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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TERRESTRIAL ORCHID *HABENARIA PLANTAGINEA* (WIGHT) OF PENINSULAR INDIA, KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT

Christudhas Williams, B. and *Mary Suja, R.

Department of Botany and Research Centre, Scott Christian College (Autonomous), Nagercoil-629 003, Tamil Nadu, India

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ABSTRACT

This Terrestrial orchid grow among the bushes on rock cervices, pleasing with well appressed carpet, bear white flowered with spreading lip as Traditional medicine was being exploited are floristically explore and preserved in the natural habitat of Asambu Hills, Kanyakumari District.

INTRODUCTION

Habenaria plantaginea is a terrestrial orchid with underground bulbs was observed from the bushes on the rock cervices at an altitude of about 1000 to 1500 feet of Asambu in Kanyakumari District is the southernmost end of the peninsular India lies between 8º-20º North of the equator and between 70º-85º in longitude**.** Photographs of the vegetative and reproductive (inflorescence) parts were compared with the description published in orchids of Nilgiris (Joseph, 1987).

Orchids stimulate the naturalists and other orchid enthusiasts to explore for new species that may still be hiding in the forest. Orchids are the largest botanical family of higher plants in India. It is estimated that about 1, 300 species of orchids are found in our country with Himalayas as their main home and others scattered in Eastern and Western Ghats. The efforts of Wight, Hooker, Fischer, Blatter and Mc Cann Santapau and Kapadia, nearly 240 species in about 70 genera of orchids have been reported from South India and nearly 60% of the species are epiphytic, the remaining 40% constituting the terrestrial flora (Abraham and Vatsala 1981).

Corresponding author: Mary Suja, R.
Department of Botany and Research Centre, Scott Christian College (Autonomous), Nagercoil-629 003, Tamil Nadu, India

Distribution

Habenaria plantaginea has been reported from National Endemic (From Bihar to Western Ghats), India, Ootty, Pykara, Porthimund, Mudimund and Naduvattam.

Terrestrial

Flowers small, stigma with distinct appendages----------
Habenaria

Botanical Description

Tuberous herbs, small to medium sized 26-30 cm with ovoid-globose tuber giving rise to an erect, glabrous, bracteate stem 3 to 7cm, sub basal, clustered, elliptic-oblong, sub-acute to acute, sub-sessile, bear basally clasping leaves with one sheath beneath was found in bushes and on the rock cervices. Most of the leaves grow close to ground about 4 – 5cm emerge widen on the ground 2.5-7cm x 1.5-3cm, lanceolate with a long slender scape beset with sterile bracts.

Flowers 7 to 9 flowered, glabrous white, 11mm across, restricted towards the apex of the scape. Bracts narrowly lanceolate and much shorter than the ovary acuminate at the tip with setaceous margined floral bracts carrying faintly fragrant flowers. Dorsal sepals 0.5x3.1mm, erect, cucullate, broadly ovate, obtuse at the tip and prominently 3-nerved.

Plate 1. *Habenaria plantaginea* (Habit)

Plate 2. *Habenaria plantaginea* (Flowers)

H. plantaginea Lindl., Gen and Sp. Orch. 323. 1835; Wight. Ic. 5(1): 13 t. 1710. 1852; Hook. f., Fl. Brit. Ind.6: 141. 1890; Fischer in Fl. Pres. Madras 1470. 1928 (Repr. Ed. 3: 1027, 1957): Sant. and Kapad., Orch. Bombay 28.t. 6. Fig.25. 1966.

Lateral sepals thick, 5.0-5.5 x 2.5-3.0mm, sub-erect or spreading, obliquely lanceolate-ovate, obtuse at tip, 4 nerved, slightly larger than the dorsal sepal. Lateral petals 0.5x1.5 mm, narrower than the sepals, falcately elliptic, erect, sub-equal with sepals, acute at tip, one nerved, more or less hyaline. Lip trilobed, long-spurred, rhomboid in outline, 12mm across with porrect sidelobes are much broader than the midlobe narrowly ligulate almost equivalent to the side ones. Spur slender, longer than the ovary. Ovary 1.5-2.0 cm long, shortly stalked. Tubers 3.0x1.5cm, oblong, hairy 1 or 2 per plant.

Lawson s.n. (MH Acc. No. 50803); Narayana and Raju 18326; Rathakrishnan 39005;Vivekananthan 43092; Mudumali, Carcoor Ghat, Moyar; Alt. 850-925 m.

Flowering and Fruiting: August -September

Conclusion

The Indian Traditional Healers use *Habenaria plantaginea* Lindl to cure Pulmonary Tuberculosis based Formulations document as to conserve the terrestrial orchid.

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