NEW RECORD

***Dioscorea cumingii* Prain & Burkill – a new distributional record for Tripura in North-east India**

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Abstract

The present paper deals with the new distributional record of *Dioscorea cumingii* for the North-east Indian state Tripura. A brief description and photographs provided to identify it easily in the field.

Key words: Dioscoreaceae, *Dioscorea cumingii*, New record, Tripura

INTRODUCTION

The genus *Dioscorea* L. (Dioscoreaceae) comprises of about 600 species distributed all over the world, especially in tropical and sub-tropical regions (Trimanto & Hapsari 2015). Out of these, about 91 species are reported from North-eastern part of India (Ummalyma *et al.* 2018), of which 30 species from Arunachal Pradesh (Saikia *et al.* 2011), 19 species from Assam (Goswami *et al.* 2013), 16 species from Meghalaya (Sheikh *et al.* 2009), 12 species from Sikkim (Pradhan *et al.* 2015;), 10 species from Tripura (Paul *et al.*, 2017) and 4 species from Manipur (Kumar *et al.* 2017). Most of the species are distributed in the tropical and subtropical regions of the world. The North East India forms part of two IUCN declared Biodiversity Hotspots [Himalaya and Indo-Burma] is particularly rich in tropical root and tuber crops (Goswami *et al.* 2013). Species of *Dioscorea* are in luxuriant growth in wild habitat in this region. During one ongoing study, mainly addressed to explore the ethnomedicinal uses of *Dioscorea* in North East India, we recorded a plant that is now identified as *Dioscorea cumingii* from West Tripura. Earlier, Deb (1983) recorded only 6 species and two varieties of *Dioscorea* in his *Flora of Tripura state*. Majumder *et al.* (2009) reported *D. hispida* Dennstedt from Tripura and Paul *et al.* (2017) mentioned the occurrence of 10 species of *Dioscorea* from Tripura. Now, with the addition of *Dioscorea cumingii*, the number of species of *Dioscorea* for state is increased to 11.

Taxonomic treatment

Dioscorea cumingii Prain & Burkill, J. As. Soc. Beng. new ser. 4: 449. 1908; Ann. Roy Bot. Gard. Calc. 14: 182.1936, pl. 73. R.Knuth, Pfl. R. 87: 148. 1924. *D. inaequitifolia* Elmer ex Prain & Burkill, J. As. Soc. Beng. N.S. 10: 24.1914; R. Knuth op. cit. 146; Prain & Burkill, Ann. Roy Bot. Gard. Calc. 14: 181. 1936. *D. polyphylla*, R. Knuth, Pfl. R. 87: 148. 1924; Prain & Burkill, Ann. Roy Bot. Gard. Calc. 14:184. 1936. *D. echinata* R. Knuth, Pfl. R. 87: 148.

Climbing herb with annual aerial shoot; root tuber fibrous with profuse roots. Stem twining to the left, prickly pubescent, yellowish-green. Leaves alternate, palmate-compound; petiole, 7–14 cm long, channelled above, pulvinus oblong; leaflets 5–7, 7–14 × 2–4.9 cm, entire, rounded-acute, with 4–5 mm long acumen, base gradually cuneate, hairy, green. Racemes axillary, 15–22 cm long, pendulous; female racemes 1–2 per axil, bracts small, subulate, tepal 6, pubescent, 2–2.5 mm, epigynous, ovary 3-winged, puberulent. Capsule 3-winged, oblong; seeds develop near tip of the chamber inside.

Exsiccatae: Tripura, Sekerkote, West Tripura, *Das et al.*, TUH-2739, Dated 12.11.2019

Flowering: August – September

Fruiting: October – January

Global Distribution: Native of Taiwan and Philippines

Indian Distribution: Assam, Tripura

Uses: Lower part of tuber used as vegetable by local tribal people.

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