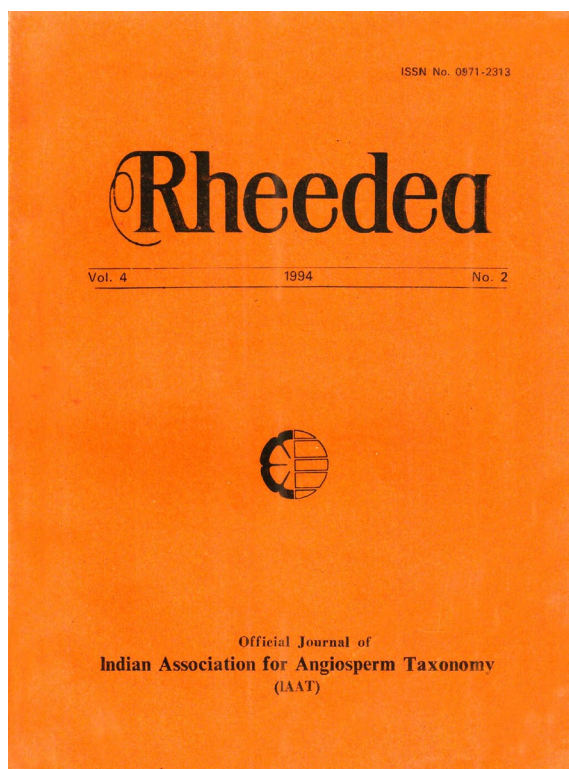




An interesting new species of *Hibiscus* Linn. (Malvaceae) from Kerala, India

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An interesting new species of *Hibiscus* Linn. (Malvaceae) from Kerala, India

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Abstract

An interesting species of *Hibiscus* Linn., *H. Sreenarayanianus*, which cannot be accommodated in any of the sections recognised under the genus, is described and illustrated.

Recently, we collected interesting specimens of *Hibiscus* L., from Kollam town and an adjoining village, Palkulangara, which did not match with any of the known species of the genus. The novelty of the specimens was, subsequently, confirmed by Drs. K. Paul and M. Sanjappa of Botanical Survey of India, Howrah and Dr. Paul A. Fryxell, USDA, Texas. The new taxon is described and illustrated here and a small note on its systematic position in the genus is provided.

Hibiscus sreenarayanianus* Anilkumar *et* Ravi, *sp. nov.

Sine affinitatibus proximis inter species cognitae generis *Hibiscus* L., haec species bene distincta tomento miscello constanti ex pilis simplicibus longis brevibusve, pilis rigidis basaliter bylbois, pilis hispido stellatis, pilisque cum glandibus longi-vel brevistipitatis, stipulis linearibus, pedicellis usque ad 8 cm longis, segmentis epicalycis lineari subulatis, basaliter distinctis, calyce omnino stellato tomentoso, lobis 7-nervis, late triangularibus, acuminatis, corolla calyce permajor, intus extusque sparse breviter pilosa capsula calyce aequilonga vel parum longior, manifeste hispida versus apicem manginemque valvarum, seminibus glandulari papillois.

Type: Palkulangara, Near Kollam Town, Kollam District, Kerala, *Ravi* 3418 (holo MH, iso TBGT & SNCH-Sree Narayana College Herbarium, Kollam)

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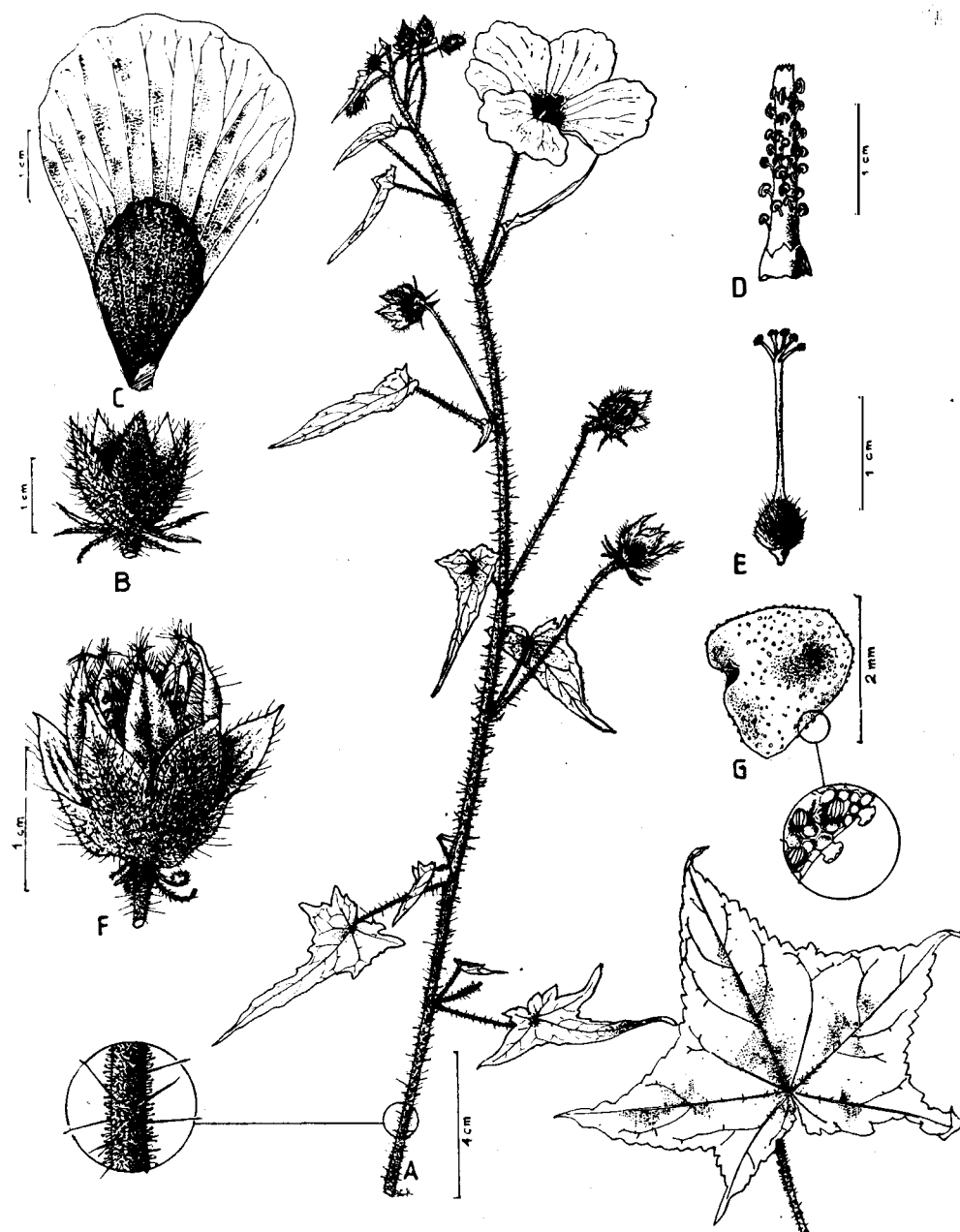


Fig. 1. *Hibiscus sreearayanianus* Anil. et Ravi A. habit, B. Calyx, C. Petal, D. Staminal column, E. Pistil, F. Fruit, G. Seed.

A New species of *Hibiscus* Linn. from Kerala

Tall annual herbs, up to 3 m tall. Stem terete, tomentose with (a) thin, long, simple hairs (up to 5 mm long), (b) stiff, straight, simple and bulbous-based and stellate bristly hairs, short or long-stalked, capitate glandular hairs, all intermixed. Leaves simple; petiole to 12 cm long, slender, terete, hairy as the stem stipules linear, bristly hairy, to 5 mm long, deciduous; lamina highly variable in size and shape; basal blades broadly ovate to suborbicular, longer than broad, to 12 × 15 cm, digitately 5-lobed; lobes acute or acuminate; upper leaves progressively smaller, shallowly lobed or unlobed, ovate to lanceolate; all leaves deeply cordate with overlapping lobes at base, acute or acuminate at apex, dentate or serrate-dentate or margins, glandular-punctate and sparsely hairy with simple and stellate hairs below and on main nerves above, basally veined. Flowers solitary, axillary, at times in apparent terminal racemes due to reduction of upper leaves. Pedicels slender, terete, hairy as the stem, to 5 cm long in flowers and 8 cm in fruits, jointed c. 1 cm below the epicalyx. Epicalyx segments 8–10, linear-subulate, hairy, persistent. Calyx gamosepalous, accrescent, 1.5 cm long in flowers to 2 cm in fruits, lobed to about the middle, densely hairy outside with long and short, simple and stiff stellate hairs, simple hairs more abundant towards the margins of lobes, sericeous inside; lobes triangular-acuminate, 8–15 cm long, 7 cm wide at base, 7-nerved. Corolla yellow with a reddish-brown centre; petals, broadly obtuse at apex; obliquely cuneate towards the base, 5 × 3.5 cm, very sparsely shortly hairy on both surfaces. Staminal tube antheriferous throughout, 2 cm long; filaments 2 mm long; anthers yellow; apically 5-toothed, staminal column and filaments with stipitate, elliptic, yellow glands. Ovary orbicular-ovoid, adpressed pubescent with longer hairs towards the apex, 5-chambered ovules many in 2 rows in each chamber; style 1–1.5 cm long; stigmatic branches 5, short, 2 mm long, purplish; stigma discoid, purplish. Capsule, enclosed by accrescent calyx, equalling or exceeding it, orbicular-ovoid, acute, adpressed pubescent with 5 thick longitudinal lines of hirsute hairs along the back of the loculi glabrous inside. Seeds many, brownish-black, compressed, obliquely triangular-reniform, glandular-pappillose with reticulately pitted surface.

without close relatives among the known species of *Hibiscus* L., the taxon is characterised by mixed tomentum (consisting of long or short simple hairs, stiff bulbous-based hairs, bristly-stellate hairs and long or short-stalked glandular hairs), linear stipules, up to 8 cm long pedicels, linear-subulate, basally distinct epicalyx segments, stellate-tomentose calyx with 7-nerved, broadly triangular-acuminate lobes, corolla much larger than calyx, sparsely shortly hairy inside and outside, capsule equalling or slightly longer than calyx, prominently hispid towards the apex and margins of valves and glandular-pappillose seeds.

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H. sreenarayanianus is an interesting taxon in that its sectional position is problematic and cannot be accommodated in any of the sections recognised under the genus. It is close to section *Ketmia* in habit, nature of epicalyx segments and staminal column and number of capsule loculi. But it is clearly distinct from the latter in having 7-veined calyx lobes, and glandular-papillose and reticulately pitted seed surface. To quote Dr. Fryxell "I would prefer to see the new species described as without close relatives, and leave the question of where it fits in the genus for the future, when cytological and other kinds of data may become available" (Personal communication).

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