A valid name for *Fittonia albivenis* 'Nana' (*Acanthaceae*)

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Fittonia albivenis 'Nana' is a dwarf form of the popular houseplant commonly known as the nerve plant because of its decorative white-veined leaves. It is much smaller than the typical form, which has broadly ovate leaves (30–75 × 20–60mm) with cordate bases, and is reputed to be less vulnerable to fluctuations of temperature and humidity and so better suited to growing in houses (Hessayon, 1980).

In Brummitt's (1980) careful examination of the genus *Fittonia* in cultivation he noted that the name "*F. argyroneura nana* [had been] seen in commercial exhibits in Britain in recent years". However, he also suggests that the epithet has never been validly published as a botanical epithet. Its first mention in traditional literature appears to be when it was exhibited by Thomas Rochford and Sons Ltd on 19 May 1975 at the RHS London Show, where it received an Award of Merit. Unfortunately, it is very unlikely that the cultivar epithet was in use much before then. Rochford does not mention it in his book of 1973 (Rochford & Gorer, 1973) but does refer to it three years later (Davidson & Rochford, 1976). It is therefore almost certainly contrary to Article 19.13 of the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants* (Brickell *et al.*, 2004) and a new name is required for this cultivar, which is still commonly grown (Brickell, 2003).

To complicate matters, there is also a cultivar under the name of 'Minima', which appears to have arisen in the USA at about the same time, as by 1980 it is already being used as a reference plant in the issuing of US Plant Patents (Anonymous, 1980a & 1980b). According to Staples & Herbst (2005) this is the same dwarf form of the plant as 'Nana'. It therefore appears that in America it is known by the name 'Minima' but in Europe 'Nana'. Unfortunately, 'Minima' is also invalid as it too is contrary to Article 19.13. Considering that it is not known who raised this cultivar or if it arose first in America or

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Europe, the replacement of both names with a valid epithet seems an appropriate action.

Several new cultivars of *Fittonia albivenis* have been named with reference to heavenly bodies, e.g. 'White Star', 'Snow Star', 'White Angel'. It therefore seems appropriate to give this popular cultivar the epithet 'White Dwarf'. As the original raiser is not known it is also worth designating the Brummitt collection cited by him (Brummitt, 1980) as the nomenclatural standard, as it is the earliest reference to a specimen of this cultivar.

***Fittonia albivenis* 'White Dwarf' (Argyroneura Group)**
Nomenclatural Standard designated here: Cultivated in British Isles, sold for 80p as house plant under name "Fittonia" by Oaken Lane Garden Centre, Claygate, Surrey, 26 Sept 1977, *Brummitt 15028* (K).

Syn. *F. argyroneura* 'Nana'; Anonymous: 76 (1975)
F. argyroneura nana; Davidson & Rochford: 90 (1976); Brummitt: 162 (1980); Hessayon: 38 (1980)
F. verschaffeltii argyroneura 'Minima'; Anonymous (1980a & 1980b); Beckett: 256, fig. (1987)
F. verschaffeltii argyroneura minima; Kremplin: 136, fig. (1983)
F. verschaffeltii argyroneura nana; Philip: 185 (1990)
F. verschaffeltii var. *argyroneura* 'Nana'; Brickell: 441 (1996)
F. albivenis 'Nana' (Argyroneura Group); Philip & Lord: 222 (1994); Brickell: 451 (2003)

Stems procumbent, rooting at lower nodes, flowering stems ascending to 10cm high; stem hairs white, those on four angles spreading, those on faces crisped; leaves elliptic to ovate or rhombic, 17–42 × 11–29mm, base cuneate to slightly cordate, apex rounded to obtuse, petiole 6–21mm long, dark green (darker than 136A) above, conspicuously white-veined, greyed-green (137B–189A) beneath. Inflorescence a congested head of closely overlapping bracts, ±7 × 4mm, on a peduncle up to 37mm long; flowers 2 times as long as bracts, 2-lipped, tube 8–12mm long, cream (3D), lobes ±5mm long, cream-yellow (3C), upper lip oblong, entire at tip, ±1mm broad, arching over stamens, lower lip 3mm broad, 3-lobed, middle lobe deeper yellow (3A) than others.

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