



## Article

### A new species of *Syzygium* (Myrtaceae) from the southern Western Ghats of Kerala, India

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#### Abstract

A new species of *Syzygium*, *S. palodense* is described and illustrated from the southern Western Ghats, Kerala, India. It is similar to *S. densiflorum* and *S. rubicundum* but differs from both by the slightly winged branchlets, subopposite or alternate leaves with obliquely cuneate bases, thick and robust petioles, creamy-white flowers with campanulate calices and subglobose to obovoid fruits.

**Key words:** Endemic species, Old World, Palode

#### Introduction

The genus *Syzygium* Gaertner (1788: 166) (Myrtaceae) comprises more than 1200 species mainly distributed in the Old World tropics from Africa to the West Pacific with major concentration in Malesia (Parnell *et al.* 2007). In India, 54 species have so far reported (Govaerts *et al.* 2008) with the highest concentration in the Western Ghats with 45 species, among which 26 species are exclusively endemic to this region (Sheeba *et al.* 2003, Shareef *et al.* 2010). Recent taxonomic studies in the genus revealed ca. 40 taxa to occur in the Western Ghats region of Kerala (Nayar *et al.* 2008).

During a plant exploration trip to the southern Western Ghats of Kerala, the authors collected a few interesting specimens of a *Syzygium* from Palode forest areas in Thiruvananthapuram district. The species was found to be similar to *Syzygium densiflorum* Wall. ex Wight & Arnott (1834: 330) and *Syzygium rubicundum* Wight & Arnott (1834: 329) but differs in many aspects (Table 1). On critical analysis and perusal of type specimens of *Syzygium densiflorum* and *Syzygium rubicundum*, housed at Edinburgh Herbarium (E!) along with literature, it was found to be a species new to science. It is described and illustrated here.

#### Taxonomy

##### *Syzygium palodense* Shareef, E. S. S. Kumar & Shaju *sp. nov.* (Figs. 1 & 2)

*Syzygium rubicundum* et *Syzygium densiflorum* similis, ab ambabus differt in ramulis parum alatis, calyce campanulato, fructibus subglobosis, a priore floribus sessilibus albis, a posteriore petiolis brevioribus, calycis lobis deltoideis ad suborbicularibus, petalis calyptratis.

**Type:**—INDIA. Kerala: Thiruvananthapuram district, Palode, ±100 m, 16 April 2009 (with flowers), S. M. Shareef 70663 (holotype TBGT!; isotypes MH!, TBGT!)