

A NEW NEPETA FROM W. NEPAL

I. C. HEDGE

***Nepeta staintonii* Hedge, species nova.** Species characteribus insignis, nulli affinis. Combinatione characterum sequentium distinctus: foliis parvis ovato-oblongis, verticillastris distantibus, calycibus tubulosus incurvis, corollis curvatis magnis, tricoloribus. (Plate 36).

Perennis basi lignescens. *Rami steriles* numerosi, filiformes, \pm abbreviati. *Caules floriferi* 30–40 cm alti, ascendentes vel erecti, foliati, quadrangulares, simplices vel pauciramosi, appresse canescenti-tomentosi. *Folia* sessilia e basi late vel anjuste cuneata, ovata vel oblongo-ovata ad 17×7 mm, obtuse crenata vel serrata, indumento utrinque pilis eglandulosis et glandulis sessilibus; nervatura distincte reticulato-rugosa. *Folia superiora* sensim decrescentia in folia floralia transeuntia. *Inflorescentia* simplex, glandulis capitatis et punctatis et pilis eglandulosis provisa, viscosa, internodiis 4–6 cm longis. *Verticillastra* 4–6, superiora approximata. *Cymae* pauciflorae (1–4), inferiores pedunculatae; superiores subsessiles. *Bractee* anguste lineares, 1–3 mm, integrae, 1– nerviae, pilis eglandulosis praeditae. *Calyx* 10–13 mm, tubulosus, incurvus, 15–costatus, fauce intus glaber, pilis eglandulosis et glandulis capitatis brevioribus obsitus, ore obliquo, dentibus superioribus 2–5 mm triangulari-ovatis vel lanceolato-ovatis acutis, inferioribus 3–5 mm linearibus. *Corolla* ad 35 mm longa, subpendula, curvata, extra albo-puberula, coerulea maculis albis et violaceis pulchre tincta; tubus angustus, curvatus, e calyce exsertus superne inflato-dilatatus, c. 8–10 mm latus; labium superius in lobos duos fissum; labium inferius c. duplo longius, lobo mediano concavo, margine crenato. *Stamina* quam labium superius breviora. *Stylus* inclusus. *Nuculae* trigonae, ellipticae, laeves.

W NEPAL: Barbung Khola ($28^{\circ}52' N$, $88^{\circ}16' E$), in *Caragana-Lonicera* steppe, flowers pale blue, marked within with dots of deeper blue and white patches, 3960 m, 15 vii 1963, *Stainton* 4421 (holo. BM!); Tarap Khola ($28^{\circ}57' N$, $83^{\circ}7' E$), on dry stony slopes, corolla pale violet, marked white within, the leaves have an unusual and unpleasant smell, 3700 m, 6 vii 1963, *Stainton* 4399!; between Pudamigaon and Ringmigaon, dry stony slopes, corolla blue, paler in throat with purple dots, 3960 m, 22 ix 1952, *O. Polunin, Sykes & Williams* 3549! (Cultivated material of this number grown at the Royal Horticultural Society's Gardens, Wisley, Surrey!).

The diagnostic characters of the new species are the small, sessile, toothed, ovate-oblong leaves, the few-flowered, widely separated verticils, the bilabiate, incurved tubular calyx and the subpendant, curved, large, sky-blue flowers spotted darker blue and white, with a narrow tube prominently inflated above. Despite the great diversity in the genus *Nepeta* in the Himalayan and central asiatic area, there are no species with a comparable combination of characters. Some species share some features with *N. staintonii*—e.g. *N. macrantha* Fisch. has a very similar calyx and a large corolla, but in habit, leaf size and shape, and corolla shape it is quite different. There are, in fact, no species that can be considered as close allies.

Mention of *N. macrantha* Fisch. (? = *N. sibirica* L.) raises the question of the generic affinity of the new species. *N. macrantha* has often been regarded as a *Dracocephalum* and in an article in the Botanical Magazine (t. 9646: 1943) it was described as such under the name *Dracocephalum sibiricum*. In my opinion, however, this species has several characters in the calyx structure—bilabiate, oblique mouth and curved tube—that are identical with the *Nepeta* species of sect. *Schizocalyx* Pojark. and the only *Dracocephalum*-like character it has is the very large corolla. The new species has, as already mentioned, a similar calyx structure and the corolla, prominently swollen above the tube, is even more similar to certain *Dracocephalum* species than is that of *N. macrantha*. Is therefore the new species a *Nepeta* or a *Dracocephalum* and are there any *Dracocephalum* species with which it can be allied? The answer to the second part of the question is certainly 'no'; and to the first, because of the great similarity in foliage and calyx characters to *Nepeta*, I prefer to regard *N. staintonii* as a slightly anomalous member of *Nepeta*.

It is a pleasure to name this distinct and handsome new species after J. D. A. Stainton, an inveterate traveller and assiduous plant collector whose numerous expeditions to the Himalaya have brought many new species to light.

I am grateful to Mr. Stainton and to Mr. L. H. J. Williams of the British Museum (Natural History) for drawing my attention to this plant and asking me to publish its description; to the Keeper of the BM herbarium, I am grateful for the loan of the material.

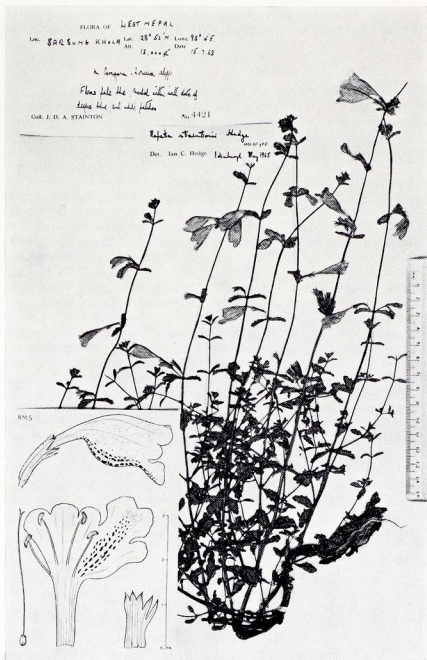


PLATE 36. *Nepeta staintonii* Hedge.