Aloe spectabilis Reynolds (1937) was described from material that was collected from KwaZulu-Natal, the eastern-most province of South Africa. Previously, material of this species was erroneously considered to represent a form of A. ferox Mill. (Berger 1908: 310, 311), a predominantly southern and eastern Cape species (see Van Wyk & Smith 2003: 56 for a distribution map of A. ferox). Aloe spectabilis, in contrast, has its present-day centre of distribution around Bushman’s River Valley near Weenen, along the Mooi River near Muden and
between 10 and 14, erect to slightly spreading, rather truncate racemes. Furthermore, it differs from *A. marlothii* in having almost erect racemes that are shorter and broader, with flowers more evenly distributed around the axis. The apices of the inner perianth segments are a dull to deep glossy black and the exserted portion of the filaments is orange in *A. spectabilis*, whereas both are a light to deep purple in *A. marlothii* (Reynolds 1937, 1950; Jeppe 1969; Bomman & Hardy 1972) (Table 4).

Given superficial similarities between *Aloe spectabilis* and *A. marlothii*, some previous authors considered the two species to be conspecific (Glen & Hardy 2000; Van Wyk & Smith 2003). Others have more recently suggested that *A. spectabilis* represents a good species (Smith & Van Wyk 2008), and warrants reinstatement. This is done here.


*A. ferox* auct., sensu A.Berger, non Mill.: 310 (1908).

Keats Drift, and in the Tugela [Thukela] River Valley between Mpfana and Pomeroy on the Greytown–Dundee Road in KwaZulu-Natal (Figure 31).

Further north in Zululand this species seems to grade into *Aloe marlothii* A.Berger, which is its closest relative. However, *A. marlothii* is typically an element of southern Africa’s northcentral and northeastern savannas, with subsp. *marlothii* widely distributed in KwaZulu-Natal, western Swaziland, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Gauteng, North-West and the eastern border of Botswana, while *A. marlothii* subsp. *orientalis* Glen & D.S.Hardy has a more easterly distribution in northern KwaZulu-Natal, Swaziland and into Mozambique (Glen & Hardy 2000) (Figure 32).

Overall, plants of *Aloe marlothii* tend to be more robust than *A. spectabilis* in general appearance. *Aloe spectabilis* is a single-stemmed, tree-like aloe up to 5 m high (Figure 33). It is distinguished by its tall, unbranched stem and much-branched inflorescences with very dark brown to almost black peduncles and
### Differences between *Aloe spectabilis* and *A. marlothii*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th><em>A. spectabilis</em></th>
<th><em>A. marlothii</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raceme orientation</td>
<td>suberect</td>
<td>oblique to horizontal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dimensions</td>
<td>± 250 × 90–100 mm</td>
<td>300–500 × 50–60 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number</td>
<td>10 to 14</td>
<td>20 to 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peduncle colour</td>
<td>dark brown to almost black</td>
<td>green to reddish brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower disposition</td>
<td>evenly distributed around axis</td>
<td>secund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apex of inner perianth segments</td>
<td>dull to deep glossy black</td>
<td>light to deep purple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exerted portion of filaments</td>
<td>orange</td>
<td>light to deep purple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---


### Specimens examined


### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Ms Hester Steyn, National Herbarium, South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria, for producing the distribution map; and an anonymous referee for suggesting improvements to the manuscript.

### REFERENCES


R.R. KLOPPER* and G.F. SMITH**

* Biosystematics Research and Biodiversity Collections Division, South African National Biodiversity Institute, Private Bag X101, 0001 Pretoria. E-mail: r.klopper@sanbi.org.za; g.smith@sanbi.org.za.

+ Acocks Chair, H.G.W. Schweickerdt Herbarium, Department of Botany, University of Pretoria, 0002 Pretoria.

MS. received: 2009-08-27.