



RESEARCH COMMUNICATION

Taxonomic notes on the status of *Syzygium caryophyllatum* var. *abrahamianum* (Myrtaceae)

Sainudeen Muhammed Shareef^{*} & Ettickal Sukumaran Santhosh Kumar

KSCSTE - Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute, Thiruvananthapuram 695 562, Kerala, India

*Correspondence email - smshariftbgri@gmail.com

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Abstract

Syzygium caryophyllatum var. *abrahamianum* Shareef & E.S.S. Kumar is elevated to specific rank.

Keywords: endemic; Kerala; nomenclature; south west India; species; variety

Introduction

The genus *Syzygium* Gaertn. (Myrtaceae) comprises approximately 1,200 species distributed from Africa eastwards to the Hawaiian Islands and from India and southern China southwards to Australia and New Zealand, with the highest diversity occurring in Southeast Asia (1, 2). The genus can be recognised from *Eugenia* by its glabrous branchlets, leaves and inflorescences; terminal or axillary inflorescences with reduced or absent bracteoles, inconspicuous calyx lobes on the fruit; free or calyptrate petals and seeds with free cotyledons. In India, 102 taxa have been recorded, of which 44 are endemic to the country (3). The Western Ghats represent the centre of diversity and endemism, harbouring 54 species, including 28 endemics. The north-eastern region of India, encompassing Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, ranks second in species richness with 48 species, of which 8 are endemic. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands also contribute significantly to the diversity of the genus, supporting 22 species, including 4 endemics. Among these, *S. munnarensis* Shareef, P.E. Roy & Krishnaraj (4); *S. palghatense* Gamble (5); *S. palodense* Shareef, E.S.S. Kumar & T. Shaju (6); *S. periyarensis* Augustine & Sasidh. (7); and *S. ponmudianum* A.K. Sreekala, Ramas., D.S. Pillai & Surendr. (8) are strict endemics confined to the state of Kerala, south west India.

As part of the revisionary studies on the genus *Syzygium* Gaertner (Myrtaceae) of India, a new variety, namely, *S. caryophyllatum* var. *abrahamianum* Shareef & E.S.S. Kumar, was described based on collections from Varkala and Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala (south west India) (9). Recent records show that this variety has been reduced to a heterotypic synonym of *S. caryophyllatum* (L.) Alston without any taxonomic justification (10). Examination of the protologue, type material and live specimens revealed affinities with both *S. caryophyllatum* and *S. makul* Gaertn. However, the taxon can be

readily distinguished by several diagnostic traits. These morphological traits warrant the elevation of this variety to species rank, here recognized as *S. abrahamianum*. It can further be distinguished from its allied species by the characteristics listed in Table 1.

Syzygium abrahamianum (Shareef et E.S.S.Kumar)
Shareef et E.S.S.Kumar, stat. & comb. nov. (Fig. 1 & 2).

Syzygium caryophyllatum var. *abrahamianum* Shareef et E.S.S.Kumar, J. Non-Timber Forest Prod. 2021;28(2):43.

Type: INDIA, Kerala: Thiruvananthapuram district, Bhagavathi Kavu (a sacred grove), near Varkala, Sea level, 18 December 2009, S. M. Shareef 69335 (Holotypus, TBGT!; Isotype, TBGT!)

Authors' contributions

SMS prepared the manuscript and took the photograph; ESSK corrected the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest: Authors do not have any conflict of interest to declare.

Ethical issues: None

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Table 1. Comparison of *Syzygium abrahamianum* (Shareef et E.S.S.Kumar) Shareef et E.S.S.Kumar with *S. caryophyllatum* (L.) Alston and *S. makul* Gaertn.

Characters	<i>Syzygium caryophyllatum</i> (L.) Alston	<i>Syzygium abrahamianum</i> (Shareef et E.S.S.Kumar) Shareef et E.S.S.Kumar	<i>Syzygium makul</i> Gaertn.
Habit	Shrub to medium-sized tree, 2–6 m tall	Large tree, 10–12 m tall	Large tree, to 30 m tall
Seedlings	Profusely branched from the base; branchlets slender, subterete	Not profusely branched from the base; branchlets comparatively thick, 4-angled and slightly winged	Much branched from the base; branchlets very slender, 4-angled and slightly winged
Bark	Smooth or minutely grid cracked, reddish-brown or pale grey-brown	Smooth and irregularly cracked, greyish-white	Smooth, thin, papery flakes peeling off old wood, pale orange brown
Blaze	Brown	Mauve	Dark brown
Branchlets	Subterete, reddish brown	Terete, greyish-brown or light brown	Terete, pale cream- brown
Petiole	3–5 mm long	0.5–1 cm long	1.2–1.5 cm long
Leaves	Opposite to subopposite, obovate or obovate-oblancheolate	Opposite, elliptic, elliptic-obovate	Opposite narrowly obovate to elliptic or elliptic-obovate
Leaf apex	Obtuse, emarginate or shortly sub-acuminate	Obtuse or obtusely acuminate	Narrowly acuminate with twisted acumen
Inflorescence	Terminal, subterminal or axillary, to 6 cm long	Terminal or rarely lateral, to 9 cm long	Terminal, subterminal or axillary, to 12 cm long
Flowers	0.5–0.9 cm across at anthesis	1.3–1.5 cm across at anthesis	0.8–1 cm at anthesis
Bracteoles	Lanceolate, 0.4 × 1.5– 0.2 mm	Broadly deltoid, 0.5–0.8 × 0.8–0.9 mm	Lanceolate, 0.5 × 0.2–0.3 mm
Hypanthium	Turbinate or campanulate, 2–2.9 × 1.5–2 mm	Campanulate, 3–4 × 3–3.5 mm	Campanulate, 2.5–3 × 2–2.5 cm
Petals (calyptra)	1–2 mm across	1.5–2.7 mm across	4 mm across
Filaments	2–4 mm long	2.5–5 mm long	2.5–4 mm long
Styles	3–4.5 mm long	5.5–6 mm long	3.5–5 mm long
Fruits	Globose to subglobose, 0.8–1 cm diameter	Globose to subglobose, 0.8–2 cm diameter	Subglobose, 0.8–1 cm diameter

**Fig. 1.** *Syzygium abrahamianum* (Shareef et E.S.S.Kumar) Shareef et E.S.S.Kumar, stat. & comb. nov.



Fig. 2. Holotype of *Syzygium abrahamianum* (Shareef et E.S.S.Kumar) Shareef et E.S.S.Kumar, stat. & comb. nov.

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