

NEW RECORDS OF *HELICHRYSUM FOETIDUM* (L.) MOENCH (ASTERACEAE: GNAPHALIEAE) FOR BRAZIL

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Helichrysum foetidum (L.) Moench is an annual or short-lived perennial herb, with medicinal or ornamental uses, native from Africa (Cameroon, Uganda and Tanzania) and cultivated in Europe (Spain and Portugal). Based on fieldwork, herbaria study and literature revision the first records of the species are confirmed for Brazil. The description was based on field observations, analysis of herbaria exsiccates and literature concerning the species. The first three records of the species in the country and maybe in South America were made in two locations of Rio Grande do Sul state in the municipalities of Canguçu and Pinheiro Machado (Heiden 1143, 1735, 1775) and are deposited in the herbaria ECT, RB, and SPF. *Helichrysum foetidum* is an erect and strongly aromatic herb, 0.3–1m tall, with discolor narrow leaves, which are green adaxially and whitish abaxially, bearing showy capitula with yellow involucre bracts surrounding the yellow disc florets. In Brazil, the species was found growing naturalized for the first time in the Pampas in temperate grasslands, usually close to swamp areas, and along the edges of thickets of semideciduous forests. This species is used in Africa as a medicinal herb, due to its anti-inflammatory and hallucinatory effects, in sacred rituals of traditional African communities. The plant is also used in folk medicine to relieve menstrual pains and the leaves are said to make a good circumcision wound dressing, besides its use for influenza and eye complaints. In its native area, *H. foetidum* (L.) Moench along with *H. decorum* DC. and *H. stenopterum* DC., is inhaled in rituals to induce a trance-like state. In Europe, the species is grown as ornamental. Records of medicinal or ornamental uses were not found for Brazil yet. The introduction of the species in the country may have been intentional, due to its potential use as medicinal and/or ornamental, or it may have been accidentally introduced for reasons unknown to date. Although some alien species may disperse and reproduce strictly along disturbed sites, the current species was found in undisturbed habitats, suitable for its establishment along of grasslands and forest thickets, posing the risk of becoming a new invasive and representing a threat for native species. The new records of *Helichrysum foetidum* (L.) Moench for Brazil demonstrate the need for more samplings and monitoring of the species in order to avoid risks of biological invasion (PROBIC-FAPERGS).

Key-words: Alien species, Pampas; Rio Grande do Sul; South Brazil