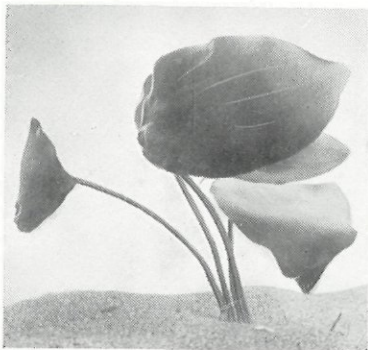


Cryptocoryne griffithii

and its allies



A plant of *Cryptocoryne griffithii* Schott.

FROM 1832-1845 William Griffith, a surgeon, worked in British India. Griffith was born at Ham Common in Surrey in 1810 and was an amateur botanist with a wide knowledge of plants. He amassed large collections of dried plant specimens on his long journeys through Afghanistan and the Malay Peninsula. His important herbarium is now kept at Kew.

After Griffith's death (1845) a large quantity of his highly valuable botanical notes remained unpublished until 1847-1854, when J. McClelland had them printed in four volumes.

As a result, descriptions by Griffith of two species of *Cryptocoryne* appeared in print in 1851; the first was *Cryptocoryne cordata* and the second, for which Griffith had no name in his MS., was indicated as "*Cryptocoryne* No. 5". This latter species was different, Griffith suggested, in having a very much shorter tube to its flower, the limb was narrower, shorter tailed and warty, not smooth as in *C. cordata*.

Griffith's view was shared by H. W. Schott, a director of the Botanic Garden at Schönbrunn (Austria), and this caused "*C. No. 5*" to be named *Cryptocoryne griffithii* Schott in 1856. Later authors supported Schott's decision, e.g., H. G. A. Engler, who published a revision of all *Cryptocoryne* species in 1920.

Greater Complexity

In the meantime, however, the problem of the de-limitation of *C. griffithii* and allied species had been made more intricate by the work of H. N. Ridley, a director of the Singapore Botanic Garden.

Aquarists can help in sorting out classification difficulties with this popular aquarium plant

by Dr. H. C. D. de WIT

In 1900, the Botanic Magazine contained a coloured plate of a plant named *C. griffithii*, flowering at Kew. Ridley held that this identification was erroneous and that, actually, a new, undescribed species had been pictured. This led to the publication of *Cryptocoryne purpurea* Ridley in 1902. The characters which Ridley indicated as differences between *C. griffithii* and *C. purpurea* I do not think are convincing, though it must be admitted that he may have been right in distinguishing the two.

A Related Plant Named

In 1905 Ridley proposed still another, closely allied, species, *Cryptocoryne grandis*, as he named it, which occurred in Sarawak, and it is obviously closely allied to *C. cordata*, *C. griffithii* and *C. purpurea*. It is not surprising, therefore, that C. X. Furtado, a botanist working at Singapore, in 1935, reduced *C. grandis* to *C. cordata*.

These are some of the main facts to be considered when assessing the status of *C. griffithii*. Were Griffith, Schott, Engler, and others right when they accepted "*Cryptocoryne* No. 5" as a well-defined species, or is it preferable to accept one single species only, to be named *Cryptocoryne cordata*, Griff., and are the allied species, mentioned here, nothing but local varieties?

Aquarists may help to answer these questions by growing as many kinds of *C. griffithii* as they are able. When the plants flower the aquarist should carefully note anything that could be of interest and, by preserving flowering specimens either by drying them or placing them in spirit, make them available for later research.