
Sphaerulina rhododendricola

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Sphaerulina rhododendricola Crous & Cheew., *sp. nov.*

Etymology. Named after the host genus from which it was collected, *Rhododendron*.

Conidiomata immersed, globose, brown with central ostiole, up to 150 µm diam, exuding a creamy-white conidial mass; wall of 3–6 layers of brown *textura angularis*. *Conidiophores* subcylindrical, 0–1-septate, unbranched or branched at base, hyaline or pale brown, straight to geniculate-sinuous, smooth, 10–30 × 3–4 µm. *Conidiogenous cells* integrated, hyaline, smooth, subcylindrical, 10–30 × 2–2.5 µm; proliferating percurrently or sympodially near apex. *Conidia* solitary, hyaline, smooth, guttulate, subcylindrical to narrowly obclavate, apex obtuse, base obconically truncate, hilum 1.5 µm diam, (0–)3(–6)-septate, (17–)28–35(–55) × (2–)2.5(–3) µm.

Culture characteristics — Colonies reaching 30 mm diam after 2 wk, spreading, with moderate aerial mycelium and even, lobate margins. On MEA surface iron-grey with patches of dirty white; on PDA surface iron-grey with patches of pale olivaceous-grey, reverse iron-grey.

Typus. Thailand, Chiang Mai, Chiang Mai Botanical Garden, on leaves of *Rhododendron* sp. (*Ericaceae*), 2 Nov. 2012, *P.W. Crous* (holotype CBS H-21444, culture ex-type CPC 21813, 21814 = CBS 136435, ITS sequence GenBank KF777187, LSU sequence GenBank KF779493, MycoBank MB805849).

Notes — Species of *Sphaerulina* are morphologically very similar to those accommodated in the genus *Septoria* (Quaedvlieg et al. 2013, Verkley et al. 2013), but can be distinguished based on DNA sequence data. Several species of *Septoria* have been described from *Azalea* and *Rhododendron*, all of which can be distinguished from *S. rhododendricola* based on their conidial dimensions, namely *S. solitaris* (*Rhododendron* sp., USA, conidia 20 × 2 µm), *S. azaleae* (*Azalea indica*, Italy, conidia (12–)14–16(–18) × 1.5–2.5, 0–3-septate), *S. azaleae-indicae* (*Azalea indica*, Brazil, conidia 50–65 × 1.5 µm, indistinctly septate) and *S. rhododendri* (*Rhododendron* sp., USA, conidia 40 µm long, filiform) (Pirone et al. 1960).

Closest hits using the ITS sequence had highest similarity to *Pseudocercosporella chaenomelis* (GenBank JQ793663; Identities = 609/611 (99 %), no gaps), *Mycosphaerella berberidis* (GenBank EU167603; Identities = 659/663 (99 %), no gaps) and *Cercospora coniogrammes* (GenBank JX143583; Identities = 573/580 (99 %), no gaps).

Colour illustrations. *Rhododendron* sp. in Chiang Mai Botanical Garden; conidioma on PNA; colony sporulating on OA; conidiophores and conidia. Scale bars = 10 µm.

Pedro W. Crous & Johannes Z. Groenewald, CBS-KNAW Fungal Biodiversity Centre, P.O. Box 85167, 3508 AD Utrecht, The Netherlands;
e-mail: p.crous@cbs.knaw.nl & e.groenewald@cbs.knaw.nl
Ratchadawan Cheewangkoon, Department of Plant Pathology, Faculty of Agriculture, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50200, Thailand;
e-mail: ratcha.222@gmail.com