



A new species of *Memecylon* (Melastomataceae) from the Western Ghats, India

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Abstract

Memecylon ponmudianum, a new species of Melastomataceae from Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala, India, is described and illustrated. The new species resembles *M. terminale* and *M. subramanii* but differs from the former by its larger and sessile leaves with cordate and amplexicaul leaf bases, robust and shortly peduncled inflorescences, pedicels distinctly shorter than the campanulate calyx, and from the latter by the terete stem and branchlets, smaller subsessile and amplexicaul leaves, terminal short peduncled umbellate cymes with terete peduncle and the pedicels distinctly shorter than calyx. A key to the *Memecylon* species with cordate leaf bases occurring in south India and Sri Lanka is also presented.

Key words: Endemic species, Kerala

Introduction

The genus *Memecylon* Linnaeus (1753: 349) consists of more than 300 taxa, distributed mainly in the Old World tropics (Renner *et al.* 2007 onwards). In Peninsular India, the genus includes 34 species with 18 species endemic to the Western Ghats (Gamble 1919, Mohanan *et al.* 2001, Viswanathan 2001, Viswanathan & Manikandan 2001, Santhosh Kumar *et al.* 2003, 2004, Rajendra Prasad *et al.* 2006, Manickam *et al.* 2007).

During systematic studies on the genus *Memecylon* of the Western Ghats, the authors collected an interesting species of *Memecylon* from the Ponmudi hills in the Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve of the Thiruvananthapuram district in Kerala state. On critical study of relevant literature and type specimens of *Memecylon* species, it was found to be quite distinct from other known Indian species. It is described and illustrated as a species new to science here.

Taxonomy

Memecylon ponmudianum Sivu, N.S.Pradeep & Pandur., *sp. nov.* (Figs. 1 & 2)

Memecyli terminali et M. subramanii similis, a priore foliis maioribus sessilibus, basi cordatis amplexicaulibus, inflorescentia robusta breviter pedunculata, pedicellis calycibus campanulatis distincte brevioribus, a posteriore caule ramulisque teretis, foliis minoribus subsessilibus amplexicaulibus, umbellis terminalibus breviter pedunculatis, pedunculo tereto, pedicellis calycibus distincte brevioribus, etc. differt.

Type:—INDIA. Kerala: Thiruvananthapuram district, Ponmudi Hills, Kowdiyarmottai, 8°43' N, 77°07' E, ± 779 m, 30 December 2009 (fl.), *Sivu 65150* (holotype TBGT!, isotype MH!).

Key to the species of *Memecylon* with cordate leaves occurring in peninsular India and Sri Lanka

1. Leaves elliptic-orbicular in outline *Memecylon orbiculare* Thwaites (1859: 112)
- Leaves ovate, elliptic-ovate, ovate-oblong, lanceolate or oblong-lanceolate in outline 2
2. Leaves with conspicuous intra-marginal veins 3
- Leaves with obscure intra-marginal veins 6
3. Leaves with revolute margins *Memecylon revolutum* Thwaites (1859: 111)
- Leaf margins flat 4
4. Flowers borne in sessile clusters on the branches below the leaves *Memecylon hookeri* Thwaites (1859: 113)
- Flowers in axillary and terminal pedunculate inflorescences 5
5. Branchlets terete; leaves up to 12 cm long; inflorescence to 4 cm long *Memecylon ponmudianum*
- Branchlets winged; leaves 20–35 cm long; inflorescences 6–12 cm long *Memecylon subramanii*
6. Flowers fascicled on axillary or lateral tubercles 7
- Flowers in peduncled cymes 11
7. Leaf margins revolute *Memecylon ovoideum* Thwaites (1859: 112)
- Leaf margins flat 8
8. Leaves 15–40 cm long *Memecylon macrophyllum* Thwaites (1859: 111)
- Leaves less than 15 cm long 9
9. Leaves ovate or elliptic-ovate, base semi-amplexicaul 10
- Leaves lanceolate, base not amplexicaul or semi-amplexicaul *Memecylon depressum* sensu Gamble (1919: 504)
10. Branchlets 4-angular; calyx funnel shaped *Memecylon sessile* Bentham ex Wight & Arnott (1834: 320)
[*M. malabaricum* (Clarke 1879: 559) Cogniaux (1891: 1148), non Kosteletzky (1835: 1517)]
- Branchlets terete or subterete; calyx campanulate *Memecylon wightii* Thwaites (1859: 113)
11. Inflorescence subterminal and axillary umbellate cymes; peduncle 1–2 cm long *Memecylon terminale*
- Inflorescence an axillary or lateral short peduncled cyme; peduncle 0.5–1 cm long 12
12. Leaves ovate-oblong, obtuse at apex; calyx campanulate above the ovary *Memecylon sisparensense* Gamble (1919: 227)
- Leaves oblong-lanceolate, acuminate at apex; calyx tube above the ovary saucer-shaped
..... *Memecylon deccanense* Clarke (1879: 560)

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