

## The correct name for the South American *Senecio* (sea cabbage)

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The name *Senecio candicans* has had rather a confused history. It is usually applied in horticultural circles to a plant from the Falkland Islands and southern tip of South America with broad ovate silvery leaves and rather insignificant yellow-orange flowers. It is not particularly hardy in the UK but is sometimes grown in the milder counties (Taylor, 1980) and Ireland (Besant, 1939) for its attractive foliage. Unfortunately, in the *RHS Dictionary of Gardening* (Huxley & Griffiths, 1992) and the *RHS Plant Finder* (Philip & Lord, 1994 and onwards), the name *S. candicans* has been linked to *S. cineraria*, a Mediterranean species to which it is evidently unrelated. This confusion appears to have arisen from the similarly named *S. candidus* DC., considered by *Flora Europaea* (Tutin *et al.*, 1976) as a synonym of *S. bicolor* subsp. *nebrodensis* but now treated as a distinct species by the Euro-Med Project under the name *Jacobaea candida*.

However, the name *Senecio candicans* was first coined by Wallich in his catalogue for an Indian plant. It was later validated by de Candolle in 1834. This would make any later use of *S. candicans* for the southern Atlantic plant a homonym and therefore illegitimate. Thus we are left with the question of the legitimate name for the plant grown in gardens today as *S. candicans*.

The South American plant was first described by Vahl in 1794, based upon a specimen collected by Commerson on the shores of the Magellan Straits, using the name *Cacalia candicans*. De Candolle (1838: 412) concluded that this plant should be included in the genus *Senecio* under the name *S. candidans*. Whether by good fortune or good forethought, because he was aware of the problems it would cause, de Candolle changed the spelling of Vahl's epithet. The name *S. candidans* could be considered an orthographic error to be corrected under Art. 60 of the *ICBN*. This interpretation is supported by de

Candolle's (1838: 332) treatment of *Cacalia* in the same publication, where the Vahl name, correctly given as *C. candicans*, points to *Senecio candicans* as the accepted name. However, regarding the name as an orthographic error would serve no benefit as a new name would then be required. By adopting *S. candidans* as an intentional *nomen novum* by de Candolle the problem of homonymy is avoided. This name has already been adopted by Moore (1983) amongst others including the International Plant Names Index (IPNI). It appears appropriate to adopt this subtle change of name in our garden literature as well.

**Senecio candidans** DC., *Prodr.* **6**: 412 (1838); Hook.f., *Fl. Antarctica*: 312, t. 109 (1846); Wedd., *Chloris Andina* **1**: 117 (1856); *Kew Bull.* 1899, App.: 52 (1899); Reiche, *Flora of Chile* **4**: 227 (1905); Cuatr. in *Fieldiana* **27**: 38 (1951); Moore, *Flora of Tierra del Fuego*: 242 (1983); Erskine, *Alpine Garden Society Bulletin* **62**: 72 (1985); Dillon, *Helen Dillon's Garden Book*: 119 (2007). Based on *Cacalia candicans* Vahl.  
 = *Cacalia candicans* Vahl, *Symb. Bot.* **3**: 91, t. 71 (1794)  
 = *Culcitium gayanum* J. Rémy, *Fl. Chil.* **4**(2): 130 (1849)  
 = *Brachypappus candicans* (Vahl) Sch.-Bip., *Flora* **38**: 119 (1855)  
 = *Senecio culciremii* Cuatr., *Fieldiana* **27**: 43 (1950). Based on *Culcitium gayanum* Remy  
 = *Senecio candicans sensu* Nicholson, *Illustrated Dictionary of Gardening*, Suppl.: 667 (1901); Vallentin, *Illustrations of the Flowering Plants and Ferns of the Falkland Islands*: t. 30 (1921); Besant in *Gard. Chron.* **106**: 392 (1939); *Proc. Roy. Hort. Soc.* **85**: 50, 94 (1960); Elliott in *Journ. Roy. Hort. Soc.* **89**: 277 (1964); Taylor, *The Milder Garden*: 217 (1990); Erskine, *Alpine Garden Society Bulletin* **62**: 274 (1994)  
 = *S. cineraria sensu* Huxley & Griffiths, *RHS Dictionary of Gardening* **4**: 277 (1992); Lord et al., *RHS Plant Finder* (1994 onwards), *pro parte quoad syn.*

Not to be confused with:

*Senecio candicans* Wall. ex DC. in Wight, *Contributions to the Botany of India*: **22** (1834); DC., *Prodr.* **6**: 369 (1838).

*Senecio candidus* (C. Presl) DC., *Prodr.* **6**: 355 (1838).

= *Cineraria nebrodensis* Guss., *Cat. Pl. Hort. Boccadifalco*, Add.: **4** (1821)

- = *Cineraria candida* C. Presl in: Presl & Presl, *Delic. Prag.*: 95 (1822)  
= *Senecio bicolor* (Willd.) Tod. subsp. *nebrodensis* (Guss.) Chater, *Bot. J. Linn. Soc.* **68**: 273 (1974); Tutin *et al.*, *Flora Europaea* **4**: 194 (1976)  
= *Jacobaea candida* (C. Presl) B. Nord. & Greuter, *Willdenowia* **36**: 712 (2006).

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