

Meet *Eugenia walkerae*, a newly named plant species from Anguilla

March 25 2019, by Chrystian Tejedor



Biological sciences Ph.D. student Jonathan Flickinger described a new plant species, *Eugenia walkerae*. Credit: Florida International University

Once relegated to the dustbin of history, a Caribbean plant now has a name and a family.

Eugenia walkerae, lifelong resident of Anguilla, no longer is just a collection of stems, leaves, flowers and fruits. It was identified by biological sciences Ph.D. student Jonathan Flickinger as a full-fledged member of the myrtle family. Now it can count allspice, eucalyptus and guava as cousins.

Fruitless samples of the previously unidentified plant were found by French botanist Père Casimir Le Gallo in 1955. Then in 1995 Mary Morris Walker found more samples, this time with flowers and fruit.

Flickinger examined Walker's specimens and noticed the similarities to other [plants](#) in the genus *Eugenia*. But it was distinct from any other *Eugenia* plant in the Antilles. Flickinger described Walker's specimens as members of a new species. Then he named the species in her honor.

"I didn't think I'd find anything new. I was at the right place at the right time," Flickinger said, adding, "I have spent a lot of time looking at this group of plants and knew I had never seen it before."

As a plant native to a [tropical island](#), with few specimens in botanical collections, Flickinger said more research is needed to determine whether *Eugenia walkerae* needs to be targeted for conservation. Now that it has a name, it will be easier to track.

Flickinger is conducting his research in the International Center for Tropical Botany at The Kampong, a collaboration between FIU and the National Tropical Botanical Garden. The center is dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of tropical plants through research, education and outreach.

Flickinger is studying plant diversity and classification at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden under professor Javier Francisco-Ortega. Flickinger's goal is to describe and classify species in the myrtle family according to their [evolutionary history](#).

His description of *Eugenia walkerae* was published in *Harvard Papers in Botany*.

More information: A New Species of *Eugenia* (Myrtaceae) from the Island of Anguilla. *Harvard Papers in Botany*. [DOI: 10.3100/hpib.v23iss2.2018.n8](#)

Provided by Florida International University

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