
HORTICULTURE IN NEW ZEALAND

Journal of The Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (Inc.)



Volume 2

Summer 1991

Number 1

Cordyline Cultivar Names — Three New Combinations

Peter Heenan

Botany Institute, DSIR Land Resources, Private Bag, Christchurch

Introduction

This short paper clarifies three nomenclatural problems for the "Cultivar Checklist for the New Zealand Species of *Cordyline* (Asphodelaceae)" published in this volume of Horticulture in New Zealand. Legitimate cultivar names are given to three different plants that until now have been known illegitimately as *Cordyline australis* 'Kirkii', *Cordyline banksii* 'Purpurea' and *Cordyline* Bronze Ribbon Hybrids respectively.

Cordyline australis 'Thomas Kirk'

Cordyline australis 'Kirkii' was first published in Duncan and Davies' Nursery Catalogue (1976). The plant is a dwarf form with short, branching stems that arise both as

underground and aerial shoots; these form a low dense mound, reaching a height of about 1-1.5m. The origin of this interesting cultivar is unknown, but it has been in cultivation since at least the mid 1920s as it was listed in Duncan and Davies' Nursery Catalogue (1926), misidentified as *Cordyline terminalis*.

Under The International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants 1980 (I.C.N.C.P.) Article 27, the Latin cultivar epithet 'Kirkii' is illegitimate because it was published after 1 January 1959. Cultivar names given after this date have to be a fancy name and not in Latin. A correct name, in accordance with the I.C.N.C.P. is here given to this plant.

Cordyline australis (Forst. f.) Endl. 'Thomas Kirk'

Syn. *Cordyline australis* 'Kirkii' (nom. illeg. I.C.N.C.P. Art. 27) (Duncan and Davies Nursery Catalogue [1976] as *Cordyline* 'Kirkii').

The botanical description, from an eight year old plant grown in a garden at Maori Hill, Dunedin, is: plant up to 50 cm tall, forming densely branched clumps of short, branching stems that arise from above and below ground. Stems up to 5 cm thick. Leaves 30-36 cm long x 2.5 cm wide, narrowed to petiole, both surfaces light green, mid-rib yellow-green on underside. Flowers not seen.

The new name is in keeping with the spirit of the old name "Kirkii". It is most likely that the name "Kirkii" honours Thomas Kirk (1828-98) who lived in New Zealand from 1863 until his death in 1898. He is regarded as New Zealand's leading botanist in the latter decades of last century and was the author of "Forest Flora of New Zealand" (1889) and "The Students' Flora of New Zealand and the Outlying Islands" (1899).



Plate 1: An eight year old plant of *Cordyline australis* 'Thomas Kirk' showing its distinctive clumpy form.

Cordyline Carse Hybrids Purple Strap group

The second name published here is for a group of hybrids currently grown under the name *Cordyline banksii* 'Purpurea'. As pointed out by Metcalf (1987) these plants "appear to be hybrids between *C. banksii* and *C. australis* 'Purpurea'." It should be noted that two separate combinations have to be made to provide a functional name for this group of plants.

First, a collective epithet is needed for the interspecific cross *Cordyline banksii* x *Cordyline australis*. Under the I.C.N.C.P., Article 18, a collective epithet in modern language is being given; this name is *Cordyline* Carse Hybrids. The name honours Mr H. Carse (1857-1930), a school teacher of the Auckland region and an amateur botanist. He had specialist knowledge of ferns and sedges but was also interested in hybrid groups, publishing two names in *Cordyline* for interspecific hybrids.

Secondly, because this particular group of plants are red-bronze leaved and there is a degree of variation amongst seedlings (Metcalf, 1987) it is necessary to give these plants a group name (I.C.N.C.P., Art 26) rather than a single cultivar epithet. The cultivar "Purpurea", is not available because it has already been used for *Cordyline australis* 'Purpurea' (see I.C.N.C.P., Art 50). The group category being used here is intermediate between a species or collective name and cultivar name. The new group name is Purple Strap group.

These two combinations are:

Cordyline Carse Hybrids

A new collective epithet in modern language for all the progeny of the interspecific hybrid combination *Cordyline banksii* x *Cordyline australis* (I.C.N.C.P. Art. 18).

Cordyline Carse Hybrids Purple Strap group

This is a new group name (I.C.N.C.P., Art. 26) that includes an assemblage of cultivars of *Cordyline* Carse Hybrids whose common character is their red-bronze leaves.

***Cordyline Xgibblingsiae*
Bronze Ribbon group**

The final nomenclatural problem is a group of plants called *Cordyline* Bronze Ribbon Hybrids. A valid publication for this name has not been located, although the plants have been in cultivation for over 20

years. The name was applied by Mr O. Blumhardt of Whangarei to a group of plants bred by crossing a bronze form of *Cordyline pumilo* with a bronze form of *Cordyline banksii*. Of the resultant seedlings approximately 50% were bronze leaved; these he informally named *Cordyline* Bronze Ribbon Hybrids (the remaining 50% were green foliated and discarded). Under the I.C.N.C.P. Art. 26 the name "Bronze Ribbon Hybrids" should be a group name as it refers to only bronze leaved individuals of *Cordyline Xgibblingsiae* Carse (which is the collective botanical name in Latin for *Cordyline banksii* x *Cordyline pumilo*). Therefore the new combination being made here drops the word "Hybrids" and replaces it with the word group. The new combination is given below:

Cordyline Xgibblingsiae Bronze Ribbon group

This name is a new group name

(I.C.N.C.P., Art. 26) for those bronze leaved cultivars that are the progeny of *Cordyline banksii* x *Cordyline pumilo*.

Acknowledgements

I thank Dr Phil Garnock-Jones and Mr Bill Sykes for their comments and discussion on the draft of this paper.

References

- Brickell, C. D. et al. 1980: *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants*. Bohn, Scheltema and Holkema, Netherlands.
- Metcalf, L. J. 1987 (2nd Ed.): *The Cultivation of New Zealand Trees and Shrubs*. Reed Methuen, Auckland.
- Moore, L. B. and Edgar, E. 1970: *Flora of New Zealand Vol. II*. Government Printer, Wellington.
- Moore, L. B. and Irwin, J. B. 1978: *The Oxford Book of New Zealand Plants*. Oxford University Press.