



A new species of *Rhododendron* (Ericaceae) from Shangri-La, NW Yunnan, China

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Rhododendron Linnaeus (1753: 392) exhibits great diversity and roughly 1,025 species are prized in the temperate parts of the world for their horticultural value (Chamberlain *et al.* 1996). There are approximately 680 species in six subgenera in China, of which more than 400 are endemic (Fang & Min 1995). However, the number of *Rhododendron* species known is increasing, with many new species being described after the publishing of *Flora of China* (Fang *et al.* 2005, Chen *et al.* 2012, Mao *et al.* 2013, Ma *et al.* 2015, Mao & Bhaumik 2015).

Xiaoxueshan Mountain lies in the Northeast of Shangri-La, NW Yunnan, China. In 1995, one of our co-authors Mr. Jens Nielsen visited Xiaoxueshan Mountain and noticed an unknown *Rhododendron* species growing on steep cliff close to the main road. This species is similar to *R. trichostomum* Franchet (1895: 396), but differs in leaf, inflorescence and fruit characters (Fig. 1). However, no detailed observation was carried out and no specimens were collected at that time. In June 2013, a field investigation was conducted, aiming to examine and fully describe this new species during its flowering period, and its status as a distinct new species was confirmed.

Taxonomic treatment

Rhododendron xiaoxueshanense R.L. Liao and Y.P. Ma, *sp. nov.* (Fig. 2)

Rhododendron xiaoxueshanense resembles *R. trichostomum*, but differs from the latter in having elliptic leaves in maturity, much longer pedicels (4.57±0.16 mm vs. 1.77±0.07 mm) but a shorter calyx (2.67±0.08 mm vs. 5.76±0.08 mm), a white corolla and a 2–6 flowered inflorescence (Table 1).

Type:—CHINA. Yunnan: Xiaoxueshan Mountain, Shangri-La county. ca. 3500 m, 99°45'09.44"E, 28°22'10.95"N, June 2013, *R.L. Liao & Y.P. Ma*, SL1306002 (holotype: KUN!; isotype: KUN!).

A small upright or rarely matted shrub, 0.20–1.05 m tall; branchlets short, twiggy, densely scaly with flaky scales, glabrous or sometimes minutely puberulous; leaf-bud scales deciduous or rarely persistent. Petiole densely scaly, glabrous or narrowly puberulent, 0.57–3.09 mm long. Leaf blade thickly leathery, oblong or rarely oblong-elliptic, tiny to small, 5.23–9.21 × 3.24–5.64 mm, apex obtuse or rounded, mucronate, base obtuse or tapering, margin slightly revolute; adaxial surface green, somewhat shining, scaly, glabrous; abaxial surface densely scaly, the scales pale brown, fawn or rust-coloured, overlapping, with closely or widely scattered dark brown scales, scales lacerate. Inflorescence terminal, umbellate, 2–6 flowered; flower-bud scales persistent; rhachis 8 mm long, scaly, minutely puberulent or glabrous; pedicel 2.79–6.56 mm long, moderately to densely scaly, glabrous. Calyx 5-lobed, 2.11–3.87 mm long, ciliate, outside densely to moderately scaly. Corolla 5-lobed, narrowly tubular, 0.66–1.08 × 1.05–1.44 cm, white or light pink, rarely lobes sparsely scaly, glabrous, outside the tube densely scaly, inside densely hairy. Stamens 5, 4.64–6.50 mm long, filaments with scurfy hairs at the base. Ovary ovoid, 2.02–4.06 mm long, 5-locular, densely scaly, glabrous; style straight, short, 0.95–1.94 mm long, no scaly or rarely scaly at the base, glabrous or sometimes puberulous at the base. Capsule ovoid or oblong, 2.25–5.29 × 1.86–3.81 mm, densely scaly, glabrous, calyx persistent. Flowering: May–June. Fruiting: September–October.

Distribution and ecology:—To date, *Rhododendron xiaoxueshanense* is known only from the type locality at Xiaoxueshan Mountain (99°45'09.44"E, 28°22'10.95"N), in Shangri-La county, NW Yunnan, China (Fig. 3). The plants have been found on rocks and cliff ledges at elevation of ca. 3500m (Fig. 1A).

Etymology:—The specific epithet refers to the site (Xiaoxueshan Mountain) where the new species was discovered and collected.