

## ELUCIDATING THE USE OF THE TERM HOMONYM IN PLANT TAXONOMY

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### Abstract

This write-up on homonyms in plant taxonomy is basically meant for the students of botany and that is why we have tried to present it in a very lucid way for better understanding.

**Keywords:** Homonym, plant taxonomy, taxon, nomenclature

### Report

In general, homonyms are names that are spelled identically, have different types, and refer to different taxa. One may learn this concept through Google search or from almost all botany textbooks, which have a chapter on plant nomenclature. At first, we are mentioning the definitions of homonym given in two textbooks of excellent quality and widely followed by the students. In these two textbooks [1,2] either it has been clearly stated that homonyms should be for different taxa [1] or projected in the same sense with example [2]. These are stated here as follows: [1] '**Later homonym:** Just as a taxon should have one correct name, the Code similarly does not allow the same name to be used for two different species (or taxa). Such, if exists, constitute homonyms.' and [2] 'Names identical in form but based on different types are termed **homonyms**: for example, *Festuca incrassata* L. is a quite different plant species from *Festuca incrassata* Salzm. ex Lois.' However, the glossary of the *Shenzhen Code*[3] defines a homonym as "A name spelled exactly like another name published for a taxon at the same rank based on a different type ...".

In this aspect, we consulted N.J. Turland, the chief editor of the *Shenzhen Code* [3]. He responded by stating that "*Code* does not say anything about a homonym applying to a 'different taxon'. Based on a different type, yes, but not necessarily applying to a different taxon. There are indeed cases of homonyms applying to the same taxon."

On our request, K.N. Gandhi provided an example of homonymic generic names viz., *Ludwigia* L. (Sp. Pl. 1: 118. 1753) and *Ludwigia* DC. (Prodr. 3: 58. 1828) belonging to the family Onagraceae.

In fact, initially [4] *Ludwigia* DC. was used in a sense different from *Ludwigia* L. (1753) but according to the present taxonomic concept they are the same. Hence, presently *Ludwigia* L. and

*Ludwigia* DC. are considered as homonyms applying to the same genus. Those interested in nomenclatural aspects of *Ludwigia* DC. [4] can see the Remarks in a reputed international plant name database[5].

N.J. Turland, Dr. John McNeill and Dr. K.N. Gandhi too informed us that (*pers. c/-\]/-omm.*, 2022) example of homonyms applied to the same species is very rare.7’/

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