

Georg Rudolf Böhmer (1723 – 1803)

Georg Rudolf Böhmer (Boehmer), the son of a pharmacist, was born in 1723 in Legnica, a town in present-day southwest Poland. After matriculating, he studied at the University of Leipzig, attaining his Bachelor of Medicine degree in 1746 and a medical licentiate on 20 March 1750. During this time he studied botany under Professor Christian Gottlieb Ludwig (1709–1773) and became particularly drawn to plant anatomy or phytotomy, the study of the internal structure of plants. (Ludwig is remembered for his correspondence with Carl Linnaeus, and in particular the latter's classification system. Linnaeus named the aquatic plant genus *Ludwigia* in his honour, but apparently Ludwig was not amused!)

After the death of the German anatomist Abraham Vater (1684–1751), Böhmer became professor at the University of Wittenberg, managing the departments of botany, anatomy and from 1782, therapy, as well as performing part-time duties as physician of Wittenberg and later the nearby town of Kemberg. He also devoted himself to midwifery education.

Böhmer wrote on the flora of Leipzig, on plant cell tissue, on the quality of seeds, and in *Bibliotheca Historia Naturalis Scriptorum*, an overview of the plant world, which appeared in five parts from 1785 to 1789. A considerable number of smaller works included academic programmes, newspaper articles and dissertations on anatomy, physiology and pharmaceutical botany.

Refusing to take vacations, he worked tirelessly at the university for over 40 years, and died in Wittenberg on 4 April 1803.

Böhmer's contemporary, Nikolaus Joseph Jacquin (1727–1817) was born in the Netherlands and studied at Leiden before moving to Paris and then Vienna. From 1755 to 1759 he collected plants in the Caribbean region for the Schoenbrunn Palace gardens. In his first publication on West Indian plants, *Enumeratio Systematica Plantarum* (1760), he established the genus *Boehmeria* for a "false" nettle in the family Urticaceae, naming a plant from Martinique *Boehmeria ramiflora* in honour of the botanist and physician Georg Rudolf Böhmer. The genus also includes the species (*Boehmeria nivea*) from which ramie fibre is produced.

In a recent taxonomic revision (2006), the rare Kermadec nettle tree *Boehmeria dealbata*, together with two species from Australia's Norfolk and Lord Howe islands, were renamed and transferred to the genus *Pouzolzia*.



Pouzolzia australis

Pouzolzia, named after the French botanist and plant collector Pierre Marie Casimir de Pouzolx (1785–1858), is a tropical genus of around 35 species of flowering shrubs and herbs in the nettle family. *Pouzolzia australis* is a small bushy tree bearing light green soft wrinkled triangular pointed leaves that have prominent veins on the whitish underside. Very small flowers are compactly arranged in clusters at the base of the leaves. It is found on Raoul Island in the Kermadec group, and also Australia's Norfolk and Lord Howe islands. The Kermadec tree nettle was formerly known as *Boehmeria dealbata*.

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