

Salvatore Brullo & Gianpietro Giusso del Galdo

***Limonium elfahsianum* (Plumbaginaceae), a new species from Tunisia**

Abstract

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A new species of *Limonium* from Tunisia, named *L. elfahsianum*, is described and illustrated. Its ecology, chorology and relationships with the allied-species are examined.

Introduction

According to Brullo & Erben (1989) and Erben (2001), the genus *Limonium* is represented in Tunisia by several species, all distributed along coastal places (reefs, salt-marshes and anchored dunes) or inner sebkhas.

During field investigations carried out in the inland of Northern Tunisia, a very peculiar population, localized on some hills between El Fahs and Testour, was found.

Besides ecologically, this plant is morphologically well differentiated from the other known species of this area, and therefore it is described as a species new to science.

***Limonium elfahsianum* Brullo & Giusso sp. nova. - Fig.1**

Type: Tunisia, colline mamoso-arenacee tra El Fahs e Testour, 02.07.2001, Brullo, Giusso & Sciandrello (Holotype CAT).

Planta perennis. Folia persistentia, laxe caudiculis inserta, vincta, plana, oblanceolata-spathulata, obtusa, 40-100 × 6-14 mm, 3-nervia. Scapi 25-60 cm longi, erecti, ramis sterilibus simplicibus vel pauciramosis. Inflorescentia laxe paniculata. Spicae laxe dispositae, erectae, 4-12 cm longae. Spiculae 7-8 mm longae, 1-3 florum, ad 1-3 in 1 cm dispositae. Bractea inferior 2-2.8 × 1.9-2.2 mm, triangulari-ovata, acuta, parte centrali coriacea, acumine marginem contingente. Bractea media 2.4-2.8 mm longa, retusa, oblonga. Bractea superior 5.5-6 × 3.4-3.6 mm, ovato-elliptica, rotundata, lato margine hyalino externo, angusto margine brunneo interno, acumine marginem non contingente, 0.8-1 mm longo. Calyx 6 mm longus, tubo sparsim puberulo, lobis hemisphaericis, 0.6-0.7 mm

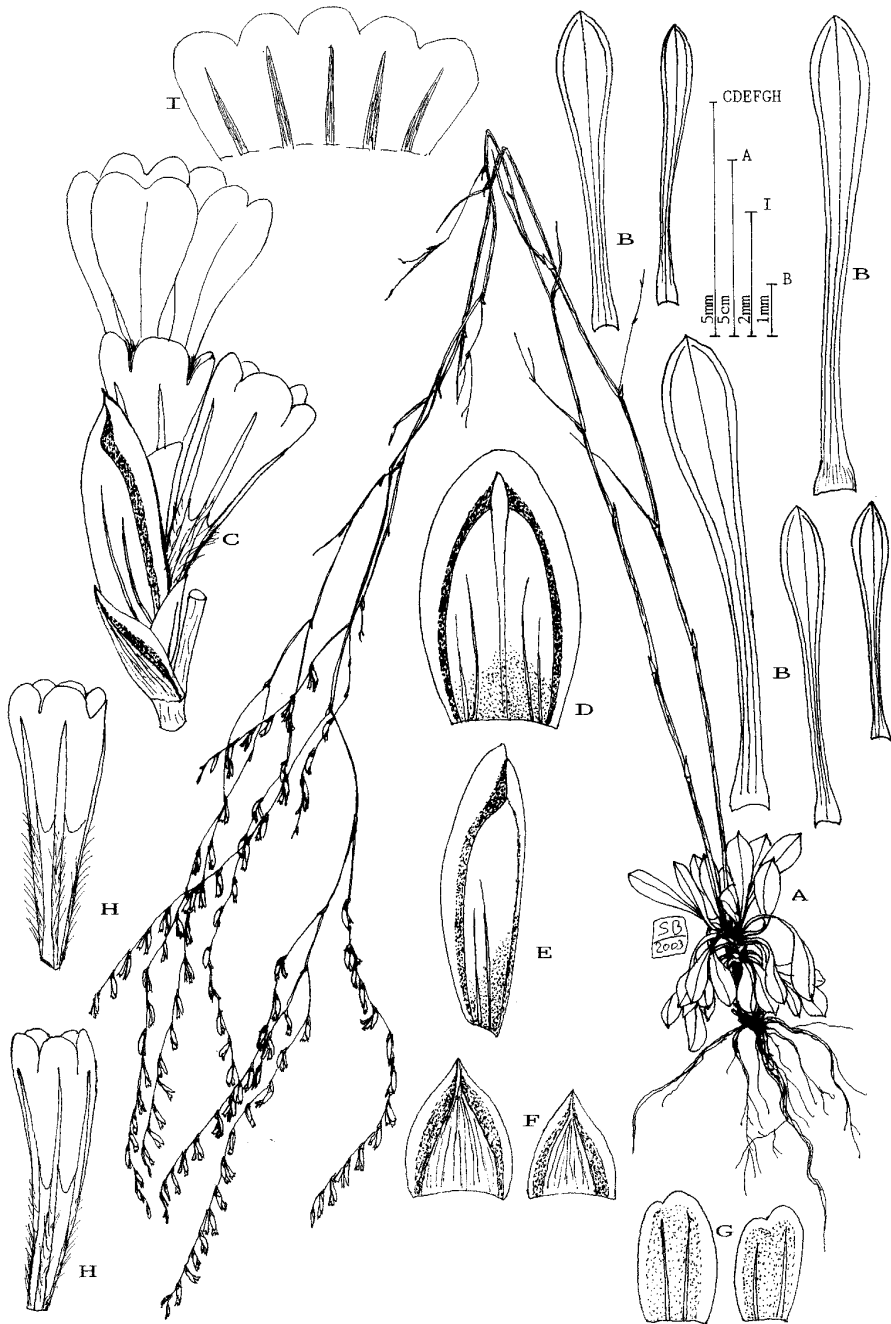


Fig. 1. *Limonium elphasianum* Brullo & Giusso del Galdo. **A:** habit; **B:** leaves; **C:** spikelets; **D:** inner bract (front view); **E:** inner bract (lateral view); **F:** outer bracts; **G:** middle bracts; **H:** calyces; **I:** calyx lobes.

longis, costis ante basim lobum calicis desinentibus. Petala 8.5 mm longa, violaceae, emarginata.

Perennial, glabrous, with caudicles branched. Leaves evergreen, laxly inserted along the caudicles, green, flat, oblanceolate-spathulate, obtuse, 40-100 × 6-14 mm, with a very narrow hyaline margin, 1 prominent midrib and 2 lateral veins, curved and reaching the apex. Stems 25-60 cm long, erect, often branched from the base, with simple or few-branched sterile branches. Inflorescence laxely paniculate, with flexuous branches. Spikes 4-12 cm long, erect. Spikelets 7-8 mm long, erect, usually unilateral, 1-3 per cm, 1-3 flowered. Outer bracts 2-2.8 × 1.9-2.2 mm, triangular-ovate, acute, coriaceous in the middle part, forming a point 0.8-1.2 mm long, widely hyaline at margin. Middle bracts membranous, retuse, 2.4-2.8 mm long, oblong. Inner bracts 5.5-6 × 3.4-3.6 mm, ovate-elliptic, rounded, with a wide hyaline outer margin and a narrow pale-brown inner margin; central part herbaceous, with 2 lateral veins, and a robust point, 0.8-1 mm long, not reaching the apex. Calyx 6 mm long; tube sparsely hairy; limb sub-equalling the tube, lobes hemispherical, 0.6-0.7 mm long; calyx midrib ending before the base of the lobe. Petals 8.5 mm long, violet, emarginate.

Ecology and Distribution. *Limonium elfahsianum* grows on marly-arenaceous substrata at an altitude of about 200 m a.s.l. It is a member of garigues characterized by several thermophilous shrubs, such as *Rosmarinus officinalis* L., *Cistus monspeliensis* L., *C. clusii* Dunal, *Calicotome intermedia* C. Presl and *Rhamnus oleoides* L., mixed with scattered trees of *Pinus halepensis* Mill. and *Juniperus turbinata* Guss. Therefore, it cannot be considered an halophyte as the most of the *Limonium* species occurring in the Mediterranean countries.

Taxonomical remarks. From the literature, *Limonium* species not-linked to halomorph soils are really rare. Among them, there are *L. merxmuelleri* Erben, *L. morisianum* Arrigoni and *L. racemosum* (Lojac.) Diana Corrias all occurring in Sardinia (Arrigoni & Diana 1999), *L. todaroanum* Raimondo & Pignatti from Sicily (Raimondo & Pignatti 1986), as well *L. carthaginense* (Rouy) Hubb. & Sand., *L. paui* Camara & Sennen, *L. erectum* Erben, *L. viciosoi* Erben and *L. longibracteatum* Erben, all distributed in the Iberian Peninsula (Erben 1993).

For the shape and size of the leaves, spikelets and calyx, the Tunisian population is morphologically well differentiated from the other known species of *Limonium*, showing a certain similarity for the habit mainly with *L. todaroanum* only, punctiform endemism circumscribed to a mountain of W Sicily, where it grows exclusively on rupestrian places.

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Address of the authors:

Salvatore Brullo & Gianpietro Giusso del Galdo,
Dipartimento di Botanica, via A. Longo, 19, I - 95125 Catania (Italy).