

Nomenclature of the white-flowered variant of *Viola reichenbachiana* (Violaceae)

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Abstract

The white-flowered variant of the Early Dog-violet hasn't been validly published under the specific epithet *Viola reichenbachiana*. We name it here as *Viola reichenbachiana* Jord. ex Boreau var. *leucantha* (Beck) M.S. Porter, M.J.Y. Foley & L. Lewis.

Early Dog Violet is fairly common in most of Britain and Ireland though scarce in the far north and south-west of England and very rare in Scotland. It is also found throughout mainland Europe, in NW Africa and as far east as Iran. Its accepted scientific name is *Viola reichenbachiana* Jord. ex Boreau, syn. *V. sylvestris* auct. Lam. (Sell & Murrell, 2018; Tropicos, 2020). It is somewhat similar to *V. riviniana* in general appearance but differs in its darker, generally unnotched spur, the slight reddish cast in the flower colour, its narrower upper petals, the scarcely branched veins on the spur petal and the proportionately narrower and more acutely tipped leaves (Fig. 1).

The flowers of *V. reichenbachiana* are normally violet. However, the BSBI Viola Handbook states: "Several colour variants have been recorded but only one, sometimes called var. *leucantha* Beck, is normally seen and this only rarely. The corolla is usually pure white with obscure veining on the lowest petal. The spur is white" (Porter & Foley, 2017). Although, as indicated in the Handbook, this white-flowered variant is sometimes called var. *leucantha*, the name *V. reichenbachiana* var. *leucantha* was not published by Beck. The name he actually published for plants with white petals was *V. sylvestris* f. *leucantha* (Beck, 1893). The name *V. sylvestris* subvar. *leucantha* was also published for plants with white or whitish petals by Rouy & Foucard (1896), together with the name *V. sylvestris* subvar. *punctata* for plants with a violet blotch at the base of the lower petal. This latter subvariety, but not subvar. or f. *leucantha*, was subsequently reclassified as a variety of *V. reichenbachiana* by P.D. Sell in Sell & Murrell (2018).



Figure 1. *Viola reichenbachiana* var. *leucantha*, Grubbins Wood, Cumbria, 14.04.2012. B.A. Tregale

As the name *Viola reichenbachiana* var. *leucantha* has never been validly published under the International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants (ICN), the only validly published names for the white-flowered variant are the now no longer accepted *V. sylvestris* infraspecific names published by Beck and Rouy & Foucard respectively. To rectify this, *V. sylvestris* f. *leucantha* is now reclassified as a variety of *V. reichenbachiana* as follows:

Viola reichenbachiana* Jord. ex Boreau var. *leucantha* (Beck) M.S. Porter, M.J.Y. Foley & L. Lewis, **comb. nov.*

Basionym: *Viola sylvestris* Lam. f. *leucantha* Beck, Fl. Nied.-Öst: 521 (1893).

Synonym: *Viola sylvestris* Lam. subvar. *leucantha* Rouy & Foucaud, Fl. France 3: 13 (1896).

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Tropicos.org. Missouri Botanical Garden. 2020. *Viola reichenbachiana.*
<http://legacy.tropicos.org>

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