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Taxonomic notes on *Isopyrum thalictroides* L. var. *insignis* Gibelli et Pirota (*Ranunculaceae*)

Abstract

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The lectotype of *Isopyrum thalictroides* L. var. *insignis* Gibelli et Pirota is designated. The specimen, incorrectly identified by these authors, is to be referred to *Aquilegia alpina* L. The name *Isopyrum thalictroides* var. *insignis* is consequently to be considered as a heterotypic synonym of *Aquilegia alpina*.

Introduction

The name *Isopyrum thalictroides* L. var. *insignis* appeared for the first time in the *Flora del modenese e del reggiano* (Gibelli & Pirota 1882). In this paper the name was validly published, being followed by a short diagnosis with the characters distinguishing the new variety from the typical one. These were identified as follows:

- carpels many;
- leaflets cordate-reniform, deeply segmented, with dentate-crenate segments provided with rounded teeth;
- nectariform petals wider, with smaller nectariferous cavity.

The new variety, collected “fra le pietre [= among the rocks] al Libro Aperto”, appears to be clearly differentiated from *Isopyrum thalictroides* L. [= *Thalictrella thalictroides* (L.) E. Nardi], above all for the number of carpels. It is to be underlined that the number of carpels is just one of the morphological characters upon which the taxonomic distinction between the genus *Isopyrum* L. [*nom. cons. prop.* (Hiepko & Tamura 1966), recommended by the Committee for Spermatophyta (Brummit 1998)] and the close genus *Leptopyrum* Rchb. is based: *Isopyrum* has few carpels, while *Leptopyrum* has many. The variety described by Gibelli and Pirota, exhibiting a morphological feature typical to the genus *Leptopyrum*, is therefore likely to be of great taxonomic interest.

Moreover, *I. thalictroides* usually grows in deciduous woodlands, on eutrophic brown forest soils (Pignatti 1982); on the contrary, the var. *insignis* was collected in an open rocky habitat and thus would also be of considerable ecological interest.

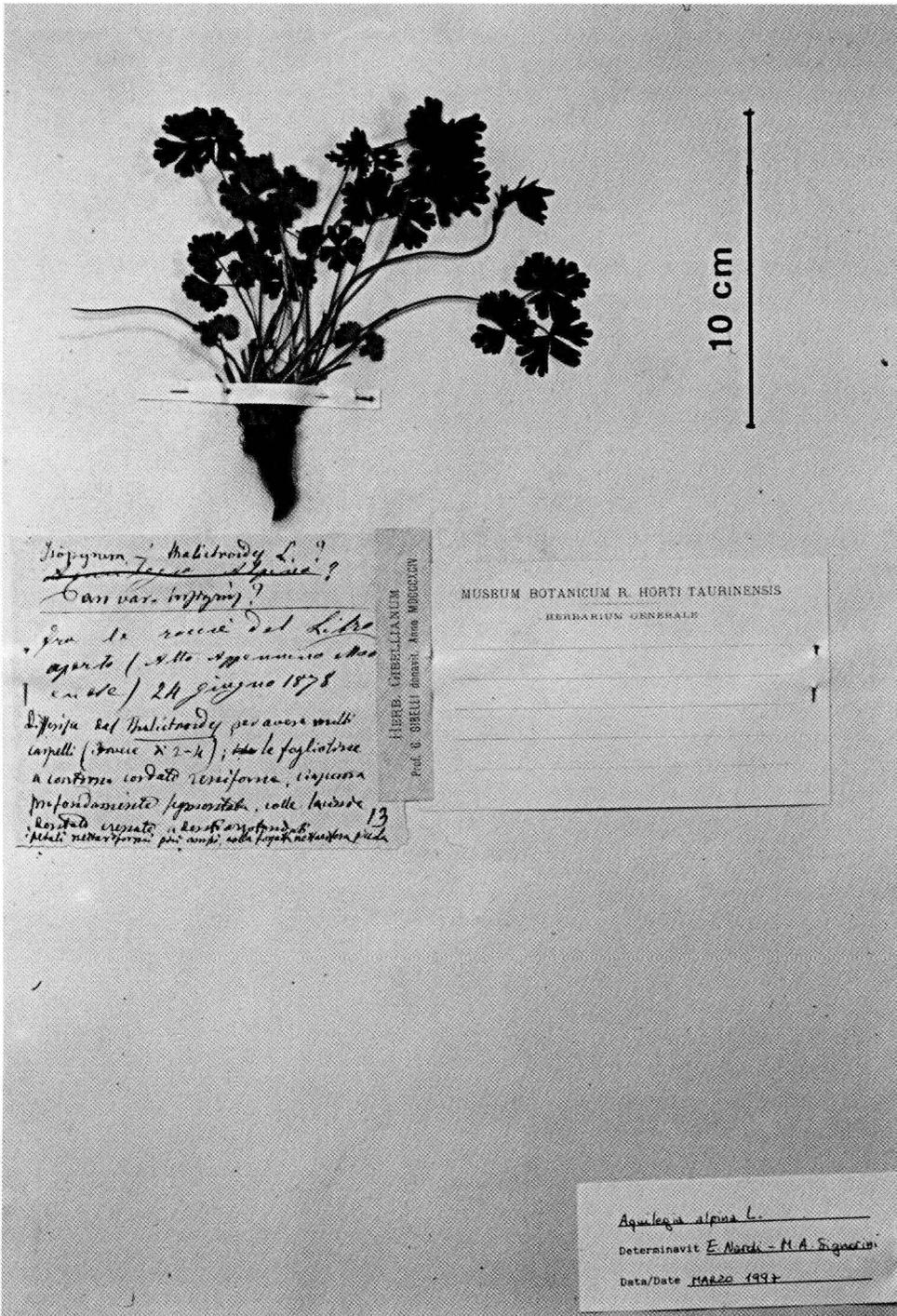


Fig. 1. Lectotype of *Isopyrum thalictroides* L. var. *insignis* Gibelli et Pirota.

The taxon described by Gibelli and Pirota was considered in different lights in floristic works which appeared after its publication. It is reported in the Appendix of Fiori's *Flora Analitica d'Italia* under the name *I. thalictroides* L. var. *insignis* Gib. et Pir. (Fiori 1908: 107), but does not appear anymore in the subsequent *Nuova Flora Analitica d'Italia* (Fiori 1923-1929). In *Flora d'Italia* (Pignatti 1982), it is mentioned below the description of the species in a note on morphological variability.

Tipification of *Isopyrum thalictroides* L. var. *insignis*

After personal investigations in FI and thanks to information given by Curators and Directors of MOD, RO and TO, we succeeded in finding only one original specimen of *Isopyrum thalictroides* L. var. *insignis*:

"*Isopyrum thalictroides* L.?/ *Aquilegia Alpina*? [deleted]/an var. *insignis*?/ Fra le roccie del Libro/ Aperto (Alto Appennino Mod/enese) 24 giugno 1878/ Differisce dal *thalictroides* per avere molti/ carpelli (invece di 2-4); le foglioline/ a contorno cordato reniforme, ciascuna/ profondamente segmentata, colle lacinie/ dentato crenate a denti arrotondati/ i petali nettariiformi più ampi, colla fossetta nettarifera piccola ["It differs from *thalictroides* for having many carpels (instead of 2-4), leaflets with a cordate-reniform outline, each of them deeply segmented, with dentate-crenate segments provided with rounded teeth, wider nectariform petals, with smaller nectariferous cavity"]/ 13 [handwritten by Gibelli]" (TO!, Fig. 1).

The specimen, bearing a label with exactly the same diagnosis and collection data reported in the protologue and perfectly agreeing with it, is here designated as the lectotype of *Isopyrum thalictroides* L. var. *insignis* Gibelli et Pirota.

Identification of *Isopyrum thalictroides* L. var. *insignis*

The type specimen - which is also the only specimen referable to this taxon we could find - was identified by us as *Aquilegia alpina* L. The incorrect identification was surely due to the apparent lack of spurs at the bottom of petals (nectaries) in the only flower present. However, upon close examination of the specimen, it appears that spurs are lacking as the result of damage (probably an insect bite) suffered by the flower during its growth. At the bottom of each petal, the beginning of spur is still detectable, in the shape of a circular hole. All the other morphological features of the specimen completely fit those of Apennine populations of *Aquilegia alpina*, a species which usually grows on rocks and stony pastures (Pignatti 1982).

Peculiar morphological and ecological features of *I. thalictroides* L. var. *insignis* can therefore be explained merely by the incorrect attribution of the specimen to the species *I. thalictroides* L.

Consequently, *Isopyrum thalictroides* L. var. *insignis* Gibelli et Pirota is to be considered as a heterotypic nomenclatural synonym of *Aquilegia alpina* L.

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