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VI. Notice of *Ruscus aculeatus*

Mr M'Nab

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and packed into bundles of 100 pieces in each. The wood is cut generally in May and June."

The specimen sent from the Roslin Mills was subjected to a microscopic examination, along with recent woods of buckthorn and dogwood, and turns out to be the true alder-buckthorn (*Rhamnus Frangula*). It can readily be distinguished, both in the fresh and dried state, from the dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), by turning yellow immediately on being moistened, which is not the case with dogwood. If dogwood is really a charcoal-producing shrub, no plant could be so easily grown, as cuttings can be got in quantity. They will soon strike root, and grow as freely as a red or black currant.

The misnomer of dogwood for alder-buckthorn ought to be corrected by all powder manufacturers, as it is apt to lead to unpleasant consequences, by parties growing and supplying the true dogwood, and afterwards finding the produce refused by manufacturers as not the dogwood required by them.

VI. Notice of *Ruscus aculeatus*. By Mr M'NAB.

Mr M'Nab exhibited a specimen of *Ruscus aculeatus*, or butcher's broom, covered with rich crimson berries, sent by George E. Frere, Esq., of Roydon Hall, Diss, with the following letter :—

"Some years ago I found this plant in a state of ripe fructification. It is brought every Christmas into the market at Brighton, for the decoration of houses at that season. I had never seen before, in any other part of England, more than one, or, at most, two berries in any one clump of the plant, and I wished very much to get it to fruit in profusion at this place.

"I was reminded that the plant was dioecious, and I found friends to supply me with female plants. Soon after I received them it was suggested to me that my plants might possibly not have been hitherto barren, because they were of the male sex, but for want of impregnating agencies. I saw, a day or two since, an article in 'Nature,' by A. W. Bennett, who calls attention to the fact, that the normal time of flowering of the plant is almost the depth of winter,

when the number of insects that can assist in its fertilisation is certainly very small. Mr Bennett also remarks on the incorrectness of the periods generally given in the Text-Books of Botany for the flowering of each species. Hooker, in his 'British Flora,' and Sowerby, in his original edition of 'English Botany,' give March and April for the flowering of this plant."

Mr M'Nab mentioned that, although several large clumps of the butcher's broom exist in various parts of the Botanic Garden, he had never seen ripe fruit on any of them. All the plants but one have a dark green colour, all are very compact, and are now covered (8th December 1869) with rudimentary fruit buds, but no male flowers have yet been obtained. The one above alluded to, a tall light green variety, has a few incipient scales on the side of the leaf. This may be the male plant, but as it is not growing beside what is undoubtedly the female plants, no seeds could be perfected. The specimen sent by Mr Frere, although containing numerous ripe berries, has also a number of apparent rudimentary fruit buds for next year, similar to those now seen on the plants in the Garden. It is difficult to say at what stage the impregnation of the ovule takes place. The plant is recorded as dioecious, and flowers during March and April, and possibly this is the time when the male blossoms expand. It will be interesting to ascertain whether these rudimentary fruit buds, now covering the plants, remain as they are till the month of March, when the male flowers expand.

Two specimens of *Ruscus*, one called *R. aculeatus*, and the other *R. aculeatus rotundifolius*, have just been received from the nursery gardens of Messrs P. Lawson & Son. The former is identical with the one cultivated here, and is also covered with rudimentary female flowers. The specimen called *R. aculeatus rotundifolius* is also covered with buds; but after a careful microscopic examination, all turn out to be male buds, while the specimen sent from England by Mr Frere has male buds and ripe fruit on the same branch. From the state of the male buds on both plants alluded to, it seems impossible that these male flowers can have the stamens sufficiently developed before March or April.