PLANT SCIENCE TODAY
Vol 13(1): 1-4
https://doi.org/10.14719/pst.11473

eISSN 2348-1900

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

Received: 26 August 2025; Accepted: 01 November 2025; Available online: Version 1.0: 16 January 2026; Version 2.0: 29 January 2026

Cite this article: Shareef SM, Santhosh Kumar ESS. Taxonomic notes on the status of *Syzygium caryophyllatum* var. *abrahamianum* (Myrtaceae). Plant Science Today. 2026; 13(1): 1-4. https://doi.org/10.14719/pst.11473

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. munnarense* 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

References

1. Parnell JAN, Craven L, Biffin B. Matters of scale: dealing with one of the largest genera of angiosperms. In: Hodkinson TR, Parnell JAN, editors. Reconstructing the tree of life: taxonomy and systematics of species rich taxa. Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis; 2007. p. 251–73.
2. Govaerts R, Sobral M, Ashton P, Barrie F, Holst BK, Landrum LR, et al. World checklist of Myrtaceae. Kew Publishing, Kew; 2008. p. 455.

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	***Syzygium caryophyllatum* (L.) Alston**	***Syzygium abrahamianum* (Shareef *et* E.S.S.Kumar) Shareef *et* E.S.S.Kumar**	***Syzygium makul* 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- oblanceolate	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.

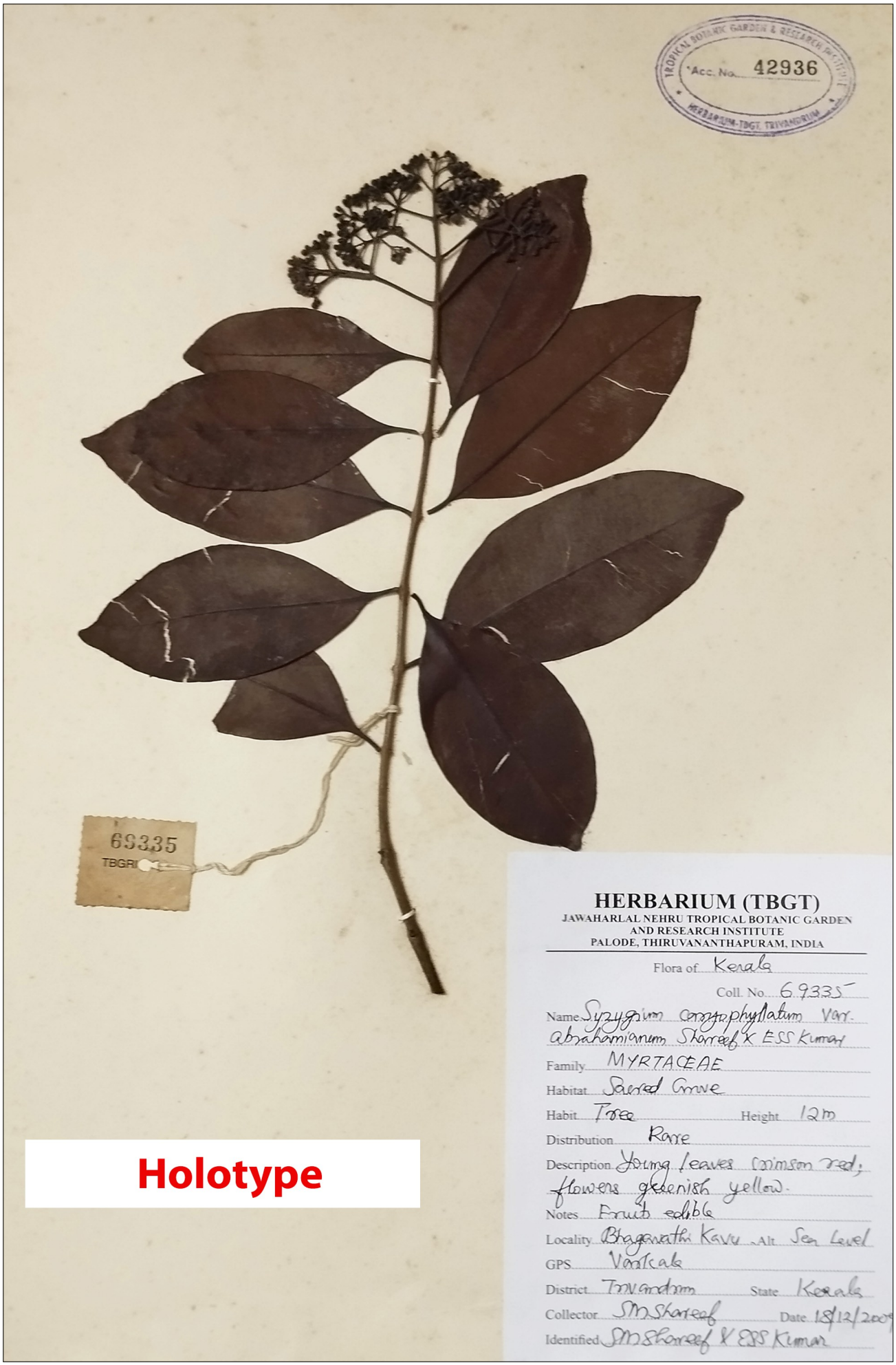

Fig. 2. Holotype of *Syzygium abrahamianum* (Shareef *et* E.S.S.Kumar) Shareef *et* E.S.S.Kumar, stat. & comb. nov.

3. Shareef SM, Kumar ESS. Census of *Syzygium* Gaertn. in India. Abrahamia. 2020;6(2):96-107.

4. Shareef SM, Roy PE, Krishnaraj, MV. *Syzygium munnarensis* sp. nov. (Myrtaceae): an overlooked endemic species from southern western Ghats of Kerala, India. Webbia. 2014;69(1):53-7. https://doi.org/10.1080/00837792.2014.899727

5. Gamble JS. Decades Kewenses: Plantarum Novarum in Herbario Horti Regii Conservatarum. Decas XCI. Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew). 1918(7):238-42. https://doi.org/10.2307/4118677

6. Shareef SM, Santhosh Kumar ES, Shaju T. A new species of *Syzygium* (Myrtaceae) from the southern western ghats of Kerala, India. Phytotaxa. 2012;71(1):28-33. https://doi.org/10.11646/phytotaxa.71.1.5

7. Sasidharan N, Augustine J. A new species of *Syzygium* Gaertn. (Myrtaceae) from southern western ghats, India. Rheedea. 1999;9 (2):155-158.

8. Sreekala AK, Pillai DS, Akhil R, Surendran A, Ramasubbu R. A new species of *Syzygium* (Myrtaceae) from the Agasthyamalai biosphere reserve, Kerala, India. Phytotaxa. 2019;403(1):66-70. https://doi.org/10.11646/phytotaxa.403.1.6

9. Shareef SM, Kumar ESS. *Syzygium caryophyllatum* var. *abrahamianum* (Myrtaceae): a new variety from Kerala, India, J Non -Timber Forest Prod. 2021;28(2):43-5. https://doi.org/10.54207/bsmps2000-2022-Z226M7

10. Plants of the World Online | Kew Science [Internet]. Richmond (UK): Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; [cited 2026 Jan 6]. Available from: https://powo.science.kew.org

Additional information

Peer review: Publisher thanks Sectional Editor and the other anonymous reviewers for their contribution to the peer review of this work.

Reprints & permissions information is available at https://horizonepublishing.com/journals/index.php/PST/open_access_policy

Publisher's Note: Horizon e-Publishing Group remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Indexing: Plant Science Today, published by Horizon e-Publishing Group, is covered by Scopus, Web of Science, BIOSIS Previews, Clarivate Analytics, NAAS, UGC Care, etc
See https://horizonepublishing.com/journals/index.php/PST/indexing_abstracting

Publisher information: Plant Science Today is published by HORIZON e-Publishing Group with support from Empirion Publishers Private Limited, Thiruvananthapuram, India.