



A new species of *Cinnamomum* (Lauraceae) from Nilgiris, southern Western Ghats, India

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Abstract

A new species of *Cinnamomum* (Lauraceae), *C. nilagiricum* is described and illustrated on the basis of distinct morphological characters known from Nilgiris, southern Western Ghats, India. It is allied to *C. dubium* but differs in the nature of trunk; shape, size and smell of leaves; 4-locellate anthers of whorl III stamens etc. A detailed description, distribution, phenology, illustration, colour plates and relevant notes are provided.

Keywords: *Cinnamomum nilagiricum*, buttressed, Camphor scent, Kerala, Tamil Nadu

Introduction

Cinnamomum Schaeffer (1760: 268) is one of the largest genera of the family Lauraceae, with about 350 species distributed from South East Asia to Australia and the new world (Rohwer 1993, Lorea-Hernández 1996, van der Werff 2009). The members of the family are trees or shrubs except *Cassytha* Linnaeus (1753: 35), a parasitic herb. The genus *Cinnamomum* is economically important as it contains essential oils like cinnamaldehyde (bark oil) and eugenol (leaf distillation) which are used in the pharmaceutical, perfumery, cosmetic and flavouring industries. In India, it is represented by 45 species, distributed from sea level to 2000 m across moist deciduous, semi-evergreen, evergreen to shola (montane wet temperate) forests, with 22 species occurring in Southern India (Kostermans 1983, Baruah & Nath 2005, Gangopadhyay 2008, Geethakumary & Pandurangan 2012).

During the taxonomic studies on the genus *Cinnamomum* in Peninsular India, an interesting specimen was collected from the shola forests of Nadugani, Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, in the southern part of the Western Ghats. After critical study of the literature and type specimens housed at various national and international herbaria (virtual images), it was concluded that the specimen represents an undescribed species with unique morphological characters compared to closely related species. Hence, it is here described as a new species along with a botanical illustration and photographs.

Taxonomy

Cinnamomum nilagiricum Geethakum., Pandur. & Deepu, *sp. nov.* (Fig. 1, Fig. 2 & Fig. 3)

Type:—INDIA. Tamil Nadu: Nilgiri Distr., Nadugani, 11°28'36.5"N & 76°25'13.1"E, ± 965 m, 07 November 2012, Geethakumary & A. G. Pandurangan 75229 (holotype TBGT!, isotypes CAL!, MH!, K!).

Trees, 8–12 m high; trunk buttressed at base; bark brown; branchlets slender, terete, covered with appressed hairs when young; terminal bud densely sericeous. *Leaves* opposite or subopposite, rarely alternate, ovate to elliptic to lanceolate, 7.5–12.5 x 2.6–4.3 cm, coriaceous, smooth, dark green above, light green below, glabrous, with strong smell of camphor; shortly attenuate at the base, acute to long acuminate to caudate at the apex, acumen to ca. 1.5 cm;