Kalinia, a New North American Genus for a Species Long Misplaced in Eragrostis (Poaceae, Chloridoideae)

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KALINIA, A NEW NORTH AMERICAN GENUS FOR A SPECIES LONG MISPLACED IN ERAGROSTIS (POACEAE, CHLORIDOIDEAE)

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ABSTRACT

Eragrostis obtusiflora (Poaceae, Chloridoideae), a species distributed from the southwestern United States to central Mexico, has long been recognized for exhibiting morphological and anatomical features atypical of Eragrostis. Phylogenetic analyses of nuclear internal transcribed spacer sequences and plastid sequences demonstrate that E. obtusiflora should be excluded from Eragrostis (Eragrostideae) and instead be placed in Cynodonteae, although its position within this tribe was unresolved. Additional data, including anatomical and micromorphological characters, suggest a close relationship with Distichlis. However, differences in spikelet and rizome characters prevent its inclusion in Distichlis. Therefore, the species is transferred to a newly described genus, Kalinia, as K. obtusiflora.

Key words: alkaline soils, bicellular microhair, Cynodonteae, halophytic grass, Kalinia, lemma micromorphology.

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2001, as part of a systematic study of Distichlis Raf. and relatives (Poaceae, Chloridoideae; Bell and Columbus 2008), the first two authors collected D. spicata (L.) Greene from numerous populations in the southwestern USA and Mexico. At Willcox Playa (Coconino County, Arizona, USA) and Salinas de Hidalgo (San Luis Potosí, Mexico) few plants of D. spicata were found to be in flower. We noted many non-flowering plants that were similar to D. spicata in overall appearance and habit but differed by having markedly pungent-tipped leaves, in contrast to the pointed but not pungent leaf blades of D. spicata. Subsequent analyses of DNA sequences of the nuclear internal transcribed spacer (ITS; nrDNA) and trnL–F (cpDNA) regions revealed that sequences of pungent-leaved plants from the distant localities were nearly identical, yet differed from other sequences of D. spicata, and, indeed, all other species of Distichlis.

In fall 2003 we revisited Willcox Playa and found the pungent-leaved plants in flower. The flowers were hemerophytic in contrast to the unisexual flowers of dioecious Distichlis. In addition, the 3-nerved lemmas, versus 5–13 in Distichlis, helped us identify the plants as Eragrostis obtusiflora (E. Fourn.) Scribn. (Eragrostideae), a species distributed from the southwestern USA (Arizona, New Mexico) to central Mexico in saline/alkaline soils of inland playas (Pleistocene lake beds; Rosen 1994; Briere 2000). Distichlis spicata is often sympatric with E. obtusiflora, and, as pointed out by McVaugh (1983), non-flowering plants are easily confused. Both species are rhizomatous and have rigid, often conspicuously orthodistichous leaf blades.

In morphological and anatomical studies of Eragrostis Wolf, a large, worldwide genus of ca. 400 species (Clayton et al. 2006 onwards), Van den Borre and Watson (1994) and Gómez Sánchez and Koch (1998) reported that E. obtusiflora is anomalous within Eragrostis. In particular, E. obtusiflora differs from other species of Eragrostis in having pungent-tipped leaves, a 3-nerved upper glume, bundle sheaths that are not interrupted, bulliforms consisting of two large cells and associated with girders of colorless cells to the abaxial epidermis, and papillae present on intercostal long cells. In contrast, similarities between E. obtusiflora and members of Monanthochloinae (Clayton and Renvoize 1986), including Distichlis, have been noted by a number of authors, specifically in overall growth habit, presence of well developed rhizomes, and occurrence in saline and/or alkaline habitats (Ogden 1897; Scribner 1897; Gómez Sánchez and Koch 1998; Bell and Columbus 2008). In addition, E. obtusiflora shares two characteristics with species of Distichlis: bicellular microhairs where the basal cell is sunken into the mesophyll (also present in other halophytic grasses) and, in the intercostal zones of abaxial leaf blade surfaces, microhairs are surrounded and
The Grass Phylogeny Working Group II [GPWG II] (2012) conducted a family-wide analysis based upon three plastid loci and using a broad sample of Chloridoideae that included *E. obtusiflora*. *Eragrostis obtusiflora* resolved in the Cynodonteae clade, distant from the Eragrostideae clade where all other sampled *Eragrostis* species resolved. Although sister to *Distichlis* in the tree, the relationship had low statistical support. Based on Ogden (1897), Van den Borre and Watson (1994), Gómez Sánchez and Koch (1998), and GPWG II (2012), there is growing evidence that *E. obtusiflora* is misplaced in *Eragrostis*. We test this hypothesis by analyzing DNA sequences of additional loci from samples of *E. obtusiflora* and many representatives of Chloridoideae. The *rps16* (cpDNA) region of *Bell 251* was sequenced and added to the data set from Columbus et al. (2007) which include a broad sample of Chloridoideae. The rps16 (cpDNA) region of *Bell 251* was sequenced and added to the data set from Ingram and Doyle (2007). This data set contains a large sample of *Eragrostis* species representing both subgenera (Van den Borre and Watson 1994) and most of the major morphological groups in the genus based upon spikelet disarticulation type.

Specimens from across the geographical range of *E. obtusiflora* were examined for leaf blade transectional anatomy (*Bell 295*, 305, 318) and for micromorphology of the abaxial surfaces of leaf blades (*Bell 295*, 310, 318) and lemmas (*Bell 239*, 295, 305). As described in Bell and Columbus (2008), segments of living leaf blades were liquid-preserved in the field for anatomical study.

**DNA Sequencing and Analysis**

Sequences of ITS, *trnL–F*, and *rps16* from *E. obtusiflora* were obtained following the methods in Columbus et al. (2007) and Ingram and Doyle (2004). The sequences were manually aligned with the data sets of Columbus et al. (2007) and Ingram and Doyle (2004) and analyses of these data were carried out as described in those studies. GenBank accession numbers for newly generated sequences are provided in Appendix 1. We also performed a Kishino-Hasegawa test (Kishino and Hasegawa 1989) and a Templeton test (Templeton 1983) using the combined ITS and *trnL–F* data set in PAUP vers. 4.0b (Swofford 2002) to compare the length of the most parsimonious trees with the length obtained when *E. obtusiflora* was constrained as a member of Eragrostideae (sensu Columbus et al. 2007).

**RESULTS**

**Micromorphology**

The abaxial surfaces of fully expanded leaf blades and mature lemmas were examined using scanning electron microscopy following the methods of Bell and Columbus (2008).

**Leaf Blade Transectional Anatomy**

Preparation of blade transections followed the methods described in Columbus (1996) and Bell and Columbus (2008). Permanent microscope slides are deposited at RSA. Descriptive terminology for leaf anatomy and micromorphology follows Ellis (1976, 1979).

**Analyses of DNA Sequences**

In maximum parsimony analyses of the separate (trees not shown) and combined (Fig. 1) data sets of ITS and *trnL–F*, *E. obtusiflora* resolved within Cynodonteae, apart from the other species of *Eragrostis*. However, due to limited resolution and clade support, the phylogenetic position of *E. obtusiflora* within Cynodonteae is uncertain. In maximum parsimony analysis of *rps16*, *E. obtusiflora* likewise was not placed with other *Eragrostis* species and instead resolved in a clade among members of Cynodonteae (Fig. 2). Descriptive statistics for the analyses are given in Table 1. Results of a Kishino-Hasegawa test indicated that tree length was significantly longer when *E. obtusiflora* was constrained as part of Eragrostideae (length difference = 42, *p* = 0.001; see Fig. 1).

A Templeton test provided almost identical results.
Fig. 1. Strict consensus of 126 most parsimonious trees from analysis of combined ITS and trnL–F sequences (length = 4826; CI = 0.38; RI = 0.54). Bootstrap values ≥50 are given above the branches and Bremer decay values ≥3 are below the branches. Bulleted nodes are found in the strict consensus of separate parsimony analyses of ITS (13 trees) and trnL–F (360,726 trees). Phylogenetic analysis methods are described in Columbus et al. (2007). Tribal classification follows Columbus et al. 2007 and Peterson et al. 2007. (AZ = Arizona, JAL = Jalisco, SLP = San Luis Potosí).
Fig. 2. Strict consensus of 840 most parsimonious trees from analysis of *rps16* sequences (length = 235; CI = 0.68; RI = 0.88). Bootstrap values ≥50 are given above the branches. Phylogenetic analysis methods are described in Ingram and Doyle (2004, 2007).
prickle hairs, stoma, and microhairs (Fig. 4). Stoma on lemmas have a similar shape to those on the leaf blades with low-dome-shaped subsidiary cells. Papillae are found adjacent to and sometimes overarching both stoma and microhairs. Apically pointing prickle hairs are distributed in the costal and intercostal zones. Microhairs on lemmas are the chloridoid bicellular type.

The observations reported in this study are generally in agreement with those of Gómez Sánchez and Koch (1998) with the exception that their illustration of the abaxial blade surface shows five files of cells in the costal zone (versus 7–9 in the present study) and they do not show any round short cells in these files. Gómez Sánchez and Koch (1998) did note rows of stoma with overarching papillae in the intercostal zones. Liu et al. (2010) did not find stoma on lemmas of the five Eragrostis species that were included in their study.

Leaf Blade Anatomy

Transitional leaf anatomy of E. obtusiflora is distinctive with large ridges of colorless cells on the adaxial side of all vascular bundles except those at the margins (Fig. 5, 6). The outline of the blade forms a broad, continuously curved U. There are deep, narrow furrows between all vascular bundles on the adaxial side and shallow furrows on the abaxial side. The median vascular bundle is not distinct as a midrib and there is no keel. The blade has 19–25 vascular bundles with five 1st order bundles regularly arranged with two or three 2nd order bundles between the 1st order and a single 3rd order bundle at each margin.

The shape of all vascular bundles is elliptical or slightly pointed adaxially. The vascular bundles have a double bundle sheath, the outer of which is even in outline and contains chloroplasts that are centripetally arranged within the cells, features that are predictive of the NAD-ME type of C4 photosynthesis (Prendergast and Hattersley 1987). In the 1st order vascular bundles, parenchyma cells adjoin the inner sheath. Metaxylem is slightly narrower than the outer sheath cells and has thickenened walls. Bundle sheaths are complete; on the abaxial side some outer sheath cells lack chloroplasts. Adaxial bundle sheath extensions consist of large, thin-walled, colorless cells that are separated from the epidermis by a narrow sclerenchyma strand. Abaxial sclerenchyma forms small girders. At each margin there is a small, slightly pointed sclerocyma cap. The mesophyll is radiate, composed of tabular cells, and separated from adjacent vascular bundles by bi- or multiseriate columns of colorless cells of irregular size and shape. At the base of the furrows there are bulliform cells associated with the colorless cells.

There are numerous papillae and/or prickle hairs on the adaxial surface and, consistent with the micromorphological study, fewer papillae on the abaxial surface between vascular bundles. Dumbbell or flask-shaped bicellular microhairs are present on both surfaces; the basal cell is partially sunken below the epidermis into colorless or mesophyll cells (Fig. 7).

The results of the present study are in general agreement with previous work, with the exception that Gómez Sánchez and Koch (1998) did not distinguish 2nd order and 3rd order vascular bundles in blades of E. obtusiflora. However, distinct metaxylem is evident in the 1st order vascular bundles (Ellis 1976) as noted by Ogden (1897) and Bell and Columbus (2008).

**Table 1. Summary information for the data sets and results of the analyses.** PIC = parsimony informative characters, CI = consistency index, RI = retention index.

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<th>Data Set</th>
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<td>11</td>
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</table>

**Discussion**

Eragrostis obtusiflora has long been positioned in Eragrostis because of its multiple florets per spikelet and 3-nerved, awnless, and glabrous lemmas. However, based on other characteristics, including leaf anatomy, taxonomists have found it to be a puzzling species with enigmatic affinities (Ogden 1897; Scribner 1897; Hitchcock 1951; McVaugh 1983; Van den Borre and Watson 1994; Gómez Sánchez and Koch 1998; Calderón de Rzedowski and Rzedowski 2001). Most of these researchers have noted similarities in vegetative appearance and in habitat requirements between E. obtusiflora and members of Monanthochloinae, especially D. spicata. Distichlis spicata and E. obtusiflora frequently co-occur in saline/alkaline habitats, and both species are strongly rhizomatous. However, rhizomes of E. obtusiflora are thicker (>5 mm) and generally golden yellow with distinctive scale scars while rhizomes of D. spicata are more slender (<4 mm) and brownish with persistent scale leaves. In addition, lemma nerve number (3 in E. obtusiflora vs. 7–13 in D. spicata) and floral sexuality (hermaphroditic in E. obtusiflora vs. unisexual in D. spicata) clearly distinguish these species.

Analyses of molecular data from the nuclear and chloroplast genomes confirm that E. obtusiflora has been misplaced taxonomically (GPWG II 2012; Fig. 1, 2). It does not form a clade with other species of Eragrostis in tribe Eragrostideae. When E. obtusiflora is constrained as part of Eragrostideae (in the analysis of combined ITS and trnL–F, Fig. 1), tree length is significantly longer (Templeton 1983; Kishino and Hasegawa 1989). Rather, it resolves in Cynodonteeae. In both GPWG II (2012) and the present study, it resolves with the same group of genera but with a lack of statistical support making its exact relationship to these genera uncertain based upon these data and analyses.

Another source of evidence disputing the current placement of E. obtusiflora comes from micromorphological and anatomical data. Amarasinghe and Watson (1988, 1990) studied bicellular microhair morphology in 74 Eragrostis species and reported three types of microhairs: chloridoid (short, broad, and distal cell thick walled), panicoid (long, narrow, and distal cell thin walled), and intermediate (long, distal cell inflated). While Eragrostis microhairs are variable, the dumbbell or flask-shaped microhairs observed in E. obtusiflora (Fig. 7) have
Fig. 3–8. Micromorphology and anatomy.—3. Abaxial surface of leaf blade of *Eragrostis obtusiflora* (Bell 295). Note: some short cells may be silica cells.—4. Abaxial surface of lemma of *E. obtusiflora* (Bell 295).—5. Whole-blade transection of *E. obtusiflora* (Bell 295). Arrows indicate 1st order vascular bundles.—6. Detail of median vascular bundle of leaf blade of *E. obtusiflora* (Bell 295).—7–8. Comparison of microhairs of *E. obtusiflora* (Bell 295)-7 and *Distichlis spicata* (Bell 231)-8. (bc = basal cell, bu = bulliform cell, cc = colorless cells, cz = costal zone, dc = distal cell, is = inner sheath, iz = intercostal zone, lc = long cell, me = mesophyll, mi = microhair, mvb = median vascular bundle, mx = metaxylem, os = outer sheath, pa = papilla, ph = phloem, pr = prickle hair, sc = sclerenchyma, sh = short cell, st = stoma).
not been reported for other members of the genus. However, they are strikingly similar to the microhairs found in Distichlis (Fig. 8) and other halophytic chloridoids such as Aeluropus Trin., Cynodon Rich., Odyssea Stapf, Spartina Schreb., and Sporobolus R.Br. (Levering and Thomson 1971; Liphschitz and Waisel 1974; Oross and Thomson 1982; Amarasinghe and Watson 1988; Somaru et al. 2002; Bell and Columbus 2008).

In addition, E. obtusiflora has stomata on its lemmas (Fig. 4), a feature not observed in a small sample of Eragrostis species (Liu et al. 2010). In Chloridoideae, stomata on lemmas have been reported in 25 (of ca. 140) genera including Distichlis and other related members of Cynodonteae (Columbus 1996; Bell and Columbus 2008; Liu et al. 2010).

Leaf blade anatomy provides additional evidence of the unique nature of E. obtusiflora. Four previous studies have presented data on blade transectional anatomy of this species (Ogden 1897; Van den Borre and Watson 1994; Gómez Sánchez and Koch 1998; Bell and Columbus 2008). The conclusion of these studies is that anatomy of E. obtusiflora differs from that of other Eragrostis species by the presence of papillae in intercostal zones of the abaxial surface and the lack of interruption of the bundle sheath by sclerenchyma (shared only with E. pergracilis S.T.Blake). The anatomy of E. obtusiflora differs from Distichlis in the presence of bundle sheath extensions of colorless cells (absent in Distichlis) and the wide diameter of metaxylem cells (narrow in Distichlis) (Bell and Columbus 2008). However, the presence of dumbbell or flask-shaped bicellular microhairs with a portion of the basal cell sunken below the epidermis is a feature shared by all members of Distichlis, supporting a possible close relationship between these taxa (Fig. 7, 8; Bell and Columbus 2008).

It is clear from analyses of DNA sequence data and from anatomical and morphological evidence that E. obtusiflora does not belong in Eragrostis and, in fact, is placed in Cynodonteae, therefore, we propose a new genus, Kalinia, for this species.

**TAXONOMIC TREATMENT**

**Kalinia** H.L.Bell & Columbus, gen. nov.—**TYPE: Kalinia obtusiflora** (E.Fourn.) H.L.Bell & Columbus.

Robust perennial with long, glabrous stolons and thick, tan to golden rhizomes with imbricate scales dehiscing to form distinctive scars; ligule a line of short hairs, leaf blades rigid, conspicuously orthodichotous, with markedly pungent tips; inflorescence a narrow to open panicle; spikelets with 5[4?]-12 hermaphroditic florets, the distal floret occasionally reduced, lemmas 3-nerved, glabrous, with an obtuse to slightly pointed tip, sometimes erose, fringed, or mucronate from the central nerve.

**Kalinia obtusiflora** (E.Fourn.) H.L.Bell & Columbus, comb. nov.


Robust, rhizomatous, and stoloniferous perennial to 50 cm tall, branching from the base; rhizomes stout, to 8 mm thick, tan to golden yellow, with imbricate scales dehiscing to form a distinctive banding pattern, spiny tipped; stolons branching extragynagally at nodes, internodes to 24 cm long, hollow, nodes distinctly brown; culms erect or ascending, intragynagally from plant base, nodes hollow, pale. Leaf sheaths overlapping, concealing the culm, open, with tufts of villous hairs at distinct collar and ciliate along margin, occasionally sparsely pilose on surface; ligule a short (1–1.5 mm) line of whitish hairs; blades <22 × 0.3–0.6 cm, conspicuously orthodichotous, ascending to spreading, straight or slightly arcuate, rigid, involute, more tightly so distally, narrowing to a hard, light yellow, markedly pungent tip, abaxial surface glabrous, adaxial surface with deep, narrow furrows, scabrous, margins scabrous, midrib not prominent. Inflorescence a narrow or open panicle to 20 cm long, exerted or partially included in upper sheath, 1’ branches to 3.5 cm long, sometimes with 2’ branching, tufts of hairs occasionally observed in branch axils, rachis and branches flattened, scabrous to various degrees, pedicels short (<0.5 cm), appressed to branches. Spikelets 0.8–1.5 × ca. 0.3 cm, narrowly cylindric except when the florets spread during anthesis, glabrous, pale or purple-tinged, disarticulation above glumes and between florets, rachilla segment disarticulating with floret below, bracts ovate, usually obtuse; florets 5[4?]-12, terminal floret sometimes reduced; glumes similar, membranous, lower 1-nerved, upper 3-nerved with lateral nerves indistinct, lower 2.5–3.2 mm long, upper 3.2–4.5 mm long; lemmas 3.5–4.5 mm long, chartaceous to apically membranous, tip variable from blunt to slightly pointed (occasionally mucronate from central nerve), frequently erose to fringed with 3 (rarely 5) prominent nerves; palea slightly shorter than lemma, loosely held in lemma, membranous, prominently 2-nerved and 2-keeled, nerves scabridulous, apex obtuse; lodicules 2, broadly cuneate; stamens 3, anthers white to reddish purple, 2.0–2.4 mm long; ovary ca. 1.0–1.2 mm, stigmas 2, plumose, purplish; Caryopses 1.6–2.0 × 0.8–1.0 mm, narrowly obovate, rounded on side opposite the hilum, with shallow vertical depression on hilum side.

**Chromosome number.**—2n = 40 (Reeder 1977).

**Etymology.**—The generic name is derived from the Arabic root of alkali, al qaliy (ashes of saltwort), in recognition of the habitat preference of this plant.

**Common names.**—“Zacate amor seco,” “zacate jihuite” (Beetle et al. 1991); “zacahuixtle” (Lleverino González et al. 2000); “carrizillo” (term used in Jalisco, Mexico).

**Type locality.**—In the *Brizopyrum obtusiflorum* protologue, Fournier (1886) indicated “[i]n ora occidentali (Émy en meo herbario).” “Orizaba” is written on the type specimen. Fournier (1878) noted that some specimens collected by members of the French Scientific Commission to Mexico, 1865–1866, did not have detailed collection data. Such specimens were attributed to Captain Émy and to the site of the military encampment, Orizaba, in the state of Veracruz (Hemsley 1882–1886). Fournier mentioned Acapulco (Guevaro) and Mazatlán (Sinola) as coastal areas where collections were made by members of the commission; however, *K. obtusiflora* has not been collected from the Pacific (or Gulf) coast of Mexico, including Veracruz. We are not aware of suitable habitat of *K. obtusiflora* near Orizaba. In the region it is known from collections at Laguna Atotonilco (Jalisco), Laguna Cuítzeo (Michoacán), and Lago de Texcoco (México).
Distribution and habitat.—*Kalina obtusiflora* occurs in Arizona and New Mexico (USA) and in the Mexican states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Guanajuato, Jalisco, México, Michoacán, and San Luis Potosí (Appendix 1; Fig. 10). It is frequently sympatric with *D. spicata*. A large number of specimens are from Willcox Playa in southern Arizona, and multiple vouchers represent the area around the town of Playas, New Mexico, as well as northern Chihuahua and the
central Mexican states of Jalisco, México, and Michoacán. Throughout its range, K. obtusiflora has a patchy distribution on inland saline and alkaline playas.

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LITERATURE CITED


intron = HM152787, USA. Arizona: Chiricahua Mts, 25 Sep 1896, Toumey 27 (US); Sulphur Spring Valley, September 1896, Toumey s.n. (US 859726); Willcox Playa, August–September 1896, Toumey s.n. (US 1723504); 28 Aug 1905, Thornber s.n., (ASU, CAS, GH, MICH, NY, RSA 627597, TAES [2 sheets]), TEX, UNM 90792); 12 Jun 1937, Goodding s.n. (MIC, US 1721946, US 1721945); 12 Jun 1937, Silveus 2169 (TAES, TEX); 12 Apr 1938, Silveus 2538 (GH, MICH, TEX, US); 19 Sep 1938, Silveus 5430 (CAS, TAES, TEX); 26 Sep 1938, Silveus 3502 (CAS, TAES, TEX); 15 Sep 1940, Shreve 10007 (MICH); 2 Sep 1944, Pultz et al. 1036 (CAS, GH, MICH, US); 26 Aug 1971, Reeder & Reeder 5330 (US); 10 Jul 1986, Reeder & Reeder 7867 (ASU); 23 Jul 1996, Reeder & Reeder 9411 (ASU); Willecox Playa, 26 Aug 2001, Bell 239 (RSA); 16 Sep 2003, Bell 295 (RSA), ITS = HM152783, trnL–F = HM152785. California: Olancha, 29 May 2001, Bell 231 (RSA) [Distichlis spicata]. New Mexico: Las Playas, 23 Jun 1906, Wooton s.n. (NMC 690, US 735348); edge of Playa Lake 5 mi N of smelting plant, 9 Jul 1984, Trent & Allred 111 (NMCR); Playas, 17 Sep 2003, Bell 297 (RSA).