

Sorting out the sansevierias

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The last monograph of the genus *Sansevieria*, by N.E. Brown, was published in 1915. Since then the genus has largely been shunned by taxonomists, except where an account of local species was required for a Flora. The main reasons are the poor state of many herbarium specimens, and the fact that some species were described from cultivated plants with no known origin, in some cases with even the country of origin unknown. When no type locality is known, it is difficult to establish the identity of a species. About a third of the known species are native to Kenya, and so the opportunity was taken to carry out some field work. In this presentation I shall concentrate on the species that have a distinct erect stem, often up to 2 metres tall. Four such species were included in Brown's monograph, but at least six apparently distinct taxa have now been found in the field. Work is in progress to determine the identity of the described species and to investigate the status of the other plants.