

# *Rhododendron diversipilosum*, comb. nov. (Ericaceae)

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The essentially Japanese taxon *Ledum palustre* L. var. *diversipilosum* Nakai (Ericaceae) deserves the specific rank. Following the current generic concept, the taxon is at the same time transferred to the genus *Rhododendron* L. as *Rhododendron diversipilosum* (Nakai) Harmaja.

Key words: Ericaceae, Japan, *Ledum*, *Rhododendron*

The well-known broad-leaved *Ledum* L. (Ericaceae) endemic to Japan and Sakhalin has traditionally been treated as an infraspecific taxon of *L. palustre* L. It is well distinguished in the Japanese literature, predominantly as *L. palustre* var. *diversipilosum* Nakai (e.g., Ohwi 1965). In my paper on the *Ledum* group (Harmaja 1991) I already supposed that it would deserve the specific rank but did not make the necessary new combination. In that paper I used an apparent synonym (cf. Ohwi 1965), *L. nipponicum* (Nakai) Tolm. nom. inval. (see Harmaja 1991). However, *L. palustre* var. *nipponicum* Nakai is a younger name than *L. palustre* var. *diversipilosum*, it is but seldom used, its characters are poorly known, and, above all, the epithet *nipponicum* cannot be transferred into *Rhododendron* L. at the specific level because of *R. nipponicum* Matsum.

As was apparent in my paper (Harmaja 1991), the present taxon is distinguished from its nearest relatives — *R. hypoleucum* (Tolm.) Harmaja and *R. tolmachevii* Harmaja — by the somewhat more acute leaves with both white and brown, long hairs

on their undersides. Future studies on the *Ledum* group in East Asia are needed to clarify the delimitation of some of the species, but the present taxon should anyway have an available name corresponding to its obvious rank and modern generic position.

Kron and Judd (1990) united the genus *Ledum* with *Rhododendron*. This concept was followed in my key to the species of the *Ledum* group (Harmaja 1991). Recently, cladistic studies at the molecular level, too (e.g., Kurashige *et al.* 1998), confirm this treatment: *Ledum* is definitely nested within *Rhododendron*.

***Rhododendron diversipilosum* (Nakai) Harmaja, comb. nov.**

Basionym: *Ledum palustre* L. var. *diversipilosum* Nakai, Bot. Mag. 31: 102. 1917. — *Ledum palustre* subsp. *diversipilosum* (Nakai) H. Hara, J. Jap. Bot. 33: 98. 1958. — Type: A holotype was not designated nor were any specimens listed; instead several localities were mentioned.

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