

Aechmea pittieri* a distinct species from *Aechmea bracteata **Eric Gouda¹.**

Aechmea pittieri Mez (1896) was considered a synonym of *Aechmea bracteata* (Sw.) Griseb. (1865) by Utley, J.F. & Burt-Utley, K. (1994) in the Flora Mesoamericana. A photo on Naturalista (online) from Panama was subject of discussion, it showed a plant on long distance high up in a tree, that was obviously distinct from *Ae. bracteata* and was called *Ae. pittieri* by one of the visitors. At first glance, I thought it was *Ae. dactylina*, because it was obviously not *Ae. bracteata* but several characteristics did not fit, so I was not happy with my identification.

The fractional specimen of *Ae. pittieri* from the Mez herbarium (now at B) I had in my database, did not look very different from *Ae. bracteata* which initially put me on the wrong track (to agree with Utley & Utley). Later I searched for the Type specimen online from BR, already filed under *Ae. bracteata* (could not be found under the original name!), and this specimen convinced me that it should be considered a distinct species.

The type specimen of *Ae. bracteata* at the British Museum (BM) seems to be a relatively small or not well-developed specimen, because in larger specimens we see a few large, long, stipitate primary branches that resembles the larger once-branched top of the inflorescence (with many spikes) attended by large red primary bracts, decreasing in size rapidly upward and then abruptly short. These large branches are not seen in the type specimen though, where the lower branches are only bearing a few (3) spikes (fig. 1) and only a few primary branches are divided.

Aechmea pittieri does not have the large lower branches resembling the top of the inflorescence as in *Ae. bracteata*. Most of the branches are long stipitate with a few (ca 2-3) digitate and relative longer, slightly denser spikes and the primary bracts are reducing gradually in size upward in the inflorescence (not abruptly, very short, fig. 2, 3). Only the upper part of the inflorescence has undivided branches (spikes).

The habit is quite similar with that of *Ae. bracteata*, but the leaf blades seem to be more strict, only arching a little bit distally, but specimens with recurving long leaves have been observed too, probably depending on biotic factors. A last obvious difference is the flower color, petals of *Ae. pittieri* are pinkish blue and of *Ae. bracteata* are yellow.

Taxonomy

Aechmea pittieri Mez DC. *Monogr. Phan.. In: De Candolle, C. (ed.). Monographiae Phanerogamarum* 9: 231 (1896), recognized as a distinct species here.

Type: Tonduz 6609 Boruca, near Buenos Aires, Costa Rica. There are two sheets at Meise (Brussel) BR, one with the annotation “Holotypus” (barcode BR0000008695642) and one without (barcode BR0000008697189). It is not clearly one collection (not marked with sheet 1 & 2), so a lectotype should be chosen, and specimen BR0000008697189 is clearly a better specimen, showing the main part of the inflorescence. Lectotype BR0000008697189 *designated here*, isolectotype BR0000008695642 *designated here*.

1. University Utrecht Botanic Gardens, Budapestlaan 17, 3584 CD, Utrecht, Netherlands. e.j.gouda@uu.nl



Figure 1. The type specimen of *Aechmea bracteata* at the British Museum (BM).



Figure 2. The lectotype specimen of *Aechmea pittieri* at BR with barcode BR0000008697189.



Figure 3. The isolectotype specimen of *Aechmea pittieri* at BR with barcode BR000008695642.



Figure 4. *Aechmea bracteata* in Jardín Botánico de Venezuela. Photo Matthias Asmuss.



Figure 5. *Aechmea pittieri* in the wild at Sabanilla, Buenos Aires, Provincia de Puntarenas, Costa Rica. Photo Cris Kettinger.



Figure 6. *Aechmea pittieri* in the wild at NW of Boca Limon, Provincia de Puntarenas, Costa Rica, notice the form of the rosette. Photo Cris Kettinger.



Figure 7. *Aechmea pittieri* in the wild at NW of Boca Limon, Provincia de Puntarenas, Costa Rica, notice the bluish pink petals. Photo Cris Kettinger.

Literature

Grisebach, A.H.R. (1865) *Flora of the British West Indian Islands*. [i]-xvi: 507-789. L. Reeve, London.

Mez, C. (1896) *Bromeliaceae*. In: De Candolle, C. (ed.). *Monographiae Phanerogamarum*. Vol. 9. Masson & Cie., Paris France, 990 pp.

Utley, J.F. & Burt-Utley, K. (1994) *Bromeliaceae*. In: Davidse, G.; Sousa, N. & Chater, A.O. (ed.) *Flora Mesoamericana*. Vol. 6: 89-156. UNAM, Mexico City, 543 pp.