

## A NEW SPECIES OF *SALACIA* (HIPPOCRATEACEAE) FROM SOUTH INDIA

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A new species from South India, *Salacia agasthiamalana* Udayan, Regy Yohannan & Pradeep (Hippocrateaceae), is described from the Western Ghats of Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala State. An illustration and data on habitat, distribution and phenology are provided.

*Keywords.* Hippocrateaceae, Kerala, *Salacia*, South India.

### INTRODUCTION

The genus *Salacia* L. (Hippocrateaceae) consists of approximately 200 species distributed in tropical America, Africa and Asia (Mabberley, 2005). In India it is represented by 21 species, of which 15 species are known to occur in Peninsular India (Ramamurthy & Naithani, 2000). Among them, eight species are recorded from Kerala (Sasidharan, 2004; Ramamurthy & Venu, 2005; Nayar *et al.*, 2006). During intensive botanical studies along the Western Ghats of Kerala State in South India we collected an interesting species of *Salacia* from Agasthiamala forest of Thiruvananthapuram District. Critical studies revealed it to be a new species and it is described here with an illustration.

### SPECIES DESCRIPTION

***Salacia agasthiamalana* Udayan, Regy Yohannan & Pradeep, sp. nov. Fig. 1.**

*Salaciae macrospermae* Wight affinis, sed ab ea praesertim habitu fruticoso scandenti, ramulis denigrescentibus lenticellatis, foliis 5–6.5 cm longis ellipticis atrovirentibus coriaceis serrato-crenatis, petiolis 5–7 cm longis, cymis 2–8-floribus et fructibus laevigatis differt. – Type: India, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram

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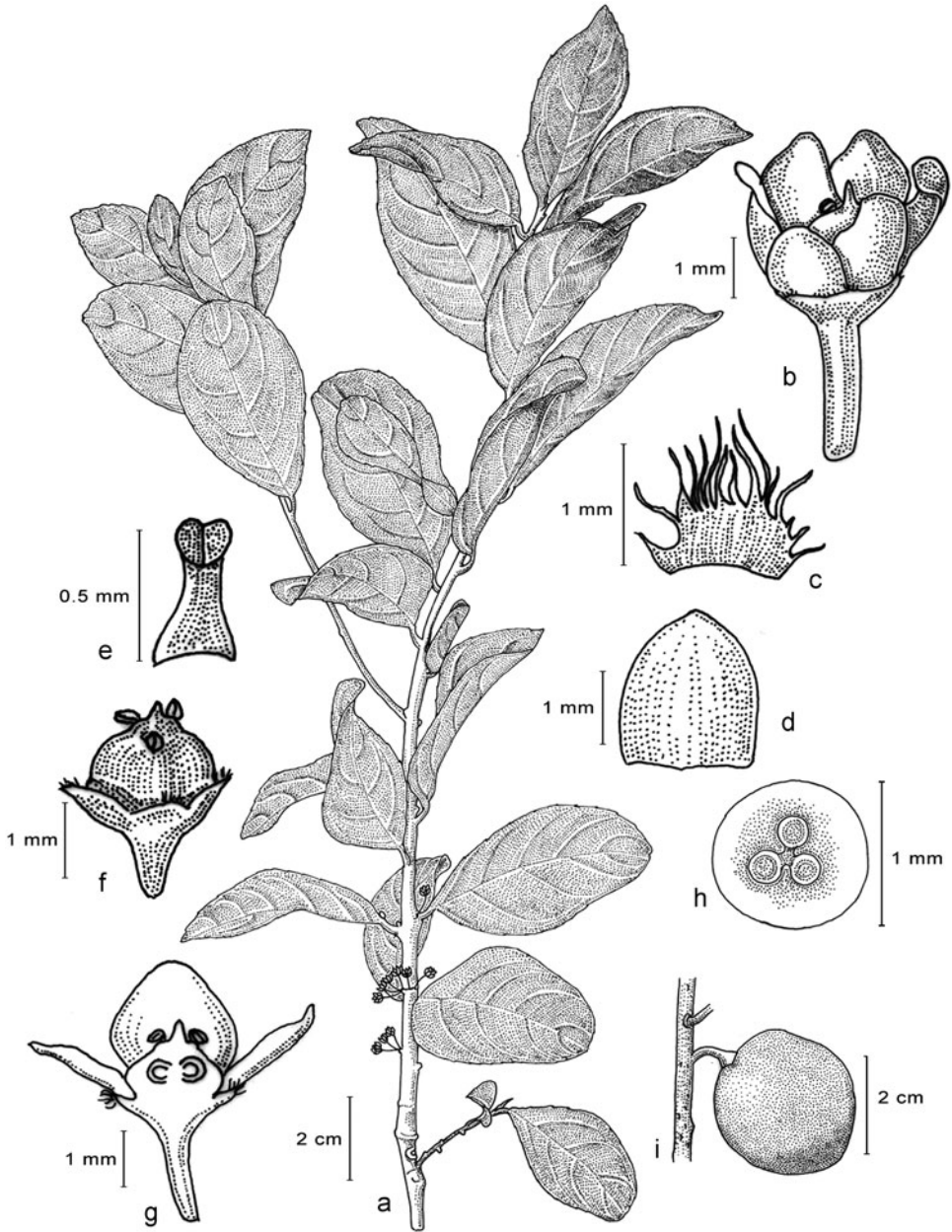


FIG. 1. *Salacia agasthiamalana* Udayan, Regy Yohannan & Pradeep, sp. nov.: a, twig with flowers; b, single flower; c, sepal; d, petal; e, stamen; f, calyx and disk with androecium and gynoecium; g, longitudinal section of flower; h, cross-section of ovary; i, fruit. a from *Udayan* S006; b–h from *Udayan* S004; i from *Udayan* S008. Drawn by Umesh M.

District, Agasthiamala, evergreen forest, 900–1000 m, 11 iv 2010 (fl), *Udayan & Regy Yohannan* S004 (holo MH; iso K, SKC<sup>1</sup>, SNCH<sup>2</sup>).

Scandent bushy shrubs; branchlets lenticellate, blackish. *Leaves* elliptic, 5–6.5 × 2–3.5 cm, acute, acuminate or rounded-retuse at apex, acute or cuneate at base, coriaceous, margin serrate in young leaves but crenate in mature leaves, venation reticulodromous; petiole 0.5–0.7 cm long. *Flowers* 2–8, cauliflorous umbelliform cyme in dense fascicles from axillary or extra-axillary branches; pedicel 0.4–0.6 cm long. *Sepals* 5, oblong, brown, c.0.1 cm long, much shorter than the petals, margins fimbriate. *Petals* 5, elliptic, 0.2 × 0.15 cm, green with a tinge of yellow when young but orange tinged towards the upper margins in older flowers. *Disk* green when young but with a faint orange tinge towards the base at maturity, 0.05 cm high, 0.1 cm wide, conical, tapering to a short style. *Anthers* 3, rarely 4, discoid, creamy-white with a brown tinge; filament slightly tri-radiate, creamy-white when young but yellowish with an orange tinge later. *Ovary* superior, 3-loculed; ovules 1 in each locule; stigma simple umbonate, pale green. *Berry* globose, smooth, 4–6 cm across, orange-red. *Seeds* slightly plano-convex, 1.5–2 × 1–1.5 cm.

*Distribution.* *Salacia agasthiamalana* is known from Pongalapara in the Agasthiamala region of the southern Western Ghats of Kerala. It is apparently endemic and very sparsely distributed on the slopes.

*Habitat and ecology.* This species occurs in evergreen grassland vegetation at an altitude of 900–1100 m. Flowering and fruiting: September and April; March and July.

*Etymology.* The species is named after the type locality, Agasthiamala Biosphere Reserve, one of the floristically rich regions of the southern Western Ghats.

*Additional specimens examined.* INDIA. Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram District, Agasthiamala, 950–1100 m, 4 v 2010, *Udayan & Regy Yohannan* S006 (CALI, SNCH); *ibid.*, 10 iii 2011, *Udayan & Regy Yohannan* S008 (CAL, CALI, FRLH, MH).

This new species is most similar to *Salacia macrosperma* Wight in its cauliflorous many-flowered umbelliform cymes and globose orange-red berries but can be distinguished from it by its bushy scandent habit; blackish lenticellate branchlets; 5–6.5 cm long, dark green, elliptic, coriaceous, serrate-crenate leaves; short (5–7 mm) petioles; few-flowered (2–8) cymes and smooth berries.

The plant was found growing together with other rare and endemic species such as *Actinodaphne campanulata* Hook.f. (Lauraceae), *Bentinckia condapanna* Berry & Roxb. (Arecaceae), *Byrsophyllum tetrandrum* (Bedd.) Hook.f. ex Bedd. (Rubiaceae), *Eugenia indica* (Wight) Chithra (Myrtaceae), *Euphorbia santapau* A.N.Henry

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(Euphorbiaceae), *Hedyotis albonervia* Bedd. (Rubiaceae), *Microtropis ramiflora* Wight (Celastraceae) and *Polyscias acuminata* (Wight) Seem. (Araliaceae).

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