

Early lineage of Larkspur and Monkshood plants rediscovered in Southern Europe

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These are *Staphisagria macrosperma* follicles. Credit: Florian Jabbour, Susanne S. Renner

Larkspurs, monkshoods, and aconites are plants, widely cultivated for their beauty and medicinal properties. They all belong to the Delphinieae, a natural group of 650-700 species ranging from Eurasia into North America, with a few species on tropical African mountains. The study was published in the open access journal *PhytoKeys*.

A broadly sampled molecular phylogeny for this group has revealed that three Mediterranean species constitute an ancient separate evolutionary line that is the sister group to all remaining Delphinieae. The British physician John Hill already recognized these species' distinctness in

1756, and Jabbour and Renner here resurrect the genus name he had proposed for them.



This is a *Staphisagria macrosperma* young inflorescence with floral buds. Credit: Florian Jabbour, Susanne S. Renner

Of the three species in Hill's genus *Staphisagria*, one is an important [medicinal plant](#) found all around the [Mediterranean basin](#), the other two are endemic to Corsica, Majorca, Sardinia, and the [Archipelago](#) of Hyères in the South of France. In an article in the open access journal Phytokeys, Jabbour and Renner from the Institute of Systematic Botany at the University of Munich illustrate and discuss the newly recognized genus, explaining how its three species share traits that fit neither in *Delphinium* nor in *Aconitum*, fitting with their long independent evolutionary history.

More information: Jabbour F, Renner SS (2011) Resurrection of the genus *Staphisagria* J. Hill, sister to all the other Delphinieae (Ranunculaceae). *PhytoKeys* 7: 21. [doi: 10.3897/phytokeys.7.2010](https://doi.org/10.3897/phytokeys.7.2010)

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