

***Passiflora alata* Curtis (Passifloraceae), an edible fruit-yielding plant species – A new record for India**

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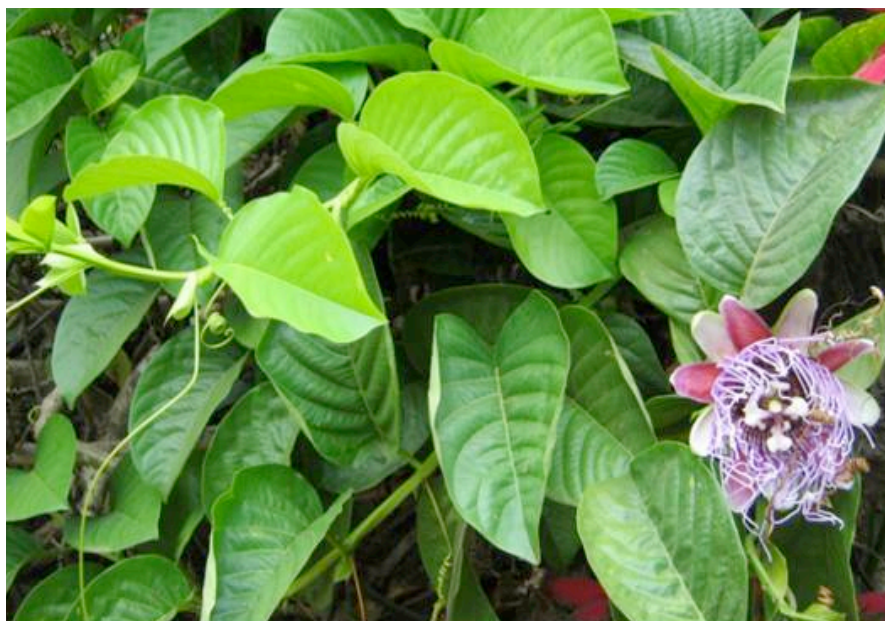
Abstract

Passiflora alata Curtis, a wild edible plant species has been collected from Gudalur taluk of Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu. It is reported here as a new record for India. A brief description and a photograph of the species are also provided.

Passiflora L. (Passifloraceae) comprises c. 430 species, and distributed chiefly in the tropical and subtropical regions of the world (Mabberley, 2008). Hooker (1879) had reported five species from erstwhile British India. Gamble (1919) reported four species from the then Presidency of Madras. Srinivasan (1983) reported 11 species from Tamil Nadu. Sasidharan (2004) had reported 8 species from Kerala. During the documentation of wild edible plants of Gudalur taluk, one of us (CU) had collected a specimen of a *Passiflora* species from the open forest of Nadugani (11°46'N; 76°41'E), Gudalur taluk, Nilgiris. After thorough scrutiny of existing literature, the specimen has been identified and confirmed as *Passiflora alata* Curtis (Passifloraceae) and the same is deposited in Bharathiar University Herbarium (BUH).

Scrutiny of literature pertaining to *Passiflora* L. revealed that *Passiflora alata* Curtis was not reported earlier from India. Hence, the present report forms a new record for India. It is native to the Amazon region of Brazil (Noriega *et al.*, 2011). A detailed description and photograph are provided to facilitate its easy identification.

***Passiflora alata* Curtis**, Bot. Mag. 2: t. 66. 1788. Vines, herbaceous, glabrous. Stems stout, quadrangular, winged at angles; stipules linear or linear-lanceolate; petioles 2 – 7 cm long, deeply channeled with one or usually two pairs of extra floral nectarines, glandular; glands sessile, orbicular. Leaves simple, alternate, broadly ovate-oblong, rounded at base, entire or



***Passiflora alata* Curtis**

minutely denticulate at margins, acuminate at apex, 8 – 15 × 7 – 10 cm, subcoriaceous, brownish-green below, paler above; nerves 7 – 10, the upper ones distant. Bracts 4, ovate, c. 1.5 cm long. Tendrils axillary. Inflorescence axillary. Flowers fragrant, bowl-shaped, bisexual, actinomorphic, 10 – 12 cm wide, violet. Sepals 5, oblong, 2.5 – 4 × 1.2 – 2 cm, green below, whitish green above, pink at base. Petals 5, oblong, 3 – 4.5 × 1 – 1.5 cm, deep violet below, pinkish red above. Corona many, 4-ranked, c. 6.5 cm long; filaments variegated white and purple. Fruits obovoid, 8 – 15 × 5 – 10 cm, yellow to bright orange.

Flowering & Fruiting: March – July.

Habitat: Growing at c. 900 m an altitude in the Western Ghats, in the Nadugani forest in Gudalur taluk, Nilgiris, it occurs along a stream bank.

Uses: Unripened fruits are given to livestock as a fodder. The local communities like Kurumbas and Paniyas were using the fruit for cooking; whereas the ripened fruits are edible. It can be also cultivated for its ornamental value.

Distribution: It is native to Brazil.

Specimens examined: INDIA, Tamil Nadu, Nilgiris, Gudalur taluk, Nadugani, C. Udhayavani & V.S. Ramachandran 1537, 1560 (BUH).

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