
SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

New records for the Maltese flora: *Pancratium foetidum* Pomel (Family: Amaryllidaceae)**Edwin Lanfranco^{1*} and Hubert J. Spiteri²**

The genus *Pancratium* is represented in the Maltese flora by *P. maritimum* L., typical of coastal sands. This was first recorded by Zerafa (1831). Brenner (1838) records *P. illyricum* L. from sandy beaches (presumably Ramla) in Gozo. In this he was followed by Grech Delicata (1853) who cites both species and giving the latter from Ramla in Gozo, and as flowering in August/September. But, as Sommier & Caruana Gatto (1915) correctly state, true *P. illyricum* flowers in spring and is not a sand-dwelling species. The record of *P. illyricum* can therefore be attributed to confusion with *P. maritimum*, a typical species of coastal sands which flowers in summer.

On the 30th September 1963, one of us (HJS) encountered an unusual *Pancratium* in Mellieha Bay and collected some material for cultivation. This however failed to flower regularly, the last flowerings being in 1995 and 2001. This species has now been identified as *P. foetidum* Pomel, native of NW Africa, from Morocco to Libya (El Gadi, 1978). Although this latter species is vegetatively similar to *P. maritimum*; so that the two species are indistinguishable in the field when not in flower/fruit, they can be readily separated when flowering/fruitletting. Thus the flowers of *P. foetidum* are considerably smaller than those of *P. maritimum* while the flowers are ill-smelling in contrast with the fragrant flowers of *P. maritimum*. In Malta, *P. foetidum* flowers mainly in Late September and October while *P. maritimum* flowers mainly in summer with only a brief overlap in the flowering period between the two species. *P. foetidum* has stamens about equal to the coronal teeth while in *P. maritimum* these are longer. The fruit in *P. foetidum* is oblong in contrast to the subglobular fruit of *P. maritimum* and carries much smaller seed.

It is unlikely that this species is introduced and it has probably been overlooked because of the identical vegetative habit and rarity of flowering. The original site from where the plants were collected no longer exists since a road has been constructed right through. Nevertheless, since it is easily overlooked, it is not unlikely that it still exists in the wild. Since there is material in cultivation, it is possible to plan a recovery program to reintroduce it in the wild.

Live material is deposited in the collection of HJS while herbarium material is deposited in the private herbarium of EL.

REFERENCES

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Grech Delicata (1853) - *Flora Melitensis*. xvi + 49pp. Malta
Sommier S. & Caruana Gatto, A. (1915). *Flora Melitensis Nova*. Firenze, Stab. Pellas, viii + 502pp.
Zerafa S. (1831) *Florae Melitensis Thesaurus sive polkantarum enumeratio quae in Melitae Gaulosque insulis aut indigenae aut vulgatissimae occurrunt* Malta.