

Neotypification of the name *Diplomeris pulchella* (Orchidaceae)

Kemprai K.K.¹, Khersa B.², Bhuyan B.³, Deori C.⁴, Chanu L.M.⁵, Medhi P.⁶ & S. Borah^{1*}

¹Department of Botany, Gauhati University, Guwahati, Kamrup (M) – 781014, Assam, India

²Department of Botany, Central Ayurveda Research Institute, Guwahati, Kamrup (M) – 781040, Assam, India

³Department of Botany, Girijananda Chowdhury University, Azara, Guwahati – 781017, Assam, India

⁴Botanical Survey of India, Eastern Regional Centre, Shillong – 793003, Meghalaya, India

⁵Department of Botany, Assam Don Bosco University, Tapesia, Kamrup (M) – 782402, Assam, India

⁶Department of Botany, Goreswar College, Baksa – 781366, Assam, India

*E-mail: souravjyotiborah@gmail.com

Abstract: *Diplomeris pulchella* D.Don (Orchidaceae) was described with an obscure indication of the type, referring only to a Wallich collection from Nepal. Subsequent searches for Wallich specimens from Nepal failed to locate any relevant material. However, a specimen of *D. pulchella* collected by Wallich from Sylhet, Bangladesh, is preserved at BM. It remains uncertain whether Don mistakenly cited the locality as “Nepalia” instead of Sylhet, or whether the BM specimen does not represent original material. As the BM specimen cannot be confidently confirmed as original material, it is here designated as the neotype.

Keywords: *Diplomeris pulchella*, Nomenclature, Typification, Wallich.

Introduction

Diplomeris D.Don (Orchidaceae) was established as a monotypic genus by Don (1825) with *Diplomeris pulchella* D.Don as the type species. The genus is currently represented by three accepted species distributed across Assam, South-Central China, the Eastern and Western Himalaya, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Tibet, and Vietnam (Pridgeon *et al.*, 2001; POWO, 2025). *Diplomeris hirsuta* (Lindl.) Lindl., *D. josephii* A.N. Rao & Swamin., and *D. pulchella*, all occurs in India (POWO, 2025). Don (*loc. cit.*) described *D. pulchella* based on Wallich collections

purportedly from Nepal while preparing ‘*Prodromus Florae Nepalensis*’, following his work on Wallich’s collections at A.B. Lambert’s herbarium (Hortense, 1970). Don provided only the origin of collection for *Diplomeris pulchella*, stating “Hab. in Nepalia. Wallich”. He described the flowers as “roseo-purpureus,” although all known species of the genus bear white flowers, a correction later reflected in Hooker’s (1894) amended description in ‘*Flora of British India*’ (Dalström *et al.*, 2019), suggesting that Don may have relied on dried specimens. Lindley (1832) subsequently described *Diplochilos longifolius* based on Wallich Catalogue no. 7064 from “Mt. Silhet” (Bangladesh) and later reduced it to synonymy under *D. pulchella* (Lindley, 1835). Roxburgh (1832) described *Orchis uniflora* Roxb. in *Flora Indica*, later reduced to synonymy under *Diplomeris pulchella* by Hooker (1894). Hooker noted that Don cited “Nepal, Wallich” as the habitat, whereas Wallich’s specimens originated from the Silhet Mountains (Khasia Hills). Don described the plant as three-leaved (“caulis ... triphyllus”), while Hooker reported usually two leaves, possibly because Don interpreted a leafy bract as a third leaf; however, a Burmese specimen at K (K000387530) shows three leaves. Wallich’s collections were widely distributed among European botanists and herbaria, contributing to later taxonomic uncertainty. Despite

Received: 27.02.2025; Revised & Accepted: 20.03.2026

Published Online: 31.03.2026

contemporary criticism of Don's *Prodromus Florae Nepalensis* (Fraser-Jenkins, 2006; de Candolle, 1825), the names published therein are valid and retain nomenclatural priority. Because Don cited only unspecified Wallich material and provided no herbarium reference, the identity of the type has remained uncertain (Dalström *et al.*, 2019). To stabilize the application of the name, designation of a type specimen is therefore necessary, which is effected here.

Materials and Methods

The original material of *Diplomeris pulchella* was searched at BM, while LINN (Smith Herbarium), BR, and P-JU were consulted through curator correspondence and virtual herbarium access for possible duplicates from Wallich collections (Stafleu & Cowan, 1976; Thiers, 2025). Kew herbarium (K) was also examined for Wallich collections, which were transferred there from the Linnean Society in 1913 (Dalström *et al.*, 2019). Online databases, including Global Plants JSTOR, GBIF, and the Indian Virtual Herbarium, were additionally surveyed. Neotypification was carried out in accordance with the ICN, Art. 9.8 (Turland *et al.*, 2025).

Typification

Diplomeris pulchella D. Don, Prodr. Fl. Nepal. 36. 1825. *Neotype* (designated here): BANGLADESH, Silhet, *s.d.*, *N. Wallich s.n.* (BM [BM000042056] digital image!). **Fig. 1**

Notes: During the search for Wallich collections of *Diplomeris pulchella*, four relevant collections were located: two at K (K001126677, K001126678) and two (with four specimens pasted on them) at BM (BM000042055-56, BM001053864, BM001053874). The K sheet K001126677 bears three labels under Wallich Catalogue no. 7064, including names *Orchis uniflora* Roxb., *Habenaria* Wall., and *Diplochilos longifolius* Lindl. (1832), with conflicting locality and collection data; although one label indicates September 1820, the absence of consistent dating and Don's

(1825) omission of *Orchis uniflora* Roxb. (1814) in the protologue renders its status uncertain, and it is excluded from typification. The second K sheet (K001126678), dated June 1830, represents post-1825 material and is likewise excluded. One BM sheet comprising mixed collections (BM000042055, BM001053864, BM001053874) includes specimens labelled *Orchis uniflora* from Roxburgh (1813), Wallich (1819), and later collections by J.D. Hooker and T. Thomson, creating conflicting origin; as the name cited differs from Don (1825), this sheet is also excluded. The remaining BM sheet (BM000042056) contains two specimens labelled "Silhet" (corrected from "Nepaul") and collected by Wallich, representing the only plausible historical material. A further specimen at BR (BR0000032827491), collected by J.D. Hooker and T. Thomson, is post-1825 and excluded. Dalström *et al.* (2019) discussed the typification extensively and suggested BM000042056 as possibly representing the original material for *Diplomeris pulchella* despite disagreement in leaf number; we agree that this specimen best matches Don's concept, although it cannot be confirmed as original material. Searches at BM, BR, LINN, K and P yielded no additional relevant Wallich collections; therefore, BM000042056 is designated here as the neotype under Art. 9.8 of the ICN (Turland *et al.*, 2025).

Acknowledgements

The authors are thankful to Dr. Kanchi N. Gandhi, Harvard University for his nomenclatural inputs in the manuscript. Gratitude to Dr. Norbert Holstein (BM) and Harry Smith (K) for sharing the specimen images. We are grateful to Drs. Germinal Rouhan (P) and Mark A. Spencer (LINN) for clarifying information on Wallich collection of *D. pulchella*. The authors are also thankful to the Head of Office, Botanical Survey of India, Eastern Regional Centre, Shillong, and Head of the Department of Botany, Gauhati University for the research support.



Fig. 1. Neotype of *Diplomeris pulchella* D. Don (BM [BM000042056]). ©The Natural History Museum (BM).

Literature Cited

- CANDOLLE A.P. DE 1825. *Prodromus Systematis Naturalis Regni Vegetabilis*. Parisii, Sumptibus Treuttel et Würtz.
- DALSTRÖM S., GYELTSHEN C., GYELTSHEN N., TOBGAY K., GYELTSHEN N., GHALLEY B.B. & K. RABGAY 2019. Orchids in Bhutan, The Genus *Diplomeris*. *American Orchid Society* 88(9): 674–677.
- DON D. 1825. *Prodromus Florae Nepalensis*. Venautapud J. Gale, London, United Kingdom.
- FRASER-JENKINS C.R. 2006. *The First Botanical Collectors in Nepal - The Fern collections of Hamilton, Gardner and Wallich - lost herbaria, a lost botanist, lost letters and lost books somewhat rediscovered*. Bishen Singh Mahendra Pal Singh, Dehra Dun.
- HOOKE J.D. 1894. *The Flora of British India*. Volume 6. L. Reeve & Co., London, United Kingdom. pp. 167.
- HORTENSE S.M. 1970. The Herbarium of Aylmer Bourke Lambert: Notes on Its Acquisition, Dispersal, and Present Whereabouts. *Taxon* 19(4): 489–553.
- LINDLEY J. 1832. *Edward's Botanical Register*. Volume 18. James Ridgways, London. pp. 1499.
- LINDLEY J. 1835. *The Genera and Species of Orchidaceous plants*. Ridgways, London, UK. pp. 330.
- POWO 2025. *Plants of the World Online*. Facilitated by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Published on the Internet: <http://www.plantsoftheworldonline.org/> (Accessed on 10.08.2025).
- PRIDGEON A.M., CRIBB P.J., CHASE M.C. & F.N. RASMUSSEN 2001. *Orchidoideae. Genera Orchidacearum*. Volume 2(1). Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford. pp. 1–416.
- ROXBURGH W. 1832. *Flora Indica*. Volume 3. P.W. Thacker, Serampore. pp. 452.
- STAFLEU F.A. & R.S. COWAN 1976. *Taxonomic literature. A selective guide to botanical publications and collections with dates, commentaries and types. Second edition I: A-G. Regum vegetabile*. Bohn, Scheltema & Holkema, Utrecht. pp. 668–669.
- THIERS B. 2025. *Index Herbariorum: A global directory of public herbaria and associated staff*. New York Botanical Garden's Virtual Herbarium. Available at: <http://sweetgum.nybg.org/ih>. (Accessed on 10.08.2024).
- TURLAND N.J., WIERSEMA J.H., BARRIE F.R., GANDHI K.N., GRAVENDYCK J., GREUTER W., HAWKSWORTH D.L., HERENDEEN P.S., KLOPPER R.R., KNAPP S., KUSBER W.-H., LI D.-Z., MAY T.W., MONRO A.M., PRADO J., PRICE M.J., SMITH G.F. & J.C. ZAMORA SEÑORET 2025. *International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants (Madrid Code)*. Regnum Vegetabile 162. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.