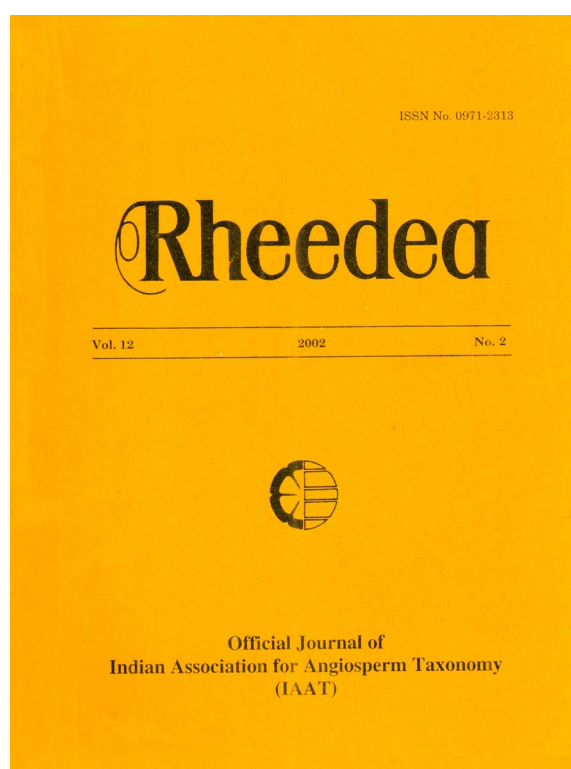




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Relocation of *Syzygium palghatense* Gamble (Myrtaceae) and description of its hitherto unknown fruits

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Abstract

Syzygium palghatense Gamble (Myrtaceae), is relocated after a gap of about 140 years from its type locality. Fruit is described for the first time based on the present collections.

INTRODUCTION

The specimens of *Syzygium palghatense* Gamble (Myrtaceae) were first collected by Beddome from Palghat hills during 1860's. The specimen was later identified as *Eugenia beddomei* Duthie (1878). While examining Beddome's specimen (*Coll. no. 254*) at Kew Herbarium in 1902, Gamble commented on its identity. Later he described this specimen as a new species viz., *Syzygium palghatense* Gamble (1918). The specimen was with flowers only. After Beddome's collection the species was reported again, and there is no specimen in Indian Herbaria. Nayar and Sastry (1987) and Nayar (1997) categorised this species as 'Possibly extinct'. During our exploration on the flora of Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary in the Palakkad District (Palghat), we were able to collect the specimens with flowers and fruits. The present collection of *S. palghatense* Gamble confirms the existence of this species in the type locality. The fruit being collected for the first time, is described and illustrated to facilitate better understanding.

Syzygium palghatense Gamble, Kew Bull. 1918: 240. 1918 & Fl. Pres. Madras 480. 1919 (Fig. 1).

Trees, to 15 m tall; bark smooth, greyish outside and muddy brown inside; branchlets subtetragonous, become terete on maturity. Leaves opposite or subopposite, 3.5-8 x 2-3.5 cm, elliptic to elliptic-oblong, base acute, apex acute, sometimes obtusely acuminate, chartaceous, sparsely gland-dotted on lower surface, lateral nerves slender, many, 2-4 mm apart with numerous secondary laterals, intramarginal nerve close to the margin; petiole 3-5 mm long, slender. Flowers in terminal or axillary, 2-3 cm long cymes; pedicel to 2 mm long; calyx tube funnel-shaped, 8-12 mm long, 5 mm at mouth; petals 2.5 mm across, creamy white, calyptrate, caducous at early stage; stamens to 8 mm long. Berry 10-13 x 4-5 mm, obconic, with a hollow depression at apex, crowned by the persistent calyx limb, prominently ribbed on drying.

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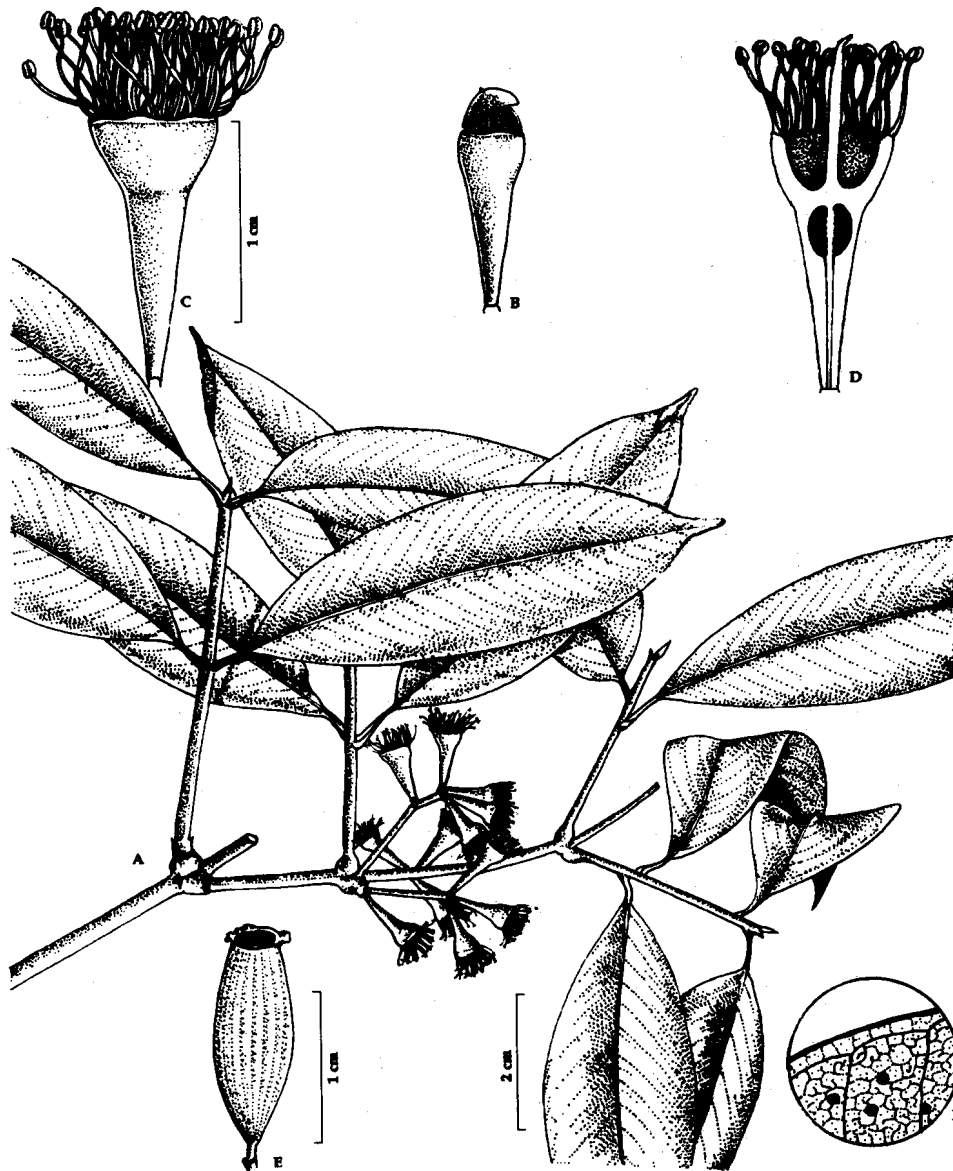


Fig. 1. *Syzygium palghatense* Gamble: A. Flowering twig; B. Flower bud with calyptra; C. Flower; D. Flower - L.S.; E. Fruit; F. A marginal portion of leaf - enlarged.
Flowering and fruiting: January - June.

Relocation of *Syzygium palghatense* Gamble

Specimens examined: INDIA, Kerala: Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary, 1200 m, 27 May 2000, *Sujanapal* 30379, *Sujanapal* 30361 (KFRI); *Ibid.*, 29 January 2001, *Sasidharan & Sujanapal* 30527 (KFRI, CNH).

Note: Profuse flowering was observed during January which appeared with new flushes of leaves. Honey bees and other insects were seen in plenty during flowering; fruit formation is extremely less. The trees were located in an evergreen forest patch at about 1200 m above MSL. Only three mature trees and two saplings could be observed in less than 1 km² area. Therefore, the species is critically endangered. Tree species associated are *Xantolis tomentosa* (Roxb.) Rafn., *Cinnamomum sulphuratum* Nees, *Beilschmiedia wightii* (Nees) Benth. ex Hook. f., *Phoebe wightii* Meisner, *Nostolachma crassifolia* (Gamble) Deb & Lahiri etc.

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