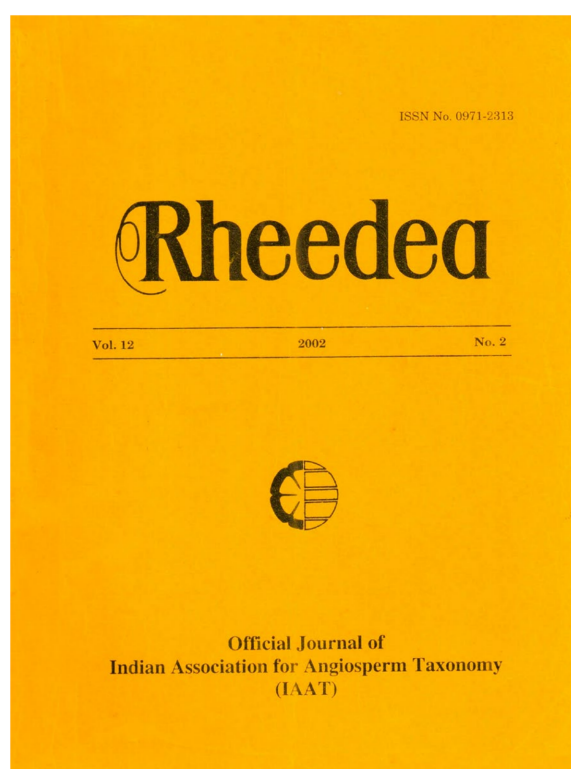




Rediscovery of *Ardisia blatteri* Gamble (Myrsinaceae) an endemic and critically endangered species from the Kalakkad - Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve in India

Viswanathan M.B., Manikandan U. & A.C. Tangavelou



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**Rediscovery of *Ardisia blatteri* Gamble
(Myrsinaceae) an endemic and critically endangered
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Reserve in India**

M. B. Viswanathan*, U. Manikandan and A. C. Tangavelou

Sri Paramakalyani Centre for Environmental Sciences

Manonmaniam Sundaranar University

Alwarkurichi – 627 412, Tamil Nadu, India

*e-mail: vinaa@rediffmail.com

Abstract

Ardisia blatteri Gamble, an endemic and critically endangered species, is rediscovered after a lapse of about 75 years from the Kalakkad - Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve of Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu, India. Description, illustration and other relevant details are provided to facilitate identification and conservation of the species.

INTRODUCTION

Gamble (1921) described *Ardisia blatteri* based on a collection by Bourdillon from Travancore of Kerala in 1887. While describing the taxon, Gamble (1921) also cited Blatter & Hallberg collection from High Wavy Mountain of Madurai district in Tamil Nadu. In 1925, Jacob collected *Ardisia blatteri* from the latter locality. Nayar (1996) considered this species as critically endangered and are at the verge of extinction. After a lapse of about 75 years this species is rediscovered from the Kalakkad - Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve of Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, India. The distribution interconnects the gap found between Madurai district and Travancore. Considering its endemism and rarity, a detailed description with illustration and other relevant details are provided to help its identification and conservation.

Ardisia blatteri Gamble, Kew Bull. 1921: 121.1921 & Fl. Pres. Madras 755. 1928 (2:531.1957, repr. ed.) (Fig. 1).

Trees, up to 5 m high; branchlets ashy grey, subterete, faintly striate, minutely rusty when young, glabrous when mature; leaf scars persistent, 2-3 mm across; internodes 3.5-11.5 x 0.75-2.5 mm. Leaves alternate, elliptic-lanceolate, oblanceolate, 1.1-12 x 0.4-4.5 cm, brown when dry, coriaceous, gland-dotted, cuneate at base, crenate-dentate at margin, acuminate at apex; midrib canaliculate above, strongly raised beneath, glabrous; lateral nerves 13-22 pairs,

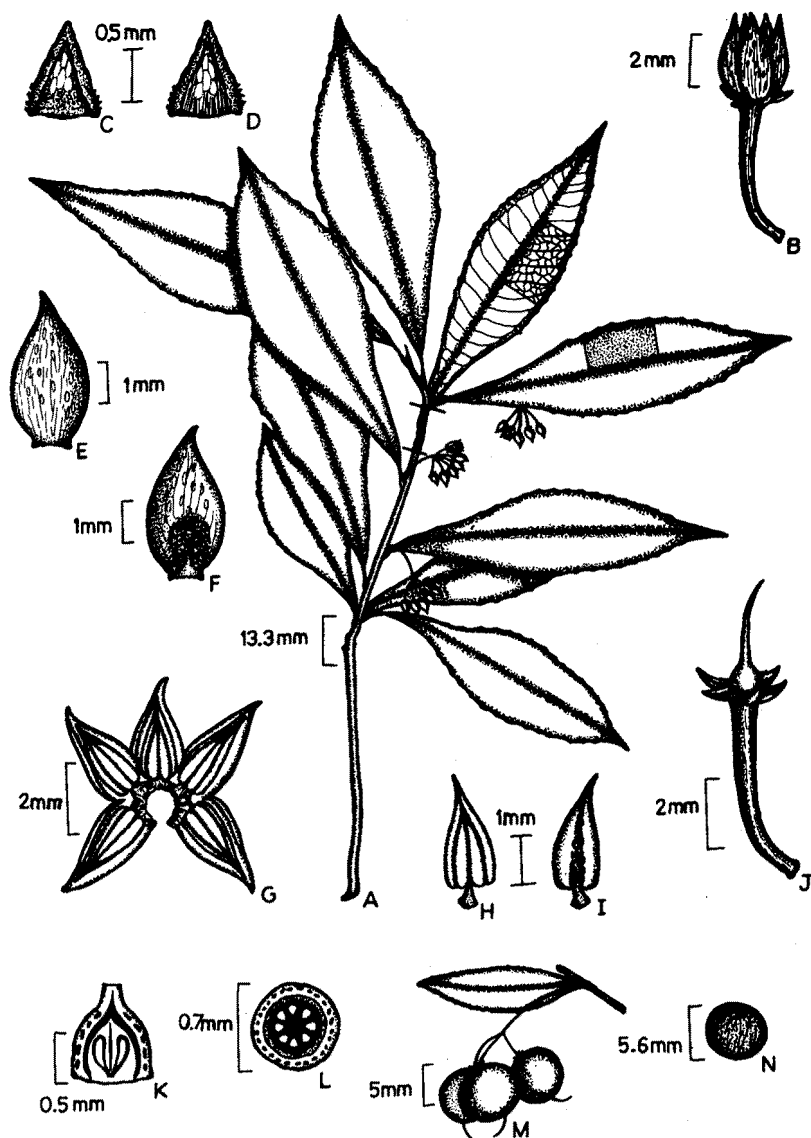
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Fig. 1. *Ardisia blatteri* Gamble: A. Flowering twig; B. Flower; C. Sepal - dorsal view; D. Sepal - ventral view; E. Petal - dorsal view; F. Petal - ventral view; G. Corolla split open; H. Stamen - dorsal view; I. Stamen - ventral view; J. Gynoecium with calyx; K. L.S. of ovary; L. C.S. of ovary; M. Fruits; N. Seeds (Drawings by S.S. Mariappan).

Rediscovery of *Ardisia blatteri* Gamble (Myrsinaceae)

nearly at right angles to midrib, sometimes branched below margin, prominent above, faint beneath, looped near margin; petioles brown, grooved above, glabrous, 4.5-6.5 x 0.9-1.4 mm. Inflorescence in axillary or subterminal umbel, 5-9 flowers in each umbel; peduncles short, 10-22.5 x 0.5-0.75 mm, minutely rusty; bracts small, caducous; pedicels short, c. 5.25 x 0.5-1 mm, gland-dotted. Flowers 5-merous, bisexual, actinomorphic; calyx lobes 5, unequal, 0.65-1 x 0.65-0.75 mm, ovate-deltoid, valvate, immersed gland inside, ciliate at margin, subulate at apex; glands immersed; corolla pink; tube c. 0.4 x 5 mm; lobes 5, twisted, narrowly ovate, c. 3.9 x 2 mm, bluntly acuminate at apex, immersed gland-dotted, cushion-like at base inside, distinctly nerved, glabrous. Stamens 5, antipetalous, inserted at throat, c. 2.7 x 1.4 mm; filaments yellowish brown, c. 0.75 x 0.3 mm; anthers 2-celled, narrowly ovate, golden yellow, sagittate at base, c. 2.25 x 1 mm, aseptate, dehiscing longitudinally, apiculate at apex; ovary globose, c. 0.75 x 0.8 mm, glabrous, 1-celled; ovules few to many; style terete, c. 2.3 x 0.1-0.35 mm; stigma simple. Berries globose, red, black when ripe, 5.8-7 x 6.5-7.5 mm; styles acicular, persistent, geniculate, c. 2.75 x 1 mm. Seeds globose, striated, c. 5.6 x 5.9 mm.

Flowering and fruiting: It flowers from January to March and from September to November, and fruits from February to April and from October to December.

Specimens examined: INDIA: **Kerala:** Travancore, Feb. 1887, *Bourdillon s.n.* (MH); **Tamil Nadu:** Madurai dist., High Wavy mountains, 7 Sep. 1925, *Jacob 77090* (MH); Tirunelveli district, Thalamalai, 15 Feb. 2000, *Viswanathan & Manikandan 5494*; Narakkadu, 12 April 2000, *Viswanathan & Manikandan 5957*; Inchikuli, 1 Nov. 2000, *Viswanathan & Manikandan 6801* (Sri Paramakalyani Centre for Environmental Sciences).

Habitat: Southern tropical wet evergreen forests in association with trees such as *Cinnamomum filipedicellatum*, *Croton zeylanicus*, *Elaeocarpus venustus*, *Erythroxylum moonii* and *Euonymus dichotomus*, and shrubs such as *Croton caudatus*, *Hedyotis purpurascens* var. *pallida*, *Memecylon subramanii* and *Phyllanthus baillonianus*.

Distribution: Madurai and Tirunelveli districts in Tamil Nadu, and Travancore region in Kerala in India.

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