. hermansdorpense*, by no means am I clear what it is. However, it certainly is an interesting plant.

The main stem is only about 2 inches (5 cms) tall and less than half an inch (1 cms) wide. Then it divides into two stems, each of a similar length and width as the main stem. One of these divides into 2 stems and the other into 3, each of similar dimensions to the earlier ones, perhaps getting slightly thinner. From these stems rise the inflorescences. So, the base of the plant looks like this:



The leaves are dark green and succulent, as follows:



Putting these two together and going no further we have a plant that is reminiscent of *P. laxum* subsp. *karooicum*, as described by Becker, Schäper & Albers in "Description of two new taxa of *Pelargonium* section *Otidia* etc" *Schumania* 5 (2008). What's more, the collecting locality would not be a great distance from those mentioned in that paper. However, the similarity stops there, for the floral attributes are wildly different.

The following is a rather poor photo, my only excuse being that it is very difficult to capture the nature of the overall inflorescence in a photo:



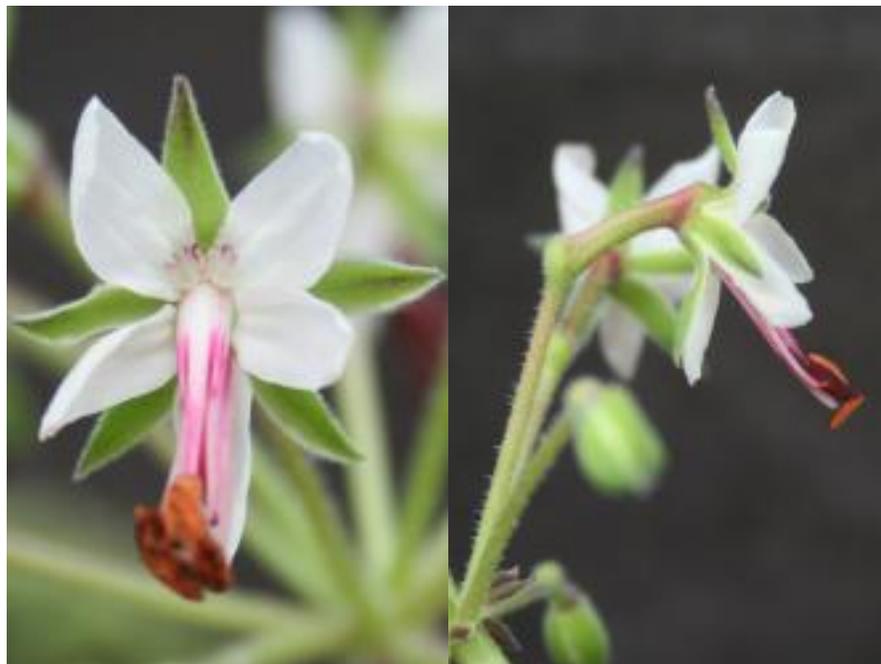
As you can probably see, there are a large number of pseudo-umbels and flowers present and at very different stages of flowering: some are in seed, some in flower, some in bud and some have not started to expand. At a quick total today, the plant carries 7 scapes, 44 pseudo-umbels and around 300 flowers. What is more, the scapes extend greatly, so that the total height of the plant is about 2 feet or 60 cms.

The only member of section *Otidia* that I know of that has an inflorescence with such characteristics is what Becker & Albers term *P. carnosum* subsp. *ferulaceum*, where their description fits this floral behaviour. However, the nature of the pseudo-umbels does not fit that taxon, as it is has much longer pedicels, giving a much more open

arrangement of flowers:



The individual flowers themselves don't look like normal *P. laxum* or *P. carnosum* subsp. *ferulaceum* flowers. They do look a little like flowers that I have seen on some forms of *P. parviflorum* and do give a hint of pink when fading:





As you can see, the petals tend to flex forwards, rather than backwards and the nectary tube is about the same length as the petals.

I find this a very interesting plant, but quite difficult to handle when in flower, due to the rather over long scapes, which tend to need support. In a number of papers, Becker reports wild hybrids arising between the *P. laxum*, *P. carnosum* and *P. parviflorum* groups and I imagine that this must be one of those.

Edited January 11, 2014 by David Victor

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David Victor

Advanced Member



Posted January 12, 2014

(IP: 86.137.118.255)  

A correction to the information in the first item in this post. I said that the plant collected as *P. hermansdorpense* by Fiona Powrie, and reported in *Geraniaceae Group News 59* (1995), had been lost to cultivation. I have just heard that is not true and that it is still held by Fibrex Nurseries and that Richard Clifton has managed to obtain a plant from them. So,



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there will be the chance to compare these two plants in due course.



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Matija

Advanced Member



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73 posts

LocationLondon (UK)

Posted October 14, 2016 (edited)

(IP: 82.7.93.177)



Hello,

I thought I'd share a photograph of the Anysberg *Otidia* - a very surprising find indeed. It has a main tuber and side tubers, and highly succulent leaves, often with red margins. The stems are many, about 5-8 mm, and about 5-8 cm tall, at least in naturally grown plants (though this could be the consequence of grazing).

This taxon appears close to *P. laxum* ssp. *karooicum*, although there are also several important differences, such as lamina shape (though I am not very sure I'd consider this as a character of a high diagnostic value), and perhaps more importantly the inflorescence structure, specifically the long pedicels.

All best,

Matija.



Edited October 14, 2016 by Matija



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Matija

Advanced Member



Members

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73 posts

Location London (UK)

Posted April 22, 2017

(IP: 162.158.154.118)

Hello,

I thought I'd report on the Anysberg otidia, which I now believe is actually *P. laxum ssp. karoicum*. I have had the extraordinary luck to see it in nature and in cultivation and have observed how the short pedicels which should be typical of this subspecies (and are evident in naturally grown specimens), develop into the extraordinarily long pedicels that look nothing like Becker's description. The red margins of laminas are also lost, as is leaf succulence (and apparently tubers), which has led me to believe that R. Clifton's *P. onustifolium* is synonymous with Becker's *P. laxum ssp. karoicum*.

I have written a bit more about this confusion, and the *Otidia* conundrum more generally, in a recent [blog post](#).

All best,

Matija.

Literature:

Clifton R. (2015), *Pelargonium* section *Otidia*: diagnosis of the new name *P. onustifolium*. Geraniaceae Group Associated Notes no. 81, 28-30.

Becker M., Schäper K., Albers F. (2008), Description of two new taxa of *Pelargonium* section *Otidia* (Geraniaceae), *P. keeromsbergense* and *P. laxum ssp. karoicum*. Schumannia 5, 181-190.



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