

## A NEW THESIMUM FROM ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT. *Thesium hararensis* A. G. Miller (Santalaceae), a new species, is described from Ethiopia.

Whilst preparing the account of Santalaceae for the *Flora of Ethiopia* several sheets of a distinctive new species of *Thesium* were discovered. It is described here as *T. hararensis* A. G. Miller, bringing the number of known species of *Thesium* in Ethiopia to six.

### *Thesium hararensis* A. G. Miller, sp. nov. Fig. 1.

Differt a *T. viride* A. W. Hill lobis perianthii interne dense villosis triangularibus non linearibus, glabris; foliis inferioribus linearibus non subuliformibus nec squamiformibus; floribus in spicis dispositis, unoquoque una bractea et duabus bracteolis subtentis.

Herba suffruticosa, glabra vel interdum scabra. *Caules* plures, ascendentes, 10-30cm alti, ± porcati, superne dense ramosi. *Folia* inferiora linearia, ± teretia, 5-30mm longa, mucrone hyalino, insuper et in regione inflorescentiae squamiformibus diminuenda. *Inflorescentia* multis spicis omnibus c. 2-3cm longis, 7-10 floribus; flores ± subsessiles, una bractea squamiforme subulata et duobus bracteolis subtenti, uterque quam flore brevior. *Perianthium* externum viridi-brunneum, internum album, late campanulatum, (1.5-)1.75-2mm longum; lobi triangulares, obtusi, cucullati, 1-1.5mm longi, 0.8-1mm lati, versus apicem inferum pilis villosis densis vestiti. *Stamina* basi loborum inserta; antherae ad lobos per fasciculos pilorum affixae. *Stigma* capitatum, ad medium antherarum attingens. *Nux* subspheroidea, 2.5-3 × 2.5-2.75mm, costis decem, prominentibus, longitudinalibus, et inter eas nervis reticulatis conspicuis; perianthium persistens, nuce 3-plo breviora.

Differs from *T. viride* A. W. Hill in the internally densely villous, triangular not linear, glabrous perianth-lobes; in the linear not subulate, scale-like lower leaves; in the flowers arranged in spikes subtended by 1 bract and 2 bracteoles, not arranged in pedunculate, axillary cymes with the flowers subtended by 6 or 7 bracteoles.

Woody-based, glabrous or sometimes scabrous herb. *Stems* several, ascending, 10-30cm, ± ridged, densely branched above. *Leaves* linear below, ± terete, 5-30mm, with a colourless mucro, becoming smaller and scale-like above the region of inflorescence. *Inflorescence* of many spikes c. 2-3cm long, each c. 7-10-flowered; flowers ± subsessile, subtended by a scale-like, subulate bract and 2 bracteoles, both much shorter than flower. *Flowers* greenish-brown outside, white inside, perianth broadly campanulate, (1.5-)1.75-2mm long; lobes triangular, obtuse, 1-1.5mm long, 0.8-1mm broad, apex hooded, fringed with dense, inwardly pointing villous hairs; orange-brown (when dry) glands present between lobes at base. *Stamens* inserted at base of perianth-lobes, anthers attached to lobes by tufts of hairs. *Stigma* capitate, held at same level as anthers. *Nut* subspheroidal, 2.5-3 × 2.5-2.75mm, with 10 prominent, longitudinal ribs, with distinct reticulate veins between; persistent perianth c. one-third as long as nut.

In open grassland on limestone slopes, probably semi-parasitic on grasses; 1372-2200m.

Type. Ethiopia, 5-10km N of Midaga, S of Harar, 08°47' N 42°10' E, 14 x 962, W. Burger 2199 (holo. K, iso. WAG).

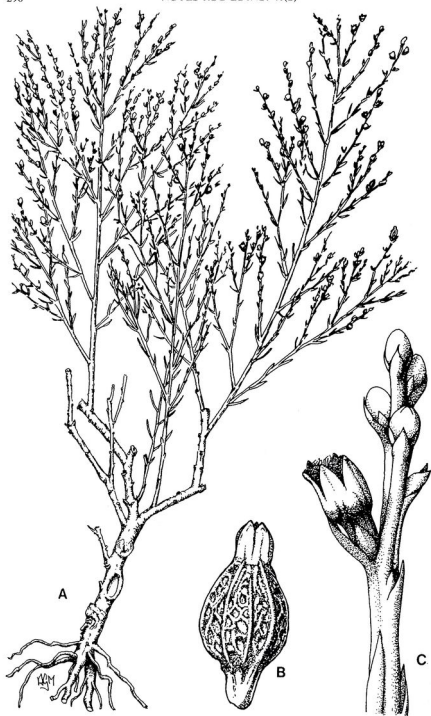


FIG. 1. *Thesium hararensis*, De Wilde 5475: A, habit  $\times \frac{1}{2}$ ; B, nut  $\times 9$ ; C, part of inflorescence  $\times 10$ .

ETHIOPIA (HU). Harar Province: Gara Achim (Mount Hakim), c. 2km S of Harar, 09°17'N 42°06'E, limestone rocks, common in open grassland, 2100m, 23 vii 1969, *J. J. F. E. De Wilde* 5475 (C, K); Gara Achim (Mount Hakim), c. 3km S of Harar, 09°17'N 42°06'E, limestone hills, open grassland, 2200m, 19 iii 1970, *J. J. F. E. De Wilde* 6376 (K, WAG); 5–10km N of Midaga, S of Harar, 08°47'N 42° 10'E, 14 x 1962, *W. Burger* 2199 (holo. K, iso. WAG); Uadendeo plateau, 36km ESE of Harar on road to Dijigdjigga (Jigiga), 09°04'N 42°23'E, limestone soil, 1520m, *W. Burger* 2065 (K, WAG).

SOMALIA. Nr Ethiopian frontier, 09°02'N 43°54'E, 1372m, 8 x 1932, *J. B. Gillett* 4230 (K).

*T. hararensis* is restricted to the Harar province of eastern Ethiopia and neighbouring areas of Somalia, growing mainly in open grassland on limestone, and is apparently semi-parasitic on grasses. It can be distinguished from all other Ethiopian species of *Thesium* by the densely bearded, triangular perianth-lobes and the broadly campanulate flowers. It resembles the non-Ethiopian species *T. viride* A. W. Hill in facies but differs in the flowers which are arranged in spikes and are subtended by one bract and two bracteoles, not arranged in pedunculate axillary cymes with the flowers subtended by six or seven bracteoles. It also differs from *T. viride* in the linear, not subulate, scale-like leaves below and in the internally villous, triangular, as opposed to glabrous and linear, perianth-lobes. In Somalia *T. hararensis* is represented by a single gathering, *Gillett* 4230; this differs from Ethiopian specimens in being completely scabrous, and less leafy in appearance, with rather more scale-like leaves, and is generally a rather stunted plant. This degree of variation is not unusual within a species of *Thesium*. *Gillett* 4230 grew at a lower altitude than the other, Ethiopian, gatherings and probably represents a low-level form.

A puzzling sheet, *Thulin* 1430 (from Chilalo awraja, c. 3km S of Assella, growing on grassy slopes along small stream at 2400m), could well represent a further new species but more gatherings are needed before it can be described; it is distinguished from the other Ethiopian species by its scale-like leaves, perennial habit and persistent perianth up to one-third as long as the nut.