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Ipomoea Muelleri Benth. (Convolvulaceae) – a new record for Asian Continent

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Abstract

Ipomea muelleri Benth (Convolvulaceae) is an endemic Australian plant species. It is reported here for the first time from the Southern Western Ghats of Coimbatore region of India in the Asian continent. A detailed description, illustration and relevant notes are provided for its collection and identification..

Keywords: Climber, Maruthamalai, Tamil Nadu, Western Ghats, India.

1. Introduction

The Convolvulaceae family, consisting of 58 genera and approximately 2,000 species (Staples and Yang, 1998), is cosmopolitan in distribution (Fang and Staples, 1995). *Ipomoea* L. comprises the largest genus of the Convolvulaceae family, represented by c. 650 species and mainly distributed in tropical and warm temperate regions of the world (Mabberly, 2008). In India, the genus is represented by c. 60 species (Santapau and Henry, 1973; Bhellum, 2012) and, in Tamil Nadu state, by c. 33 species (Henry *et al.*, 1987).

During the floristic studies on the climbers of the Southern Western Ghats, India, the authors collected an interesting invasive species from the Maruthamalai foot hills of Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu. On critical examination and perusal of literature (Johnson, 2011), it was identified as *Ipomoea muelleri* Benth. So far it is known in Australia only. The present collection of *Ipomoea muelleri* Benth, therefore, forms a new distributional record for the Asian continent, particularly in India.

2. Plant Description

***Ipomoea muelleri* Benth** Fl. Austral. 4: 423, 1868; Jessop, J.P. and Toelken, H.R., eds. (1986). Flora of South Australia, 4(4). 330. 1986; Jhonson in Kellerman. Flora of South Australia (ed. 5), pp.20, 2011.

Prostrate climbers, sparsely hirsute, with trailing or twining stems; leaves broadly ovate to triangular, 1.5-8 x 1.5-7 cm, base cordate, apex obtuse, emarginated; inflorescence cymose; peduncles longer than the petioles, bearing 1-3 flowers; bracts very small, pedicel thicker than the peduncle, 1-40 mm long. Sepals thick, outer sepals longer than the inner sepals, ovate to ovate-lanceolate, acuminate, mucronate at apex, 6-8 x 2-3 mm; corolla funnel-shaped, pale rose-pink with a slightly darker throat, glabrous, 1.5-2cm long; filaments unequal, adnate at the base; ovary 4-celled; stigma 2 lobed, globular. Capsule globular to ovoid-globular, depressed, 8-11 mm diam., splitting often tardily into 4 longitudinal valves. Seeds 4, villous, c. 2 mm long, (Figure 1 and 2).

Flowering & Fruiting: January-April

Habitat: Waste land and along roadside as a weed between 430-440 msl, Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, India.

Distribution: An invasive species occur rarely along the road side of the Maruthamalai foot Hills of the Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu, India, (Map 1).

Specimen examined: India: Tamil Nadu, Coimbatore District, Maruthamalai Road. 12 Feb-2013, Sarvalingam, Sivalingam & Rajendran, 006165 (BH).

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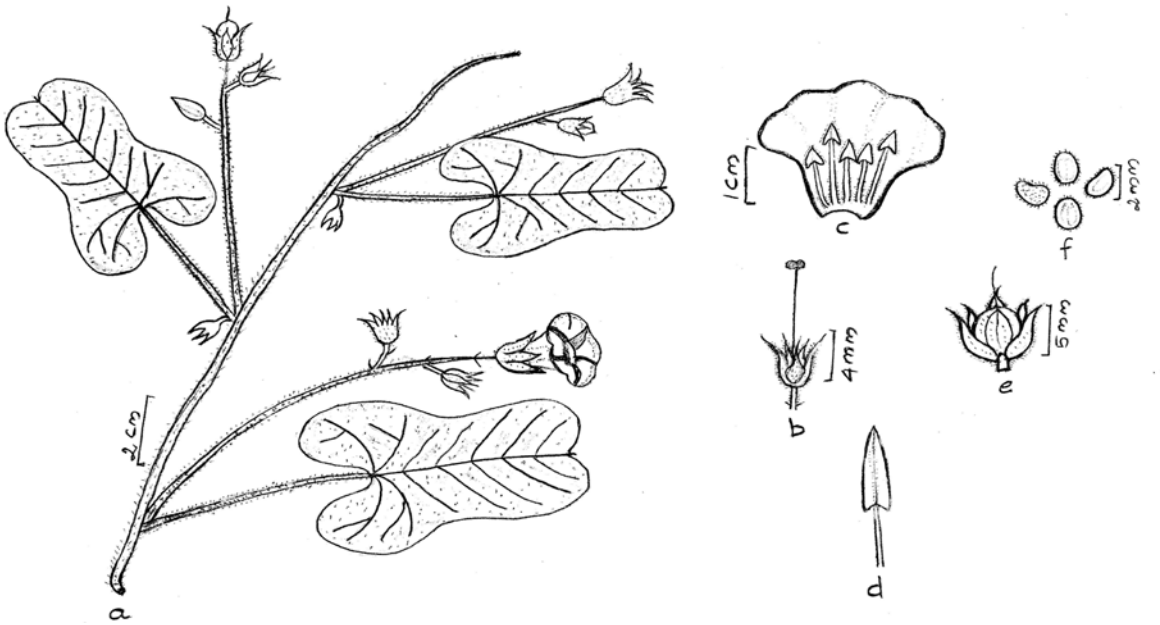
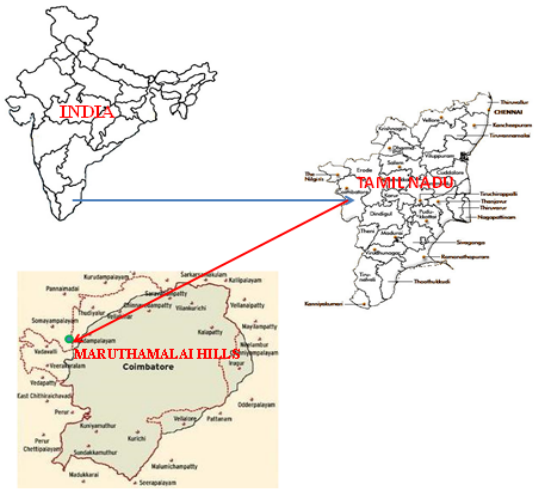


Figure 1. *Ipomoea muelleri* Benth., a. Habit; b. Sepals with pistil; c. Corolla with stamens; d. Anther; e. Fruit; f. Seed

Figure 2. Habit of *Ipomoea muelleri* Benth.



Map 1. Study area

3. Conclusions

Ipomoea muelleri Benth, growing in disturbed areas such as roadside, now intermingled with naturalized plants. The novel report of the species *Ipomoea muelleri* Benth revealed that though a large amount of environmental data are available about their role in biodiversity conservation, field surveys are still vital to enhance knowledge about the Asian biodiversity heritage, particularly in India.

Acknowledgements

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