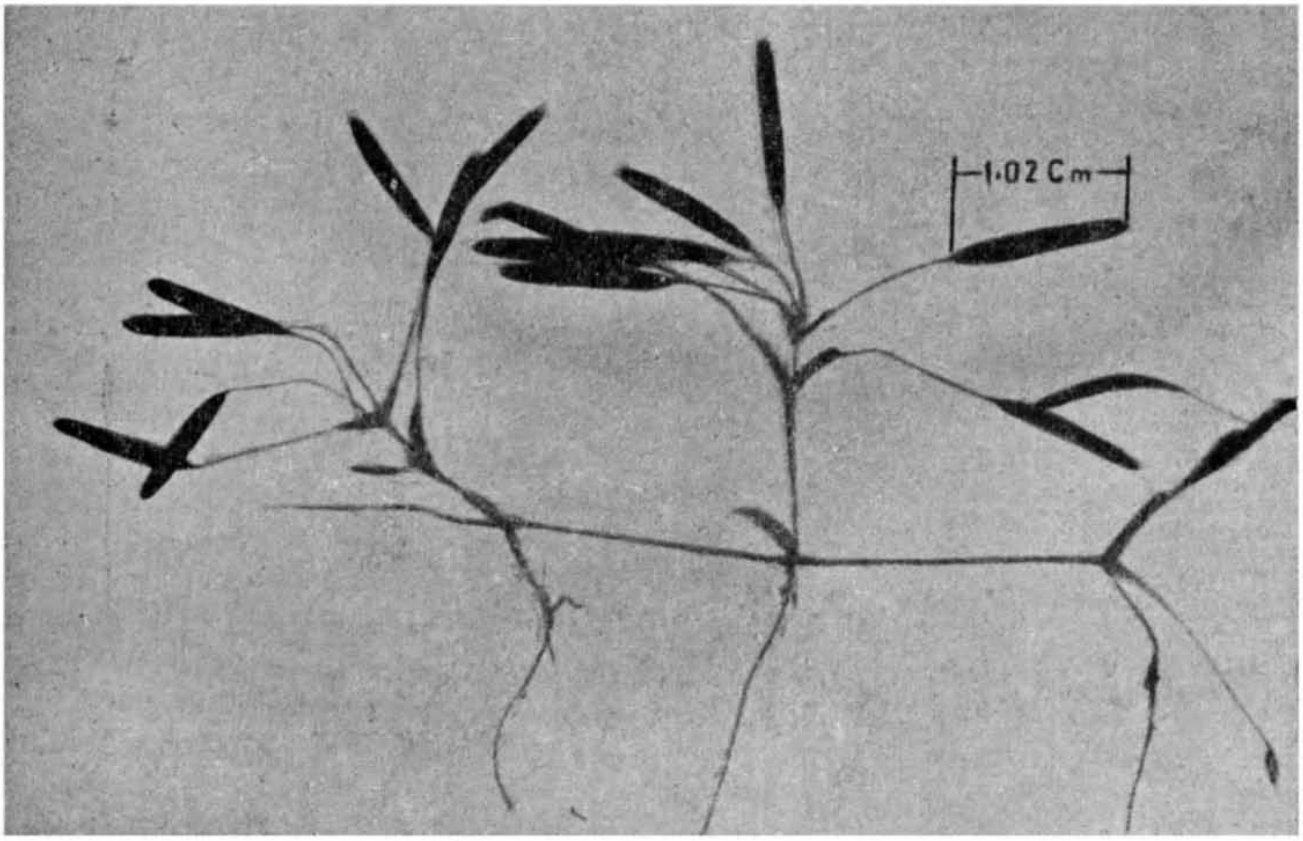
ON THE OCCURRENCE OF *HALOPHILA BECCARII* ASCHERS. (HYDROCHARITACEAE) IN INDIA

The marine genus *Halophila* Thouars consists of nine species, four of which occur in India. A specimen collected off Goa shore and sent to us was identified as *H. beccarii* and based on this, Untawale & Jagtap (1977) have published it as a new record for India. The specimen identified by us is deposited at CAL. A scrutiny of sheets deposited at Kew by the senior author revealed that *Parija* 2712 collected from Barkul, Chilka lake, Orissa on 1st October 1938 is a mixture of *H. ovalis* (R. Br.) Hook. f. and *H. beccarii* and this is perhaps the first collection from India. This sheet has been annotated by Hartog as well. Besides, this species has been collected by the senior author in 1978, off St. Mary's islands (S. Kanara, Karnataka) and another speimen (*Bhatt* s. n. 1980) collected from the coasts near S. Kanara and referred to the senior author was also identified as *H. beccarii*. These confirm that this species, though rare, occurs both along the eastern and western coasts of India.



Halophila beccarii Aschers.
A specimen collected from Goa shore coast

This species is distributed in Burma, Ceylon, Malesia and Philippines. Even in the vegetative state, it is readily distinguished from the allied species by the longer lateral shoots, 6-10 leaves together on the shoot and the absence of cross veins. All the Indian collections so far are without flowers or fruits but a full description has

been given by Hartog (Fl. Mal. 1.5: 411-412. fig. 17a. 1957). Further fresh collections, especially of male flowers are needed to supplement the description.

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REFERENCE

UNTAWALE, A. G. AND T. G. JAGTAP. New record of *Halophila beccarii* Aeschers. from Indian coast. *Mahasagar* 10(1-2) : 91-93. 1977.

OBSERVATION ON THE MAD TREE

The *mad tree* locally known as the *Paglagachh* is one of the most fascinating plants in the Indian Botanic Garden, Calcutta. Leaves of this tree are variable in form, shape, nature and degree of segmentation and lobation of the lamina to such an extent that no two leaves are similar, for which it is called the *mad tree* or *Paglagachh*. One lobe of the lamina is sometimes excessively elongating with contraction at its base. The venation is palmate with 7, sometimes 5, 8 or 9 veins radiating from the apex of this petiole. The outer two veins are, however, much weaker than the others. The amount of irregularity is perhaps, without any parallel.

The mother plant affording this striking instance of leaf variation was raised in about the year 1870 from seeds obtained from *Pterygota alata* (Roxb.) R. Br. (Syn. *Sterculia alata* Roxb.) and planted out along with others in the Sterculia Avenue. Growth of the plant was normal. It had quite normal flowers, fruits and seeds. The leaves which are cordate, ovate, acute, with entire or slightly undulating magin, show a great variety of shapes. W. W. Smith in *Journ. Asiat. Soc. Bengl* N. S. 7: 85-86, 1911 reported on this remarkable instance of leaf variation. He studied this plant for 3 successive fruiting years, when it was about 23 m in height and 1.5 m in girth (at the height of about 1.2 m), as is the normal size of this species in this area. 3-5% of the seeds of the first three fruiting years on sowing showed variation of leaves to different extent and magnitude, and about 1% as great a variation as the mother plant. In 1910 the trial of seeds showed a higher percentage than was observed in the first fruiting years. When seeds from this variety were sown, the population of seedlings segregated into normal as well as abnormal plants (partly or fully). It has been recently observed that some of the seeds obtained from *P. alata* (Roxb.) R. Br. produce seedlings bearing abnormal leaves. These evidences tend to suggest that the morphological variation of the leaf is due to genetic variation. Smith (*l. c.*) named this plant *Sterculia alata* Roxb. var. *irregularis* Smith.

The mother tree which was studied by Smith (*l. c.*) does not exist now. When and how it died could not be traced out. However, there are three other trees, one in each Division nos. 13, 19, 21 and another seedling is planted this year in Divn. no. 25. Tree in Division no. 21 is developed from the seedling studied by Smith in the course of his experiments and bears both normal and abnormal leaves. One such tree presented by Smith at the seedling stage is seen