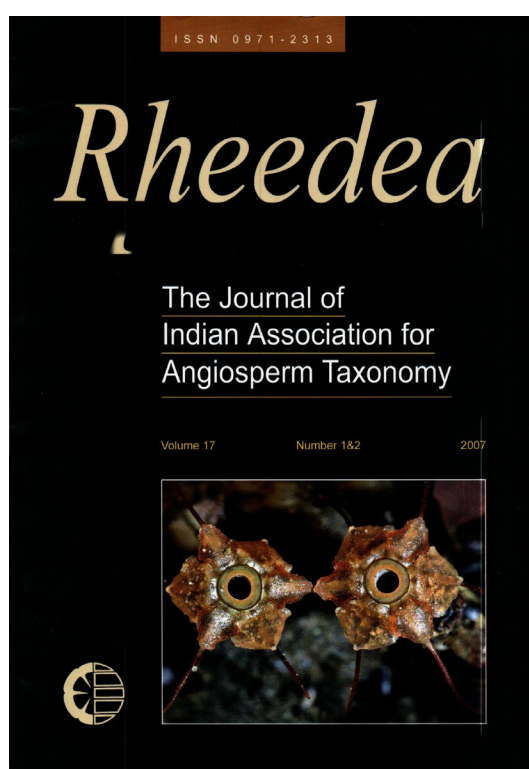




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A New Species of *Humboldtia* Vahl (Fabaceae – Caesalpinioideae) from the Western Ghats, India

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Abstract

A new species of *Humboldtia* Vahl is described and illustrated. It was collected from Neriyamangalam forests of Idukki district in Kerala. It is allied to *H. vahliana* Wight but differs in having smooth glabrous pods and not having basal appendages of stipules.

Keywords: *Humboldtia*, New species, Idukki, Kerala

Introduction

The genus *Humboldtia* Vahl consists of six species and one variety. All these taxa are confined to the southern Western Ghats of India except *H. laurifolia* Vahl which is endemic to Sri Lanka (Sanjappa, 1986). The genus is remarkable for the presence of persistent foliaceous stipules, often with basal appendages. We collected a few *Humboldtia* specimens from Neriyamangalam forests of Idukki district in Kerala and upon a critical study it turned out to be very distinct from all the known taxa. It is described here as a new species.

Humboldtia sanjappae Sasidh. et Sujanapal, *sp. nov.*

Fig. 1

Humboldtia vahlianae similis in racemorum elongatorum natura, sed stipularum sine appendicibus basalibus et etiam legumine glabro laevi differt. Etiam *H. unijugae* var. *unijugae* et var. *trijugae* similis in absentiae harum appendicum, sed inflorescentia elongata racemosa, leguminibus magnis glabris, folii rhachide tereta, foliolis duobus binis, staminodiorum absentia, petalis albis et floribus minoribus differt.

Type: INDIA, Kerala, Idukki District, Neriyamangalam, ±300 m, 23 March 2005, N. Sasidharan & P. Sujanapal 18711 (Holotype, KFRI: Isotypes, CALI, MH), 13 January 2006, N. Sasidharan & P. Sujanapal 18720 (Paratype, CALI, KFRI, MH).

Medium sized trees, to 20 m. in height and to 40 cm in diameter, bark greenish-brown, smooth, blaze red, branchlets stout, terete, glabrous. *Stipule* c. 1 x 0.5 cm,

obliquely ovate, acute, 5 or 6 nerved, glabrous, basal appendage absent. *Leaves* compound, to 25 cm long, rachis to 10 cm long, terete glabrous; leaflets 4, rarely 2; petiolule 3-5 mm long, glabrous; lamina 5-19 x 3-7.5 cm, elliptic to elliptic-obovate, acute, obtuse or rounded at base, acute or obtusely acuminate at apex, glabrous, chartaceous, lateral nerves 3-5 pairs, slender, arching along the margins, intercostae reticulate, faint. *Flowers* in racemes, axillary or from leaf scars, solitary or in groups of 2 or 3, to 13 cm long, greyish-white tomentose; bracteoles 2, 4 x 4 mm, lobes oblong, rounded at apex, villous, united at base for about 1 mm long; pedicels 3 mm long, villous; calyx tube 2.5-3 mm long, lobes 4, subequal, larger one 5 x 2.5 mm, oblong, obtuse, villous, others 5 x 2 mm; petals 5, subequal, white, larger one obovate, acute, 7 x 5 mm, glabrous, others 8 x 3 mm; stamens 5, filaments 15-17 mm long, sparsely pilose to the middle, anthers oblong, 2 mm long, versatile; ovary 1.5 mm long, pilose, ovules 3, style 8-10 mm long, glabrous, stigma capitate. *Pod* 15-17 x 4 cm, oblong, oblique, widening towards apex, beaked, compressed, smooth, glabrous, upper sutures thickened; seeds 1-2, orbicular, c. 3 cm across, brown, glabrous.

This species is allied to *H. vahliana* Wight but differs in having smooth glabrous pod and not having basal appendages of stipules. It is also related to *H. unijuga* Beddome var. *unijuga* and *H. unijuga* var. *trijuga*

Joseph & Chandrasekaran but differs in having elongated racemose inflorescence with smaller flowers and white petals, large glabrous pods, terete leaf rachis, two-paired and petioluled leaflets and in not having any staminodes.

Habitat: Evergreen forests.

Flowering & Fruiting: December-April.

Distribution: Rare, so far known only from the type locality.

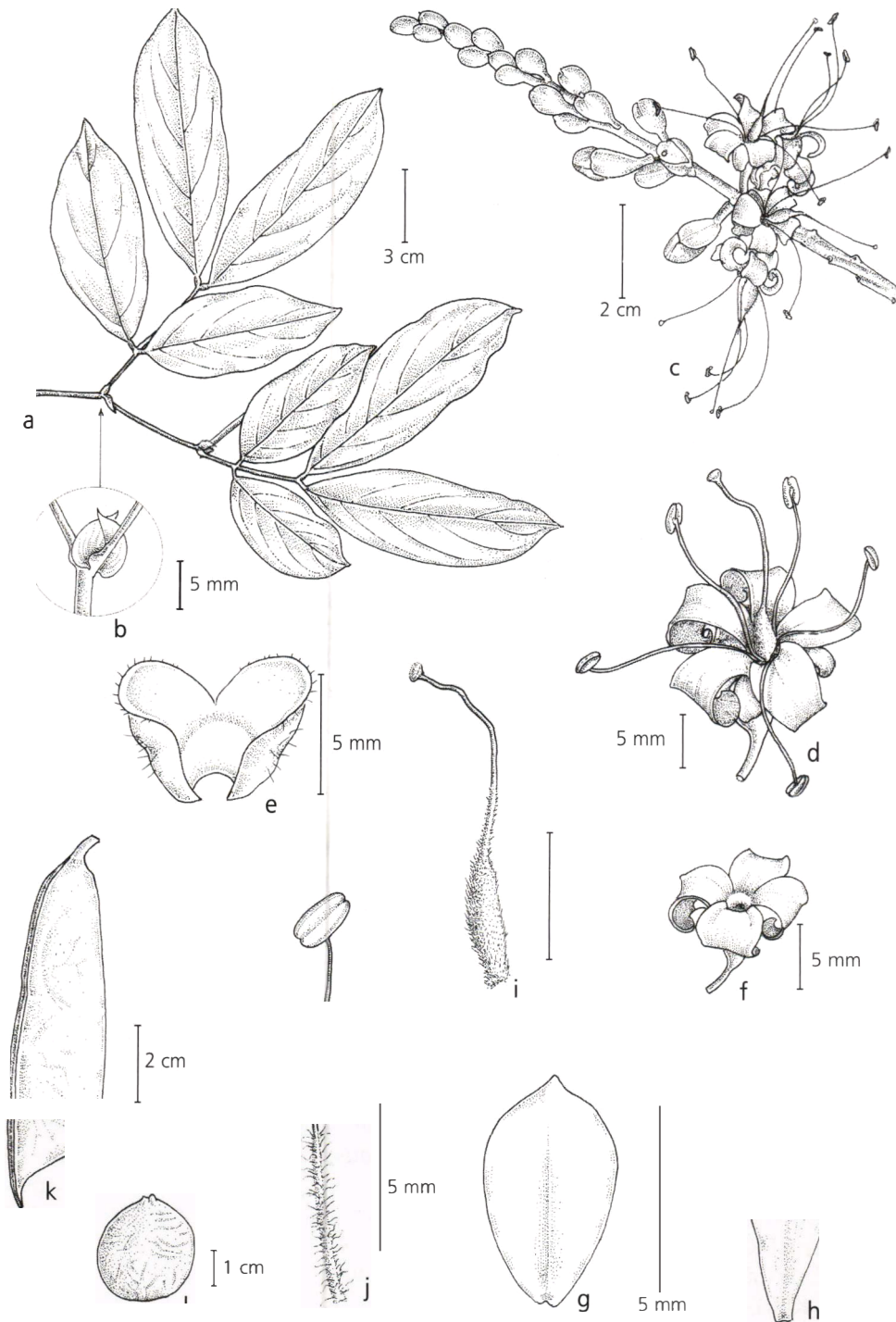


Figure 1. *Humboldtia sanjappae* Sasidh. et Sujanalal – a. Leafy twig; b. Stipule; c. Inflorescence; d. Flower; e. Bracteoles; f. Calyx; g, h. Petals; i. Carpel; j. Stamen; k. Fruit; l. Seed

Etymology: The species is named in honour of Dr M. Sanjappa, Legume Specialist and Director, Botanical Survey of India, who endorsed the novelty of our specimens.

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