their gratitude for the excellent cooperation of the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department both in exploration work and in implementing their suggestions for conservation and protection of such rare ecological niches.

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NOTES ON *CROTON AROMATICUS* L. AND *C. LACCIFER* L. (EUPHORBIACEAE)

Geiseler (1807) combined *Croton aromaticus* L. with *C. laccifer* L. under the former binomial. Beddome (1872, 1873) in his treatment of *C. aromaticus* also favoured to combine *C. laccifer* and *C. caudatus* Geisel. to it and considered *C. moonii* Thw. and *C. nigro-viridis* Thw. as its varieties. J. D. Hooker (1887) having found no difference followed Geiseler and Beddome in uniting *C. laccifer* with *C. aromaticus* and retaining the binomial *C. aromaticus* L. for the combined species. However, unlike Beddome, he correctly treated *C. caudatus, C. moonii* and *C. nigro-viridis* as distinct species. However subsequent authors, Gamble (1925), Alston (1931) and Airy Shaw (1972) continued to consider *C. aromaticus* and *C. laccifer* as distinct species. Trimen (1898) treats *C. laccifer* as a variety of *C. aromaticus*. These two species are confined to Peninsular India and Sri Lanka only, until recently Airy Shaw reported *C. laccifer* from Thailand and paralleled in this curious disjunct distribution with species of *Phyllanthus, Sauropus* and *Mallotus*.

During the revisionary studies on the genus *Croton* L. for Indian subcontinent the authors after examining critically the available collection, both old and recent, from Peninsular India as well as Sri Lanka agree with Geiseler, Beddome and J. D. Hooker and conclude that *C. aromaticus* and *C. laccifer* are conspecific. Airy Shaw in a letter to the authors also indicated the same probability. Since the dates of publication of both the species are same, the binomial *C. aromaticus* L. should be retained for the combined species as Geiseler who first united these two species chose that name.

It seems pertinent to note that *C. aromaticus* displays a wide range of morphological variations (Fig. 1 shows the variation range in leaf shape) which led to the treatment of this complex species as two distinct entities by various authors but a careful study of the numerous specimens by the present authors revealed many intermediate forms. It would appear impossible to find out any natural demarcating lines even at the varietal level.

Croton aromaticus L. Sp. Pl. 1005. 1753 (as *aromaticum*) ; Geisel. Croton. Monogr. 21. 1807 ; Thw. Enum. Pl. Zeyl. 4 : 275. 1861 ; Bedd. Fl. Sylv. t. 283. A. 1872 et For. Man. 204. 1873, excl. syn. *C. caudatus* & var. *moonii* & *nigro-viridis* ; Hook. f. Fl. Brit. India 5 : 388. 1887 ; Trimen, Fl. Ceylon 4 : 48. 1898 ; Gamble, Fl. Madras 1315. 1925 (Repr. ed. 2 : 920. 1957) ; Alston in Trimen, Fl. Ceylon 6 : 264. 1931. *C. laccifer* L. Sp. Pl. 1005. 1753 ; Thw. Enum. Pl. Zeyl. 4 : 275. 1861 ; Gamble, Fl. Madras 1315, 1925 (Repr. ed. 2 : 920. 1957) ; Alston in Trimen, Fl. Ceylon 6 : 264. 1931 ; Airy Shaw in Kew Bull. 26 : 248. 1972. *C. tiliaefolius* var. *aromaticus* (L.) Lam. Encycl. 2 : 206. 1786. *Aleurites laccifera* (L.) Willd. Sp. Pl. 4 : 590. 1805. *Croton aromaticus* var. *laccifer* (L.) Trimen, Fl. Ceylon 4 : 48. 1898.

Flowering and fruiting : Jan.-Dec.

Properties : Said to be used medicinally. A kind of lac is extracted from the bark of this plant in Sri Lanka which is used in varnish-making.

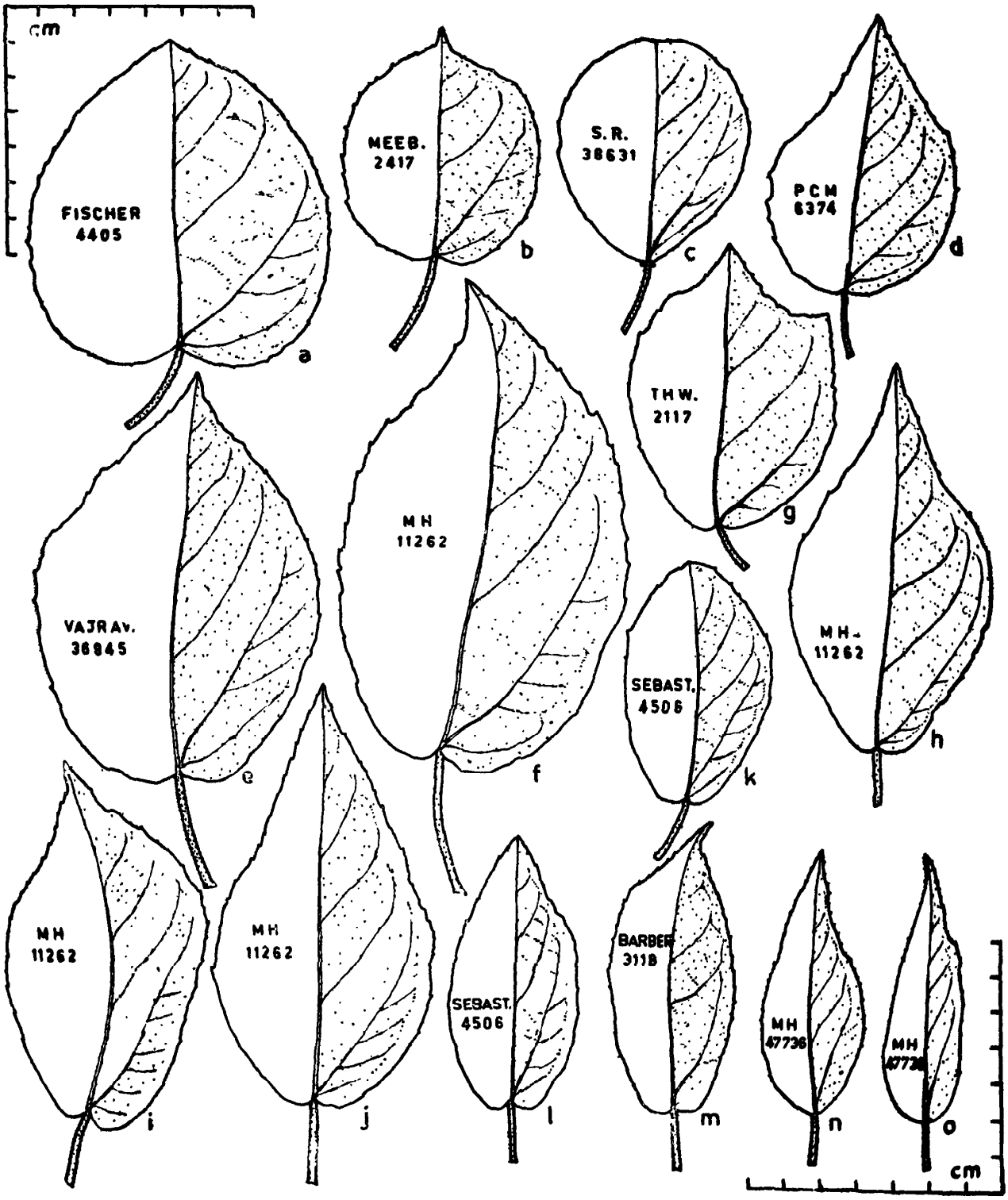


Fig. 1. (a-o). *Croton aromaticus* L. showing range of variation in leaf shape (number on each leaf represents the specimen from which it is drawn).

Vernacular names : Sinhalese : *Gaskeppetiya, Keppetiya, Welkeppetiya ;* Tamil : *Teppaddi, Vid pune.*

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