



***Musa arunachalensis*: a new species of *Musa* section *Rhodochlamys* (Musaceae) from Arunachal Pradesh, northeastern India**

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Abstract

A wild banana species from West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh, northeastern India, belonging to section *Rhodochlamys*, is newly described as *Musa arunachalensis*. A detailed description, additional notes, illustration, phenology and photographs are provided.

Key words: Banana, *Musa aurantiaca*, *Musa laterita*, West Kameng

Introduction

The genus *Musa* Linnaeus (1753: 1043) belongs to the family Musaceae, which includes two additional genera, *Ensete* Bruce ex Horaninow (1862: 40) and *Musella* (Franchet) C.Y.Wu in Li (1978: 57). India is well known for its genetic diversity of members of Musaceae comprising seeded wild species to seedless cultivars with various levels of ploidy. In India, wild *Musa* species are largely distributed in the northeastern states, the Western and Eastern Ghats and on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. However, many regions in northeastern India, one of its centers of diversification, have not been explored systematically due to factors such as inaccessibility in dense evergreen forests, civil unrest etc., hence many taxa remain to be described. Recently many species have been reported from neighboring areas such as southern China, Burma and Vietnam, (e.g. *M. haekkinenii* Lý *et al.* 2012), whereas until recently only a few new taxa have been reported from India since Hooker (1892) first reported the genus from the subcontinent. Recently some new taxa were described from India for example *M. velutina* subsp. *markkuana* M. Sabu *et al.* (2013a: 50), *M. velutina* var. *variegata* A. Joe *et al.* (2013b) and *M. sabuana* K. Prasad *et al.* (2013: 151), but several undescribed species are probably present in the region, and several species known from neighbouring regions are likely to also occur within the political borders of India, for instance Sabu *et al.* (2013b) and Alfred *et al.* (2013a) reported the occurrence of *M. chunii* Häkkinen (2009: 87) and *M. laterita* Cheesman (1949: 265) respectively.

The genus *Musa* has been divided into different sections or subgenera, viz. *Physocaulis*, *Eumusa* and *Rhodochlamys* (Baker 1893). But the most widely currently accepted classification is that of Cheesman (1947), which includes four sections: *Australimusa* (2n=20), *Callimusa* (2n=20), *Musa* (*Eumusa*) (2n=22) and *Rhodochlamys* (2n=22) based on chromosome numbers and morphological characters (Shepherd 1988, 1999, Häkkinen 2005, 2006, 2007, Häkkinen & Wallace 2007, Häkkinen *et al.* 2007, Häkkinen & Väre 2008, Uma *et al.* 2006). A fifth section, *Ingentimusa*, was established by Argent (1976) based on *M. ingens* Simmonds (1960: 198), a species from Papua New Guinea that has a chromosome number of 2n=2x=14. Section *Rhodochlamys* (which includes the species treated here) is characterized by having erect or drooping inflorescences with fruit pointing towards the apex of the inflorescence. Most of the species typically also have relatively few fruits and are best known for their brightly coloured bracts, a feature that makes them popular as ornamental plants (Cheesman 1947, Simmonds 1962, Shepherd 1999, Häkkinen & Sharrock 2002).