
Short Note

The Correct Scientific Name for Kacip Fatimah is *Labisia pumila* (Primulaceae), not *Marantodes pumilum*

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Kacip Fatimah is a small, woody-herbaceous plant in the Primulaceae family. It is commonly found in the understorey of tropical rainforests across western Malesia, with distribution extending from Thailand to New Guinea (Stone, 1988; Sunarno, 2005). The species is highly valued in traditional medicine, particularly among Malay communities, for its use in childbirth and postpartum recovery (Rahmi et al., 2020; Hairi et al., 2024).

Although the species has attracted substantial attention in pharmacological and phytochemical research (e.g., Rahmi et al., 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2022), it has been inconsistently cited in the literature under two scientific names: *Labisia pumila* (Blume) Fern.-Vill. and *Marantodes pumilum* Kuntze. This dual usage has led to taxonomic confusion, particularly in non-taxonomic disciplines where researchers may rely on outdated databases (Schellenberger Costa et al., 2023). This note clarifies the correct scientific name by reviewing its nomenclatural history, examining current usage trends, and applying the International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants (ICN – Turland et al., 2018).

To assess the prevalence and trends in usage of the competing names, we conducted a literature search on Google Scholar using the keywords "*Labisia pumila*" and "*Marantodes pumilum*". The search was performed on May 15, 2025. The results indicated 4370 citations for "*Labisia pumila*" and 357 for "*Marantodes pumilum*," with continued usage of the latter in recent publications, including 72 since 2024. The search term "Kacip Fatimah" alone returned approximately 2390 results. This trend highlights the predominant use of *Labisia pumila* among researchers, although *Marantodes pumilum* continues to appear in recent studies, primarily in pharmacological contexts within Malaysia. Selected articles were reviewed to understand the naming rationale and citation sources, revealing frequent references to The Plant List—a static resource last updated in 2013—despite the existence of other actively curated taxonomic plant lists (Schellenberger Costa et al., 2023).

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Taxonomists have long used the name *Labisia pumila* for the species known as Kacip Fatimah (Ridley, 1923; Stone, 1988; Sunarno, 2005). In contrast, as outlined above, the usage of *Marantodes pumilum* persists, contributing to confusion, especially in contexts where taxonomic verification is not a primary concern. The generic name *Labisia* was first validly published by Lindley in 1845. In comparison *Marantodes* was published by Post & Kuntze in 1903, based on a section of *Ardisia* originally described by De Candolle in 1844. Importantly, the spelling "*Marantodes*" is an incorrect orthographic variant, and the correct citation should be *Marantoides* (A.DC.) T.Post & Kuntze. Additionally, under Article 62.4 of the ICN (Turland et al., 2018), generic name ending -oides are treated as feminine, so the correct species citation would be *Marantoides pumila* (Blume) T.Post & Kuntze.

According to Article 11 of the ICN (Turland et al., 2018), priority applies only at the same taxonomic rank. Since *Labisia* was validly published at the genus level before *Marantoides*, it holds nomenclatural priority. Furthermore, because the name *Labisia* was included in synonymy under *Marantoides* (erraneously as '*Marantodes*') when it was published (Post & Kuntze, 1903), and because *Labisia* has priority, *Marantoides* is considered superfluous and cannot be used under current nomenclatural rules.

Stability in scientific naming is essential for maintaining consistency across disciplines. Inconsistent use of names may lead to fragmentation in research data, hinder literature retrieval, and complicate applications in policy, conservation, and ethnobotany. A unified naming approach facilitates effective communication, especially between taxonomists and professionals in pharmacology, ethnomedicine, and biodiversity conservation. The continued reference citation of The Plant List in recent publications is concerning, as it does not reflect updated taxonomic consensus. This case highlights the need for ongoing taxonomic awareness and training, particularly in interdisciplinary research teams.

In conclusion, we reaffirm that the correct and accepted name for Kacip Fatimah is *Labisia pumila*. Using this name is consistent with historical usage, current nomenclatural rules, and global taxonomic consensus. We recommend that future research, especially in pharmacological and phytochemical studies, consistently apply this name and actively consult maintained databases such as IPNI and POWO.

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DECLARATIONS

Research permit(s). Not applicable.

Ethical approval/statement. Not applicable.

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