

BRIEF NOTE ON *Syzygium alternifolium* (Wight) Walp., AN ENDEMIC PLANT SPECIES FOUND IN SRI VENKATESWARA WILD LIFE SANCTUARY OF ANDHRA PRADESH, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ITS FRUITING

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Figure 1. Fruiting in *Syzygium alternifolium* (Wight) Walp.

The rare plant *Syzygium alternifolium* (Wight) Walp. (Myrtaceae) is endemic to the dry localities of Kurnool, Cuddapah and Chittoor Districts of Andhra Pradesh, Chengalpattu and North Arcot Districts in Tamil Nadu and Bangalore District in Karnataka (Gamble, 1957; Chitra, 1983; Saldanha, 1996). It is found in the upper plateaux, slopes and valley tops at an elevation ranging from 600 to 1000 m. in Sri Venkateshwara Wildlife Sanctuary of Chittoor and Cuddapah districts. Very isolated patches of stunted form is seen in the Red Sanders belt in adjoining forests also. Its distribution may be related to the geology and rock structure of the area along with elevation and aspect.

The area was surveyed and monitored for three years. The trees were marked in the field and fruits collected and studied.

Syzygium alternifolium occurs in places like Gundampenta area associated with other plant species like *Terminalia pallida* Brandis (Ver. *Tella Karaka*), *Shorea tumbuggaia* Roxb. (Ver. *Thamba jalari*), *Phoenix farinifera* Roxb, *Boswalia ovalifoliolata* Balakr & Henry (Ver. *Konda sambrani*), *Pterocarpus santalinus* (Red Sanders), *Anogeissus latifolia* (DC.) Wallich, Guill, *Terminalia bellirica* (Gaertner) Roxb., *T. chebula* Retz. etc., It is found in dry, slaty, rocky areas and is gregarious at about 600 m. elevation. It is locally known as *Mogi*, *Movi*, *Manchi moyadi*. The crown height varies from 5 to 7 m. and crown diameter varies from 4 to 5 m. The speciality of *S. alternifolium* is its fruiting. After the new leaf formation and flowering, fruiting follows. Fruiting season is from early to mid July. Fruits ripen very fast since the season is very short. Fruiting varies from profuse to scarce. Size of the fruit bunch varies from 15 to 22 cm. Number of fruits in each bunch varies from 20 to 40 (Fig.1).

There are various colour shades in white and violet mixtures and there are stripes with violet colour. Dark violet (nearly black) fruits are also seen.

The fruit varies from 1.5 to 2.5 cm. in diameter. Pulp of the fruit varies from very thin layer to a juicy fleshy pulp. Pulp also differs in taste and flavour. Big fruits have fleshy pulp. In general white fleshy fruit is very tasty with the flavour of Kumkum/rose and rather similar to the taste of *Madhuca latifolia* flowers. The violet fruit is also sweet, but not as good as white one. The sweetness of different fruits varies from very sweet to bitter in their ripened stage.

Nearly 30 plants were seen admixed in the area, varying in their fruit bunch size, fruit colour, size, taste, flavour etc. The nutritive value of the fruit may vary in the different forms. The fruits are relished by Wild Boar, Sloth Bear and herbivores like Sambar. The availability of such nutritive fruits in the pinch period is advantageous to the wildlife in the area.

Fruit is prone to nematode attack. Seeds are hard and the viability is for one week only. The seeds are used as medicine for diabetes.

In nature profuse germination is seen in Gundampenta area. Fire affects the species and protection against fire in the area is a good method for conserving the species.

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