

FOREST NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

A NOTE ON THE CORRECT NOMENCLATURE OF *CASUARINA EQUISETIFOLIA*

The importance of binomial nomenclature is well understood as it allows people throughout the world to communicate unambiguously about a species of plant or animal. Every scientific name is therefore, unique. For botanists, scientific names are the international currency in plant information exchange. Every scientific name has an author, the botanist (s) who first described the species and validly published the name. In botanical nomenclature, author citation refers to citing the person (or group of people) who validly published a botanical name while fulfilling the formal requirements as specified by the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (ICBN, 2000). In ordinary conversation, there is no need for the precision afforded by citing authors. However, in scientific writing, the first mention of the name of a plant or animal in the text itself must include the full scientific name, including the authority. Since our knowledge-base and opinions change with time and new information about the plant group in question, the author citation can become quite complicated as it reflects the published opinion of botanists over time. Researchers while writing should, therefore, be careful in giving the

correct authority for any botanical name they use.

Casuarina equisetifolia is the most widely planted species of *Casuarina* in India and this multipurpose tree species is often cultivated as a cash crop by the farmers in peninsular India. Tree improvement programmes on this species are underway in different parts of the country. It has been observed that the authority of this popular tree species is being quoted differently by researchers when publications are being made. It has been generally reported as *Casuarina equisetifolia* Forst., *Casuarina equisetifolia* J.G. Forst. & G. Forst., *Casuarina equisetifolia* L. ex J.R. & G. Forst., *Casuarina equisetifolia* Blanco or *Casuarina equisetifolia* L.

According to Friis (1980), the name *Casuarina equisetifolia* was validly published by Linnaeus in 1759. The genus was treated as monotypic and the authority of the genus is also to be attributed to Linnaeus. The name *Casuarina litorea* given by Rumphius in 1743 was not accepted by Linnaeus. All the other authors described the species at a later date (Friis, 1980). Therefore, the correct citation to be used is *Casuarina equisetifolia* L.

References

- Friis, Ib. (1980). The Authority and date of publication of the genus *Casuarina* and its type species. *Taxon*, 29 (4): 499-501.

ICBN (2000). International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (Saint Louis Code), Electronic version. International Association for Plant Taxonomy. Available at <http://www.bgbm.org/IAPT/Nomenclature/Code/SaintLouis/0001ICSL>. Accessed on Sept. 09, 2008.

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