

CASSIA

the newsletter

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Bulletin of Department of Post Graduate Studies and Research in Botany
SANATANA DHARMA COLLEGE, ALAPPUZHA





Impatiens jerdoniae

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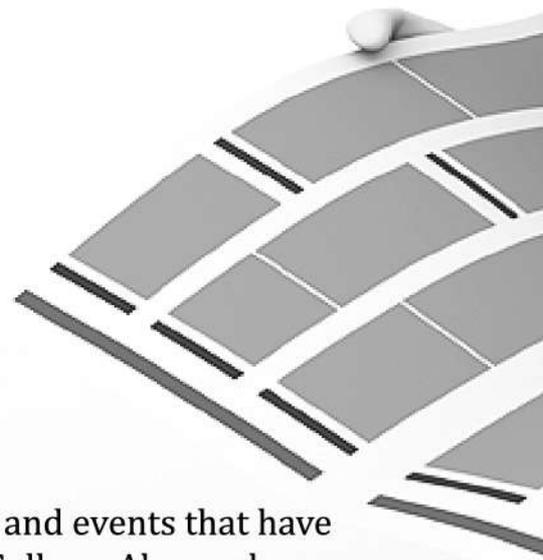
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From the Editor's Desk

Cassia is six years old. This is a chronicle of the vibrations and events that have occurred at the Botany Department of Sanatana Dharma College, Alappuzha over the last year. 2025 was a year filled with accomplishments. The fact that the college and the Botany Department are commemorating their 80th years at the same time is equally significant. The department takes great satisfaction in the students who have excelled. At the same time, outstanding research articles and discoveries are helping research fellows and faculty members improve their reputations. Numerous seminars, beyond the classroom activities and extension programmes were held here in spite of the hectic schedule. Allow me to proudly share with you the wonderful moments of the previous year. Please accept it.

Jose Mathew
Chief Editor

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Department of Post Graduate Studies and Research in Botany
SANATANA DHARMA COLLEGE, ALAPPUZHA

DBT Star College Scheme

Outreach Programme for School Students

Sacred Groves: Hotspot Diversity An Insight into the Conservation Strategies

14/11/2025
10.15 AM
BSc Botany Lab

In Association with
Samagra Shiksha Keralam
BRC Ambalappuzha

Department of Biotechnology Govt. of India

പൊതുവിദ്യാഭ്യാസവകുപ്പ് കേരള സർക്കാർ

DEPARTMENT OF POST GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN BOTANY
SANATANA DHARMA COLLEGE, ALAPPUZHA
NAAC Re-accredited with A+ grade

SEMINAR ON MODERN TRENDS IN PLANT SCIENCES #Series 1

Talk 2 | **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN BIOLOGY: INNOVATIONS AND APPLICATIONS**

DR. SURESH V.
Associate Professor in Botany
Govt. Victoria College, Palakkad

12-03-2025 10.00 AM Sarojini Damodaran Memorial Conference Hall

DBT STAR College Programme

PROGRAMMES

SANATANA DHARMA COLLEGE ALAPPUZHA

SCIENCE CLUB organizes

SCIENTIA

- Science exhibition -
In collaboration with the departments of Botany, Chemistry, Mathematics, Microbiology, Physics, and Zoology.

2025 FEBRUARY 25
celebrating

NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY 2025
'Building Public Trust in Science'

Coordinator: Dr. Sreeja Sreedharan R. Asst. Prof., Dept. of Physics 9495977880

Department Level Coordinators:
Dr. Manjumar, K. A., Asst. Prof., Dept. of Chemistry
Dr. Beethina, T. S., Asst. Prof., Dept. of Botany
Dr. Akhil, S. V., Asst. Prof., Dept. of Zoology
Ms. Arathi Lakshmanan & Ms. Tiya Mathai, Asst. Profs., Dept. of Microbiology
Ms. Ananthakalmani, Asst. Prof., Dept. of Mathematics

DEPARTMENT OF POST GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN BOTANY
SANATANA DHARMA COLLEGE, ALAPPUZHA
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SEMINAR & WORKSHOP ON PLANT WORLD #Series 2

Talk 2 | **WETLANDS FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

DR. SOJAN JOSE
Assistant Professor in Botany
Govt. Victoria College, Palakkad

12-03-2025 11.30 AM Sarojini Damodaran Memorial Conference Hall

DBT STAR College Programme

കേരള സംസ്ഥാന ജൈവവൈവിധ്യ ബോർഡ്

സസ്യശാസ്ത്രവിഭാഗം സനാതന ധർമ്മ കോളേജ്, ആലപ്പുഴ
Reaccredited by NAAC with A+ in 4th cycle

ജൂൺ-5 ലോക പരിസ്ഥിതി ദിനാചരണം 2025

#Ending Plastic Pollution

സാന്നിധ്യം: പ്രൊഫ. (ഡോ.) വി.ആർ. പ്രഭാകരൻ നായർ (പ്രിൻസിപ്പാൾ-ഇൻ-ചാർജ്ജ്), ശ്രീ. എം.ആർ. ദ്രേം (പബ്ലിക് റീലേഷൻ സ്റ്റാൻഡിംഗ് കമ്മിറ്റി ചെയർപേഴ്സൺ), ഡോ. വി.എൻ. സഞ്ജയ് (കൺവീനർ & വകുപ്പുചെയർമാൻ, സസ്യശാസ്ത്രവിഭാഗം)

വിഷയവതരണം: അശോകൻ മാഷ് പേറ്റൺ ഇന്റർനാഷണൽ ക്ലിനിക്കൽ അസോസിയേറ്റേഴ്സ് ആലപ്പുഴ ചാപ്റ്റർ

സമ്മേളനം: വ്യക്തതയിൽ പരിസ്ഥിതിദിന പ്രഘോഷണം

വേദി: ശ്രീ. കെ. പാർത്ഥസാരഥി അയ്യപ്പൻ കോർഡിനേറ്റർ ജൂബിലി ഓഡിറ്റോറിയം സനാതന ധർമ്മ കോളേജ് തിരുത്തി & സഭയും 05.06.2025 രാവിലെ 10.30 മുതൽ

സഹകരണത്തോടെ: ഇക്കോക്ലബ്ബ് | ഭൂമിശ്രേണി | സായോദ്ധേയവേഴ്സിറ്റി ക്ലബ്ബ് | സഹായകസമിതി

ജൈവവൈവിധ്യ പരിപാലനസമിതി ആലപ്പുഴ മുൻസിപ്പാലിറ്റി

ഡോ. പി.കെ. ബിന്ദു | ഡോ. എസ്. ശ്രീരഞ്ജിനി | ഡോ. ജോസ് മാത്യു (സെക്രട്ടറി)

FLORA FIESTA

An Exhibition Showcasing Economic Important Plants & Their Uses

Date: 21 OCTOBER 2025

Venue: ROOM NO. 34 A, DEPARTMENT OF BOTANY, SANATANA DHARMA COLLEGE, ALAPPUZHA

DEPARTMENT OF POST GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN BOTANY
SANATANA DHARMA COLLEGE, ALAPPUZHA

HANDS ON TRAINING ON VEGETATIVE PROPAGATION METHODS

Funded by DBT Star College Scheme

Mr. ARUN M GARDNER, Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau, Thiruvananthapuram

2/12/2025 10.00 AM Golden Jubilee Hall

"We're delighted to have you join us"

Dept. of Post Graduate Studies & Research in Botany
Sanatana Dharma College, Alappuzha

POSTER PRESENTATION COMPETITION

02 PM: 23 Jan., 2025
Dept. of Botany

organized by Dept. of Botany associated with DBT STAR COLLEGE PROGRAMME (A student centric activity)

All UG Students of SD College Can Participate

Poster Size: A3/above
Paper: Art/chart
Colour: Nat./syn.

Theme: Nature Conservation

Cash Prize (INR)
I: 1500; II: 1000

For more details Call 9744702847



Images of the Programmes : A-B. Seminar on Modern Trends in Plant Sciences. C-D. Seminar on Wetlands for Sustainable Future. E-G. World Environment Day Celebrations (E. Tree planting. F. Environment Pledge. G. Environment Day Message by Ashokan Mash).



Images of the programmes : A-B. Hands on Training on Vegetative Propagation Methods, C-D. Outreach Programme for School Students, E-H. Farewell Programmes for Our Lab Staffs (Mr. Rajeev & Mr.Vasudevan)



Received on 05 April 2025; received in revised form, 23 April 2025; accepted, 02 May 2025; published 01 September 2025

EXPLORING THE ANTIOXIDANT POTENTIAL OF FLAVANONES IN STROBILANTHES HAMILTONIANA (STEUDELL) BOSSER & HEINE: A COMBINED QUANTUM MECHANICAL, MOLECULAR DOCKING, AND BIOCHEMICAL ASSAY APPROACH

S. Lekshmi¹, P. K. Bindu², V. S. Sivapriya², Anju Murali¹, Aiswarya Jeevan², A. R. Vignesh³ and K. P. Safna Hussan^{1,4}

Department of Physics¹, Department of Botany², Sanatana Dharma College, Alapuzha - 688003, Kerala, India. Ayurgreen Scientifica Research Institute³, Ayurgreen Campus, Kavilipadi, Kaladi, Malappuram - 679582, Kerala, India. Micro/Nano Technology Center⁴, Tokai University, Hiratsuka-shi, Kanagawa - 2591292, Japan.

Keywords: Strobilanthes hamiltoniana, Antioxidant activity, Anti-inflammatory activity, Molecular docking, Density functional theory. Correspondence to Author: K. P. Safna Hussan, CEO & Chief Scientific Officer, Ayurgreen Scientifica Research Institute, Ayurgreen Campus, Kavilipadi, Kaladi, Malappuram - 679582, Kerala, India. E-mail: safnahussan2@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: Strobilanthes hamiltoniana (Paikuri), a perennial herb of the Acanthaceae family, has traditional use in treating ulcers, diabetes, arthritis, and wounds. S. hamiltoniana leaves were extracted using ethanol, chloroform, and water, and screened for phytochemicals using standard protocols. LC-MS analysis was used to identify flavonoids. Antioxidant activity was evaluated via DPPH, FRAP, and FRAP assays, while anti-inflammatory activity was assessed using the NO scavenging assay. Additionally, DFT (B3LYP/6-311G(d,p)) calculations and molecular docking were performed to investigate interactions with antioxidant-related proteins: monoamine oxidase-B, catalase, cytochrome P450, and NFE2L-related factor 2. Based on the DPPH assay, aqueous and chloroform extracts showed 25.74% and 45.04% inhibition, while ethanol and methanol extracts exhibited higher inhibition at 89.10% and 86%. FRAP showed from 25.5% to 86.4%, with ethanol extract showing the highest activity (86.4%) at 300 µg/ml and an IC50 of 25.54 µg/ml. All extracts were effective in the FRAP assay, with ethanol showing the highest activity (79.41%, IC50 = 28.24 µg/ml). In the NO scavenging assay, ethanol again showed the strongest activity (80.41%, IC50 = 26.26 µg/ml). Molecular docking revealed catechin had the strongest affinity for Monoamine Oxidase (-9.869), and also bound well to Cytochrome P450 (-6.399) and Catalase (-6.691). Epigallocatechin also showed strong binding to Monoamine Oxidase (-9.567) and Cytochrome P450 (-8.650). The plant extracts, especially the ethanolic one, showed strong antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activities with favorable IC50 values. These findings highlight their potential as therapeutic agents against arthritis, where oxidative stress and inflammation are key factors.

INTRODUCTION: Strobilanthes hamiltoniana is a perennial shrub belonging to the Acanthaceae family, commonly referred to by names such as India blue bell, Chinese rain bell, Assam indigo, and pink strobilanthus.

Native to the subtropical regions of the Himalayas and parts of Southeast Asia, this plant has become widely naturalized across various global regions.

Its distinct characteristics, dark green leaves with rib-like veins and delicate purplish bell-shaped flowers make it easily recognizable. Historically, S. hamiltoniana has played a significant role in traditional medicine, attributed to its diverse array of bioactive compounds, including flavonoids, terpenoids, and phenolic compounds. The traditional medicinal applications of S. hamiltoniana focus on stress relief, anti-



Research Articles Published

13 Research Articles were published by the faculty members of the department

Current Botany 2015, 16: 210-219 doi:10.35084/cb.2015.v16.9558 https://jupdatpublishing.com/journal/index.php/cb



Phytochemical profiling, antibacterial, antifungal and antioxidant evaluation of Acrotrema arnotianum Wight - An ethnomedicinal plant

Akhil Ashokan, S. Sreeranjini*

Department of Post Graduate Studies and Research in Botany, Sanatana Dharma College (affiliated to the University of Kerala), Alappuzha 688003, Kerala, India

ABSTRACT

Acrotrema arnotianum Wight (Dilleniaceae) is a perennial herb that grows in damp, shaded areas. It is native to the Western Ghats of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, where it is used in traditional medicine by tribal people, including the Malavedans of Kerala, to treat baldness and hair loss. Histological localisation of stem, petiole and midrib was performed to determine the localisation of flavonoids, phenols, alkaloids and tannins. The results indicated the presence of flavonoids and phenols. GC-MS analysis of ethanolic extract revealed the presence of metabolites such as Lactic acid, ethyl acetate, camphor, tetrahydroic acid, Hexadecanoic acid, 3,7,11,15-tetramethyl-2-hexadecanoic-3-ol, squalene and alpha-Tocopherol. GC-MS analysis of ethyl acetate extract showed the presence of alpha-Tocopherol-D-Mannoside, 3,7,11,15-Tetramethyl-2-hexadecanoic-3-ol, squalene, diphenyl, phytol, eugenol and beta-sitosterol. The antibacterial study against Staphylococcus aureus showed that ethyl acetate extract is more potent in inhibiting the growth (17.0±0.18) while the antifungal study against Candida albicans showed that ethyl acetate has a significant effect in inhibiting the growth (16.0±0.23), in dosage dependent manner. The antioxidant study revealed that ethanol extract has a higher IC50, value of 36.02±0.27. This study indicates that Acrotrema arnotianum is a source of pharmaceutically active secondary metabolite compounds.

KEYWORDS: Acrotrema arnotianum, Flavonoids, GC-MS, Antibacterial, Antifungal, Phenols, Squalene, Eugenol, Camphor

Jour Pl Sci Res 41 (1) 1-7 2025

Antibacterial and Antibiobiofilm Activity of Methanolic Leaf Extract of Sphenodesme involucrata var. paniculata (C.B.Clarke) Munir against Streptococcus pyogenes

Athira S¹ and Sreeranjini S²

*Corresponding author email: athiraharis31@gmail.com

Streptococcus pyogenes is a Gram positive bacterium that causes infectious diseases like rheumatic fever, Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) etc. which can be prevented only by long term penicillin usage. Emergence of antibiotic resistant bacteria and side effects of long term usage of antibiotics are posing a serious threat to mankind. Plant based alternatives are considered as an efficient remedy for this. Current study was aimed to evaluate the antibacterial and anti-biofilm activity of the leaf methanolic extract of Sphenodesme involucrata var. paniculata (C.B.Clarke) Munir, an ethno medicinal plant against Streptococcus pyogenes. The antibacterial activity was analysed by agar well diffusion assay and anti-biofilm activity by in vitro anti-biofilm assay. The extract showed a better inhibition zone at 100 µg, and showed a potent anti-biofilm activity in a dose dependent manner with an inhibition percentage of 97.1 at 1000 µg concentration. The results suggest that the usage of this plant can be considered as a defence against S. pyogenes with further in vivo analysis.

Keywords: Sphenodesme involucrata var. paniculata (C.B.Clarke) Munir, Streptococcus pyogenes, Antibacterial, Anti-biofilm.

WVivo Culture & Developmental Biology Plant ISSN: 0975-1001/10011827-0510944

PLANT TISSUE CULTURE

Maximizing andrographolide production through optimized in vitro micropropagation of colchicoid Andrographis paniculata (Burm.) Nees

Lekshmi Priya¹, P. R. Unnikrishna Pillai²

Received: 8 February 2021 / Accepted: 10 September 2021 / Editor: Deepika Chahar / © The Society for In Vitro Biology 2025

Abstract: Andrographis paniculata (Burm.) Nees, a medicinal plant renowned for its bioactive compound andrographolide, holds significant pharmacological importance. Colchicoid, a process involving chromosome set duplication, presents an innovative approach to enhancing secondary metabolite production. This study reports the successful in vitro micropropagation of nodal explants from diploid and colchicoid A. paniculata under identical culture conditions. Phloly levels were confirmed via flow cytometry. Optimal response was achieved on half-strength Murashige and Skoog (MS) medium supplemented with 4.44 µM BAP, while root induction was enhanced using half-strength MS medium containing 2.5 µM BA. The subsequent 100.0 mg l⁻¹ activated charcoal significantly improved both elongation and root development. Notably, HPLC analysis revealed a 150-fold increase in andrographolide content in colchicoid plants compared to their diploid counterparts. This is the first study to document the in vitro regeneration of colchicoid A. paniculata and quantify andrographolide from in vitro-derived colchicoid plants. These findings address a critical gap in the literature and demonstrate the immense potential of colchicoid as a strategy for enhancing secondary metabolite production in medicinal plants. This pioneering approach offers new avenues for sustainable biotechnological applications in plant-based pharmaceuticals.

GEN BULLETIN ISSN: 0010-1001/2225-025-1030-2

Untangling tightly bound knots: a reappraisal of Campbellia (Orbancheaceae), with the rediscovery of C. aurantiaca after more than 175 years

P. M. Salim¹, Jose Mathew², P. T. Anuraj^{3,4}, V. N. Sanja⁵ & B. Gopalwala⁶

Summary: The long-standing enigma on the taxonomic status of Campbellia Wight & C. aurantiaca Wight has been resolved, and this particular species is rediscovered after more than 175 years from the Western Ghats, India.

Key Words: Chloasoma Campbellia complex, endemic, holoparasitic, Robert Wight, Western Ghats

Introduction

The study of holoparasites belonging to the family Orbancheaceae Vahl is a hike through a rocky trail, facing the struggle of conducting field research due to their complex and prostrate life forms, restricted distribution, high susceptibility to climate change, and specific ecological requirements, the near impossibility of accessing their fine characteristics from herbarium specimens, and the limitation of achieving successful molecular analyses for elucidating their phylogenetic relationships. Despite these challenges, taxonomists with a keen interest in this group across the globe have made and continue to make efforts to study and resolve its complexities, leading to significant progress.

This longstanding point of ambiguity that was resolved by Anantharam (2019) work. Our diligent efforts were most crucial in tracing any further records or specimens of this species beyond the type collection. This study, therefore, signifies one of the greatest old-world rediscovery of C. aurantiaca after more than 175 years.

Taxonomic Treatment

Taxonomic status of Campbellia Wight (1819) established the genus Campbellia to accommodate two species — C. aurantiaca Wight and

Indigenous Knowledge and Sacred Conservation: Ethnobotanical Insights from Emakulam District, Kerala

34 plant species belonging to 26 different families were recorded from Kuttanapuzha panchayat, Emakulam, Kerala. By capturing indigenous ecological knowledge, this research promotes the sustainable use of biological resources and supports more effective biodiversity conservation strategies.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EVALUATION OF ANTIGONISTIC ACTIVITY OF CHROMOBACTERIUM VIOLACEUM ISOLATED FROM THE PADDY FIELDS OF EATHALA, KERALA

L. Ithina K¹ and Dilip K²

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Biology and Biotechnology, KVAFSU College of Arts and Science, Chertala - 688572

2. Professor, Department of Post Graduate Studies and Research in Botany, Sanatana Dharma College, Alappuzha - 688003, Kerala, India

Abstract: The soil surrounding the plant root, which has direct impact on plants by different microorganisms is known as the rhizosphere. This study focused on the isolation, identification, and screening of different rhizobacterial bacteria in the rice-growing regions of Eathala, Kerala. These rhizobacteria were first identified on King's Agar and Nutrient Agar media. From the screening, the rhizobacteria were identified by their properties and their antagonistic properties were screened by soil culture method. The bacteria were determined to be Chromobacterium violaceum by their characteristic features. Chromobacterium violaceum was typically considered as a consistent inhabitant of the rhizosphere region of grassy field. In this study, it has been found in the rhizosphere soil of paddy. It was further established that the chromobacterium isolate possesses the antagonistic capacity to generate non-volatile chemicals.

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Enhanced siderophore production by Pseudomonas aeruginosa and its antagonism against fungal threats in sesame fields

Karthika P. C. Sreedhar

Department of Post Graduate Studies and Research in Botany, Sanatana Dharma College, Alappuzha 688003, Kerala, India

Abstract: We succeeded in identifying and isolating three strains of Pseudomonas aeruginosa, namely P1A1, N303 and K302, from the soil of sesame (Sesamum indicum L.) cultivation fields in Oorambathur, Alappuzha district, Kerala, India. Further, in vitro and in vivo studies revealed that the maximum siderophore yield is observed in strain K302 (170 µg/ml), followed by P1A1 (54 µg/ml) and N303 (27 µg/ml). All three strains showed considerable antagonism against significant fungal pathogens such as Aspergillus flavus, Fusarium moniliforme, F. oxysporum and Rhizoctonia solani. Among these strains, K302 proved to be the most effective. Therefore, we focused on this strain for further study to demonstrate the influence of various physico-chemical parameters on siderophore production. This study identified several parameters that enhance

Revisiting the taxonomy of the genus Diplocentrum (Orchidaceae) with the proposal for reinstatement of D. longifolium

Revisiting the taxonomy of the genus Diplocentrum (Orchidaceae) with the proposal for reinstatement of D. longifolium

Revisiting the taxonomy of the genus Diplocentrum (Orchidaceae) with the proposal for reinstatement of D. longifolium

Discorsia haludranensis (Discorsaceae), a new species from south Western Ghats, India

Priya Mahalingam Sivaraj, Jayashree S, Suresh Mahalingam Mahalingam

Abstract: Discorsia haludranensis, a new species from the south Western Ghats, India, is described. It is characterized by its unique morphological features and is distinguished from other species in the genus by its distinct leaf shape and flower characteristics.

Hepiglossum chambakhorani (Anillaceae) revisited: notes on geographic area extension, leaf characters, and conservation status

Ancu Medves¹ & Sabin M. Pechar²

Abstract: Hepiglossum chambakhorani, a species from the Anillaceae family, is revisited. This study provides detailed notes on its geographic distribution, leaf characteristics, and the current conservation status of the species.

Arctostaphylos rugosula (Ericaceae, Section: Stranvaesia) a new species from south Western Ghats, India

POD MATHURAN & KRISHNAMOORTHY KALYAN

Abstract: Arctostaphylos rugosula, a new species from the Ericaceae family, is described. It is characterized by its unique morphological features and is distinguished from other species in the genus by its distinct leaf shape and flower characteristics.

Chlorophyllum rugosum (Agaricaceae) a new species from southern Western Ghats, India

SRINIVASARAO S. SURESHKUMAR, MANGALAKRISHNAN KRISHNAN SIVASUBRAMANIAM, SUDHAKAR S. SIVASUBRAMANIAM & SUDHAKAR S. SIVASUBRAMANIAM

Abstract: Chlorophyllum rugosum, a new species from the Agaricaceae family, is described. It is characterized by its unique morphological features and is distinguished from other species in the genus by its distinct leaf shape and flower characteristics.



RESEARCHER'S CORNER

PUBLICATIONS

7 Sci. Articles & 1 Book Chapter

plant_science_today

Phytochemical profiling, antibacterial, antifungal and antioxidant evaluation of *Acrotrema arnotianum* Wight - An ethnomedicinal plant

Enhanced siderophore production by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and its antagonism against fungal threats in sesame fields

Phytochemical profiling, antibacterial, antifungal and antioxidant evaluation of *Acrotrema arnotianum* Wight - An ethnomedicinal plant

Abstract: *Acrotrema arnotianum* Wight, a member of the Simarubaceae family, is a traditional medicinal plant used in the Indian subcontinent. This study aimed to evaluate its phytochemical profile, antibacterial, antifungal, and antioxidant activities. The plant was extracted using various solvents, and the extracts were analyzed for their phytochemical constituents. The antibacterial and antifungal activities were tested against various strains of bacteria and fungi, respectively. The antioxidant activity was evaluated using various assays. The results showed that the plant contains a wide range of phytochemicals, including alkaloids, flavonoids, and terpenoids. The extracts exhibited significant antibacterial and antifungal activities, and also showed strong antioxidant properties. These findings suggest that *Acrotrema arnotianum* Wight is a promising natural source of antimicrobial and antioxidant compounds.

Unraveling tightly bound knots: a reappraisal of Campbellia (Orbanbanchaceae), with the rediscovers of *C. aurantifolia* after more than 175 years

Abstract: The genus *Campbellia* (Orbanbanchaceae) is a monotypic genus of the order Sauriales, characterized by its unique morphology and ecological niche. This study aims to reappraise the genus based on recent molecular data and morphological characteristics. The type species, *Campbellia aurantifolia*, was rediscovered after being considered extinct for over 175 years. The study also identifies new species within the genus and discusses their evolutionary relationships and ecological significance. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the genus and its members, contributing to the knowledge of the Sauriales order.

The Tree of Life: Biodiversity, Systematics and Ecology

Abstract: This book explores the intricate connections between biodiversity, systematics, and ecology. It discusses the importance of understanding the tree of life in the context of conservation and the impact of human activities on biodiversity. The book provides a comprehensive overview of the field and is a valuable resource for students and researchers alike.

Indigenous Knowledge and Sacred Conservation: Ethnobotanical Insights from Ernakulam District, Kerala

Abstract: This study explores the rich ethnobotanical knowledge of the Ernakulam district in Kerala, India. It focuses on the traditional uses of various plant species and the cultural significance of these plants in the local community. The study highlights the importance of preserving this knowledge for future generations and the role of indigenous knowledge in sustainable resource management. The research also identifies several plant species that are under threat and need to be conserved.

Physico Chemical, Nutraaceutical, Morphological and Anatomical Features of Dragon Fruit: A Review

Abstract: Dragon fruit, also known as pitaya, is a popular tropical fruit known for its unique appearance and health benefits. This review article discusses the physico-chemical, nutraceutical, morphological, and anatomical features of dragon fruit. It covers the fruit's growth cycle, nutrient composition, and its potential health benefits. The article also discusses the fruit's unique morphology and the structure of its scales and leaves. The review provides a comprehensive overview of the fruit and its various applications.

Antibacterial and Antifungal Activity of Methanolic Leaf Extract of *Sporobolus indicus* var. *pusillus* (C.B. Clarke) Mani against *Stenotrophomonas proteogenes* ATCC 35061

Abstract: *Sporobolus indicus* var. *pusillus* is a traditional medicinal plant used in the Indian subcontinent. This study aims to evaluate the antibacterial and antifungal activity of its methanolic leaf extract against *Stenotrophomonas proteogenes*. The extract was tested against various strains of the bacterium and fungus. The results showed that the extract exhibits significant antibacterial and antifungal activity, suggesting its potential as a natural source of antimicrobial compounds. The study also discusses the phytochemical profile of the plant and its traditional uses.

STRATEGIES FOR THE SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION OF CAMPTOTECIN AND TRENDS ON ITS CONSERVATION

Abstract: Camptotecin is a natural product with significant anticancer activity. This article discusses the sustainable production of camptotecin and the challenges associated with its conservation. It explores various strategies for the sustainable production of the compound, including the use of synthetic biology and biotechnology. The article also discusses the current trends in the market for camptotecin and the need for effective conservation strategies to ensure the long-term availability of the compound.

34 plant species belonging to 28 different families were recorded from Kuttanapuzha panchayat, Ernakulam, Kerala. By capturing traditional ecological knowledge, this research promotes the sustainable use of biological resources and supports more effective biodiversity conservation strategies.

Abstract: This study documents the plant diversity of Kuttanapuzha panchayat in Ernakulam district, Kerala. A total of 34 plant species from 28 different families were recorded. The study highlights the importance of capturing traditional ecological knowledge for biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource management. The research also identifies several plant species that are under threat and need to be conserved.

Physico Chemical, Nutraaceutical, Morphological and Anatomical Features of Dragon Fruit: A Review

Abstract: Dragon fruit, also known as pitaya, is a popular tropical fruit known for its unique appearance and health benefits. This review article discusses the physico-chemical, nutraceutical, morphological, and anatomical features of dragon fruit. It covers the fruit's growth cycle, nutrient composition, and its potential health benefits. The article also discusses the fruit's unique morphology and the structure of its scales and leaves. The review provides a comprehensive overview of the fruit and its various applications.

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Abstract: *Sporobolus indicus* var. *pusillus* is a traditional medicinal plant used in the Indian subcontinent. This study aims to evaluate the antibacterial and antifungal activity of its methanolic leaf extract against *Stenotrophomonas proteogenes*. The extract was tested against various strains of the bacterium and fungus. The results showed that the extract exhibits significant antibacterial and antifungal activity, suggesting its potential as a natural source of antimicrobial compounds. The study also discusses the phytochemical profile of the plant and its traditional uses.

SOIL REVIVAL ECO-FRIENDLY FARMING FOR AGRICULTURE SUSTAINABILITY

Abstract: This article discusses the importance of soil revival and eco-friendly farming practices for sustainable agriculture. It explores various techniques for soil revival, including the use of organic fertilizers and cover crops. The article also discusses the benefits of eco-friendly farming practices, such as improved soil health and increased crop yields. The research provides a comprehensive overview of the field and is a valuable resource for students and researchers alike.

Jisa Ann Sabu (2025) has delivered an oral presentation on the topic 'Evaluation of in vitro antibacterial and anti-inflammatory activity of *Hyophila involuta*'; National Seminar on Plant systematics: Phylogenetic and biodiversity aspects on 13th and 14th February, organized by Post graduate and Research Department of Botany Government College of Botany and Women, Thiruvananthapuram

Lakshmiraj(2025) has presented a paper titled "Indigenous knowledge system: A pathway to Ethnobotanical Biodiversity Conservation in Ernakulam district" in International Conference on Wetland Conservation: Protecting Biodiversity on 16th and 17th December 2025, organised by Department of Botany & Zoology, Devasam Board Pampa College, Parumala, Pathanamthitta

Saranya.J. (2025) has presented a research paper titled 'A Preliminary Analysis on the role of *Lagenandra ovata* (L.) Thwaites in water purification in its natural habitat' at a Two day International Conference on Wetland Conservation: Protecting Biodiversity held on 16 & 17 of December 2025 at D. B. Pamba College Parumala, Kerala, India.

Blessy Sebastian (2025) has delivered an oral presentation on "Application of magnetic stirrer-assisted extraction techniques and RSM for maximising pigment extraction from *Murraya koenigii* leaves" at two day International Conference on Wetland Conservation : Protecting Biodiversity held on 16th and 17th of December 2025 organized by Departments of Botany and Zoology, D. B. Pampa College, Parumala, Kerala, India.

Arun M Nair (2025) has delivered an oral presentation on "Biodiversity and People: An Ethnobotanical View of Biodiversity of Kottayam District" at two day International Conference on wetland conservation : protecting biodiversity held on 16th and 17th of December 2025 organized by Departments of Botany and Zoology, D. B. Pampa College Parumala, Kerala, India in association with Kerala Biodiversity Board

Anandu O (2025) has delivered an oral Presentation on the topic Nutraaceutical Profiling of Aril of *Bhignia sapida* K D Koenig on 16th to 18th January at COGNITOPIA International Conference, Government Women's College, Vazhuthakkad, Thiruvananthapuram.

PRESENTATIONS

6 Conference Papers

From Western Ghats' Wagamon hills, a close relative of 'safed musli' found

The new species, belonging to the genus *Chlorophytum*, has been christened *Chlorophytum vanapushpam*. The herb species, which has white flowers in small clusters and slender leaves, can grow up to 90 cm in height

Tiki Rajwi
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A perennial herb spotted during a field exploration in Idukki district's Wagamon hills has been identified as a new species of the genus *Chlorophytum*, making it a close relative of the 'safed musli'.

Researchers have named the new species, which has white flowers in small clusters and slender leaves, *Chlorophytum vanapushpam* (family *Asparagaceae*).

The findings of the team from the botany depart-

ments of Sanatana Dharma College, Alappuzha; Payyannur College, Kannur; Sir Syed College, Taliparamba; and SNM College, Maliankara, have been highlighted in the latest edition of the journal *Phytotaxa*.

A herb that grows up to 90 cm in height, *Chlorophytum vanapushpam* has been found clinging to the rocky hills of Wagamon and Neymakkad - parts of the Western Ghats regions of Idukki district - at elevations between 700 m and 2,124 m. Its discovery was quite serendipitous, according to the team. The



Chlorophytum vanapushpam

plant was spotted during a research project on wild edible tubers funded by the Kerala State Biodiversity Board.

"The Western Ghats region is thought to be a centre of origin of the genus *Chlorophytum*. A total of 18 species have been identified here so far, with many of them exhibiting medicinal properties," Jose Mathew, Assistant Professor, Sanatana Dharma College, said.

Traditional medicine

One of these is the *Chlorophytum borivilianum*, more familiar to Indians as the 'safed musli', a herb widely used in traditional medical preparations and also popular as a leaf vegetable.

But unlike its more famous cousin, *Chlorophytum vanapushpam* lacks tubers. Its seeds are about 4 to 5 mm across. Flowering and fruiting occurs from September to December. The species name *vanapushpam* is a composite of 'Vanam' and 'Pushpam', the Malayalam for forest and flower respectively.

Apart from Dr. Mathew, the team credited with the discovery included C.N. Sunil, and M.G. Sanil Kumar from SNM College; M.K. Ratheesh Narayanan from Payyannur College, and Sidharth S. Nair of Sir Syed College, Taliparamba.



ആലപ്പുഴ എസ്ഡി കോളജിൽ ബോട്ടാനി വിഭാഗത്തിൽ സജ്ജമാക്കിയ മിനി മ്യൂസിയത്തിലെ പ്രദർശന വസ്തുക്കൾ വീക്ഷിക്കുന്ന കോളജ് മനേജർ പി.കൃഷ്ണകുമാർ. പ്രിൻസിപ്പൽ കെ.എച്ച്.പ്രേമസമീപം.

എസ്ഡി കോളജിൽ മ്യൂസിയം തുറന്നു

ആലപ്പുഴ ലക്ഷണക്കുന്ന് വർഷങ്ങൾ കൊണ്ടു ശിലയായ സസ്യജാലങ്ങളെ കാണാനോ, നേരെ ആലപ്പുഴ എസ്ഡി കോളജിലേക്കു ചെല്ലാം. പാറകൾക്കിടയിൽ പതിഞ്ഞു ശിലയായി മാറിയ ചെടികളുടെ ചിത്രവും ശേഷിപ്പുകളും ഉൾപ്പെടെയുള്ള മിനി മ്യൂസിയം കഴിഞ്ഞ ദിവസം കോളജിൽ പ്രവർത്തനം ആരംഭിച്ചു. രണ്ടായിരത്തോളം ഹെർബേറിയം ഷീറ്റുകളാണു മ്യൂസിയത്തിലെ മറ്റൊരു ആകർഷണം. സസ്യങ്ങളെ പ്രത്യേക രീതിയിൽ ഉണക്കി കേടുകൂടാതെ വർഷങ്ങളോളം സൂക്ഷിക്കുന്നവയാണു ഹെർബേറിയം ഷീറ്റുകൾ.

ഇവയ്ക്കു പുറമെ അപൂർവ്വയിനം കിഴങ്ങ്, നാണ്യവിളകൾ, ശോത്രവർഗക്കാർ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന സസ്യങ്ങൾ, പരമ്പരാഗത സസ്യവിജ്ഞാനീയ പ്രബന്ധങ്ങൾ, വിത്തുകൾ എന്നിവയും മ്യൂസിയത്തിലുണ്ട്. കോളജിലെ ബോട്ടാനി വിഭാഗമാണു മ്യൂസിയം സജ്ജമാക്കിയത്. പ്രവൃത്തി ദിവസങ്ങളിൽ ജനങ്ങൾക്കു മ്യൂസിയം സന്ദർശിക്കാൻ അവസരമുണ്ട്.

കോളജ് മാനേജർ പി.കൃഷ്ണകുമാർ മ്യൂസിയം ഉദ്ഘാടനം ചെയ്തു. പ്രിൻസിപ്പൽ കെ.എച്ച്.പ്രേമ, പ്രൊഫ.എസ്. രാമാനന്ദ്, ഡോ. എസ്.ലക്ഷ്മി, ഡോ. വി.എൻ.സഞ്ജയ്, ഡോ. പി.കെ. ബിന്ദു, ഡോ. എസ്.ശ്രീമതിജിനി, ഡോ. ജോസ് മാത്യു എന്നിവർ പ്രസംഗിച്ചു.

Researchers find new tuber species from Wayanad



Dioscorea balakrishnanii

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Researchers from Kerala have identified an edible tuber found in the Western Ghats region of Wayanad district as a new species of the genus *Dioscorea*.

The species, named *Dioscorea balakrishnanii* after V. Balakrishnan, environmentalist and current secretary of the Kerala State Biodiversity Board, holds potential as a tuber variety for food security and cultivation as a food crop with low glycemic index, the researchers said.

"This yam species is locally known as 'chola kizhangu' among the Kattu-

nayikar tribes of Wayanad. The tubers are edible when cooked and are said to have an excellent flavour," a paper on the findings published in the scientific journal *Species* said. The new species was discovered by Pichan M. Salim of M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Wayanad, Jose Mathew, Assistant Professor in Botany, Sanatana Dharma College, Alappuzha, and M.M. Safir, College of Agriculture, Kerala Agricultural University, Thiruvananthapuram.

Scientifically described

Found only in the sholas of evergreen forests, the *chola kizhangu* had not been

scientifically described until now, Dr. Mathew said.

The species was named after Dr. Balakrishnan for his valuable contributions to the biodiversity conservation and the taxonomy of South Indian *Dioscorea*, according to the paper.

Continuously observed

The Wayanad region of the Western Ghats is rich in unique wild tubers, relatives of the commonly cultivated tubers known as *kachil* or *kavat* (purple yam). These belong to the plant family *Dioscoreaceae* and 23 different forms of more than 14 species, including the newly discovered *Dioscorea balakrishnanii*, have

been found in Wayanad, according to the researchers.

Since there are male and female varieties, *Dioscorea balakrishnanii* was continuously observed for the last ten years and the differences in the flowers have been recorded.

The discovery of this new tuber is of significance for the conservation of unique ecosystems and unique wild relatives as well as food security and the medicinal sector, Dr. Mathew said. In addition, it is also an indication that the biodiversity of the Wayanad forests has not yet been fully documented, he said.

After 175 years, parasitic plant presumed extinct rediscovered in Wayanad

Tiki Rajwi
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A parasitic plant with vibrant orange and yellow flowers that was long thought extinct in the wild has been rediscovered after 175 years from Wayanad district.

Researchers have identified the plant, first collected and described in 1849 from Naduvattam in Tamil Nadu by the Scottish Botanist Robert Wight, as *Campbellia aurantiaca* (family *Orobanchaceae*). The plant has now been rediscovered from a forest region that lies less than five km from Chooralmala and Mundakkai, the sites of the deadly landslides of July 30, 2024.

A paper on its rediscovery by Salim Pichan of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation; Jose Mathew, P.T. Arunraj, and V.N. Sanjai from the Department of Botany, Sana-



Campbellia aurantiaca in its habitat. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tana Dharma College, Alappuzha; and B. Gopallawa from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka; has been published in *Kew Bulletin*, the official journal of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, England.

Although Wight had established the genus *Campbellia* with *C. aurantiaca* as its type species, its taxonomic status had become entangled in uncertainty due to divergent interpretations by subsequent taxonomists. The big chal-

lenge before the present-day researchers was verifying beyond any doubt that plant specimens collected in 2022-23 from the Thollayiram forest region in Wayanad was indeed the one described by Wight. Wight's 1849 citation read thus: "Neilgherries (Nilgiris), in a small clump of jungle by the roadside near Nedawuttim (Naduvattam), flowering in August and September.

As seen growing, this is a peculiar looking plant,

the deep orange coloured tops only appearing above ground."

A few years ago, Mr. Pichan had chanced upon a "few vibrant orange clumps of a holoparasitic species thriving in humus-rich, moist, shady soil," according to the research paper. Holoparasitic plants are incapable of photosynthesis and are dependent on the host plants for nutrients. Careful examination of its characteristics, supported by an extensive survey of literature, had helped them establish it as *Campbellia aurantiaca*.

Physically, the plant grows to a length of 13-17 cm long.

The paper in the *Kew Bulletin* has noted that the present specimens have been collected from an eco-sensitive area vulnerable to landslides, and therefore "encounters severe natural threats in the locality."

Kalaadrika

MOHINIYATTAM RECITAL

Dr. Bindu P.K.
(Asst. Professor
Sanatana Dharma College, Alappuzha)

**Disciple of
Dr. Mohi Frammed Menon**
Kalaadrika School of Dance, Kochi

05.30 PM
Saturday
at
Ujjain Sree Mahalal Amman Koval
Mullakkal, Alappuzha

Kalaadrika

MOHINIYATTAM RECITAL

Dr. Bindu Mahesh
(Asst. Professor
Sanatana Dharma College, Alappuzha)

7.30 pm
Saturday
21 October 2024

at
Aparajita Mahalal
Sri Ravi Parasara Temple
(Changanu Malabar)

Co-Artists:
Nathavanam: Dr. Mini Prasad Nair
Vocal: Ujjay T. Srinivas
Mridangam: Kalamandiram Gurusamy
Veeru: Suresh Narayanan
Flute: Rajarathnam Sankar
Esakka: Ajith Kumar Thiruvalla

Biodiversity board holds strategic discussion on agrobiodiversity projects

The Kerala Biodiversity Board (KBBB) convened a strategic discussion on agrobiodiversity initiatives to commemorate the World Food Day on Thursday.

Eighteen research institutions, including JICA, participated in the meeting. The discussion focused on the need for institutional arrangements, research, and extension activities to address the loss of agrobiodiversity. The meeting was chaired by KBBB Director N. Anil Kumar.

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ആദ്യകാല ജനസംഖ്യാനയിൽ എച്ച്.എസ്.എസ്.എസ്.യിൽ ജൈവവൈവിധ്യ പ്രവർത്തനം തുടങ്ങി

ആദ്യകാല ജനസംഖ്യാനയിൽ എച്ച്.എസ്.എസ്.എസ്.യിൽ ജൈവവൈവിധ്യ പ്രവർത്തനം തുടങ്ങി. കേരളം മുഴുവൻ പ്രവർത്തിച്ചു വരുന്ന ജൈവവൈവിധ്യ പ്രവർത്തനം ആദ്യകാല ജനസംഖ്യാനയിൽ എച്ച്.എസ്.എസ്.എസ്.യിൽ തുടങ്ങി.

കേരളം മുഴുവൻ പ്രവർത്തിച്ചു വരുന്ന ജൈവവൈവിധ്യ പ്രവർത്തനം ആദ്യകാല ജനസംഖ്യാനയിൽ എച്ച്.എസ്.എസ്.എസ്.യിൽ തുടങ്ങി.

വല്ലികൾ പുഴയ്ക്കു വെള്ളിപ്പാലം

കേരളത്തിലെ വല്ലികൾ പുഴയ്ക്കു വെള്ളിപ്പാലം പണിയിക്കുന്നതിന് തീരുമാനിച്ചു. പാലം പണിയിക്കുന്നതിന് തീരുമാനിച്ചു.

കേരളത്തിലെ വല്ലികൾ പുഴയ്ക്കു വെള്ളിപ്പാലം പണിയിക്കുന്നതിന് തീരുമാനിച്ചു. പാലം പണിയിക്കുന്നതിന് തീരുമാനിച്ചു.

വെളിയിലേക്കു വഴിയടങ്ങുന്ന വഴികൾ

വെളിയിലേക്കു വഴിയടങ്ങുന്ന വഴികൾ. വെളിയിലേക്കു വഴിയടങ്ങുന്ന വഴികൾ.

വെളിയിലേക്കു വഴിയടങ്ങുന്ന വഴികൾ. വെളിയിലേക്കു വഴിയടങ്ങുന്ന വഴികൾ.

School Children Explore Sacred Grove

On March 29, 2025, the Biodiversity Club of SDV UP School organized a visit to Vandaram Sacredgrove as part of a biodiversity awareness program funded by the Kerala State Biodiversity Board. The visit aimed to provide students with an in-depth understanding of the biodiversity within the sacred grove.

The visit aimed to provide students with an in-depth understanding of the biodiversity within the sacred grove.

TREE ENUMERATION PROJECT

In Forest Land along Line Route For Upgradation of 66KV SC Line to 110KV DC Line from Thannamsey Substation to Kuthammala Substation

Submitted to: Office of the Assistant Executive Engineer, TCS, Thannamsey, Kerala State Electricity Board Limited.

Scientific study led by two Plus Two students offers hope for paddy revival

Sam Paul A.
ALAPPUZHA

A scientific study led by two Plus Two students at NSS Higher Secondary School, Kurathikad, Alappuzha, has offered new hope for reviving paddy farming in areas where declining soil fertility has driven farmers away from agriculture.

The findings of the study by Architha Manoj and Jyothika Krishna, conducted as part of school science fair, have been published in the peer-reviewed *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*.

In the paper titled *Soil Revival Eco-friendly Farming for Agriculture Sustainability*, the researchers evaluated the use of Effective Microorganism (EM) solution as a sustainable and eco-friendly alternative to chemical fertilizers.

The scientific study revealed that EM-treated rice seeds not only enhanced crop growth but also significantly improved soil health.

Degraded soil more than 80% of local farmers surveyed in Mavekkara-Thekkera grama panchayat in Alappuzha admitted they had abandoned paddy cultivation due to poor yields caused by degraded soil.

Laboratory, greenhouse, and field experiments conducted as part of the study confirmed that EM treatment led to better seed germination, longer shoot and root development, increased biomass, and ultimately higher grain yields compared to conventional NPK fertilizer use.

"The soil in Thekkera panchayat has become acidic and nutrient-deficient due to the prolonged use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides," the researchers noted. Soil samples collected across 10 wards showed pH values as low as 4.8, indicating high acidity.

After EM treatment, soil nutrient levels, including nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus, showed marked improvement. Field trials demonstrated that paddy grown from EM-treated seeds yielded more healthy grains and fewer chaff, pointing to a direct improvement in productivity.

Microbial diversity "We saw an increase in germination and better growth metrics under both lab and field conditions. Most importantly, the soil started to regain its microbial diversity. We hope the model can be replicated across the region," the researchers added.

NSS Higher Secondary School, Kurathikad, Principal Renu S. said that "recognition at the international level is a testament to the students' dedication."

Apart from Architha and Jyothika, the research team also included NSS School Botany teacher Sreekala C.G., SD College Botany department former head C. Dileep, and researcher Karthika T.P.

The team worked in collaboration with the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kayamkulam, research wing of SD College, Alappuzha, and the local Agriculture office. After completing the project, both students graduated from the school in the 2024-25 academic year.

DBT STAR COLLEGE PROGRAMME ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2024-2025

- Field Visits:** Visit to the Biodiversity Board, Kerala State Biodiversity Board, etc.
- Competitions:** Participation in various science fairs and competitions.
- Seminars:** Attending seminars on biodiversity and environmental protection.

ആലപ്പുഴയിൽ നടന്ന പരിസ്ഥിതി ദിനാചരണം പബ്ലിക് വർക്ക്സ് സ്റ്റാൻഡിംഗ് കാൺസിൽ ചെയർപേഴ്സൺ എം.ആർ. പ്രേം ഉദ്ഘാടനം ചെയ്യുന്നു.

ആലപ്പുഴയിൽ നടന്ന പരിസ്ഥിതി ദിനാചരണം പബ്ലിക് വർക്ക്സ് സ്റ്റാൻഡിംഗ് കാൺസിൽ ചെയർപേഴ്സൺ എം.ആർ. പ്രേം ഉദ്ഘാടനം ചെയ്യുന്നു.

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Extension Activities : A-B. Mohiniyattam Recital by Dr. Bindu P.K., C-D. News about the activities in association with Kerala State Biodiversity Board, E-H. Popular articles , I. Project completed for KSEB, J. News about the research activities done by Kurathikad School students, K. DBT Star College Scheme Annual Presentation at Delhi University L. News about Environment Day Celebration,



Institute Visits: A. Banana Research Institute, Kannara B-C. KFRI, D. UPASI Tea Research Station, Vandiaperiyar, E. JNTBGRI, Thiruvananthapuram, F. Connemara Tea Factory, G. Central Cardomom Research Institute, Mayiladumpara, H. Cardomom Research Station, Pampadumpara.



Field Visits: A. Periyar Tiger Reserve, Thekkadi, B. Thenmala, C. Athirappally, D. Wagamon, E. Chathurangappara, F. Kabani, G. Marayoor-Kanthalloor.



PTA & Student Centric Activities : A-C. PTA meetings, D. Herbarium Visit at Catholicate College, Pathinamthitta, E. Inaguration of Flora Fiesta (An exhibition), F. Arogyam Anadham (participants), G. Award distribution for poster presentaion competition, H. Presentation on Env-ironmental problem solutions, I. Association Day inauguration by Dr. T. Sunilkumar

Tribute to Legends

Remembering their relentless pursuit of knowledge
and exploration

Dr. Arathy R. 



James Dewey Watson
Unraveling Life's Code



Prof. C.A. Ninan
A Life Dedicated to Science,
Teaching, and Mentorship

When one thinks of the blueprint of life, the elegant double-helix of DNA inevitably comes to mind - a symbol that shaped modern biological science. James Dewey Watson, who passed away in November 2025 at the age of 97, was one of the architects of that image and the far-reaching understanding it represents.

Born in Chicago on April 6, 1928, Watson displayed an early love for science. As a teenager, he gained national attention by appearing on the American quiz show *Quiz Kids*, reflecting his early intellectual promise. Eventually earning his Ph.D. in zoology and embarking on a journey that would alter human understanding of life's fundamental mechanisms. By integrating existing experimental data, most notably X-ray diffraction images produced by Rosalind Franklin and Maurice Wilkins. Watson and Crick proposed the double-helix model of DNA in 1953. Their model explained how DNA could store genetic information and replicate itself, a cornerstone of all living systems. For this, he shared the 1962 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine with Crick and Maurice Wilkins. Beyond the DNA discovery, Watson played a major role in shaping modern biological research. He authored influential textbooks, including *Molecular Biology of the Gene*, which educated generations of students and researchers worldwide.

Watson served for decades at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in New York, one of the world's leading research institutions in genetics and molecular biology. As its director and later president, he transformed the laboratory into a global center for cutting-edge research. In the late 20th century, Watson also became a strong advocate for the Human Genome Project, an international effort to map the entire human genetic code. He was instrumental in promoting the idea that understanding the genome could lead to breakthroughs in diagnosing, preventing, and treating disease.

In the story of scientific progress, some names become globally celebrated, while others live on quietly through the minds they shape and the values they instill. Prof. C. A. Ninan belongs firmly to the latter tradition - a scientist, teacher, and mentor whose influence extended far beyond publications or titles, and whose legacy endures in generations of students and colleagues.

Prof. Ninan, the renowned botanist and former Kerala University Botany Head, passed away on Nov. 1, 2025. The passing of Prof. C. A. Ninan marked the loss of a respected academic and a deeply valued human being. While his name may not appear in popular science histories, his legacy lives on in lecture halls, laboratories, and in the countless students who continue to think critically because he taught them how. Prof. Ninan served as the Head of the University Department of Botany at Kariavattom for 16 years and was also the Dean of the Faculty of Science. He was a highly respected teacher and research guide, mentoring numerous students who went on to earn their doctorates under his supervision.

Prof. Ninan gained international acclaim for his groundbreaking research on the cytology of pteridophytes. His most famous achievement was reporting the highest chromosome number ever found in the plant kingdom in the species *Ophioglossum reticulatum* (fern), which has a $2n$ number of 1260 chromosomes. His studies on the cytology and phylogeny of various ferns, including *Psilotum nudum* and *Osmunda regalis*, were extensive and influential. He made significant contributions to the understanding of the genetics and intervarietal variation of the coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera* L.).

He was a prolific writer, authoring books and over 200 international scientific papers. He was an influential figure in the botanical community in Kerala and India, known for his commanding academic presence and significant role in building the reputation of the Botany Department at the University of Kerala as an internationally recognized center for cytogenetics and cytotaxonomy.

KNOW A PLANT



P.T. Arunraj

Gymnostachyum warrierianum K.M.P.Kumar et al.
Family : Acanthaceae
Distribution: Endemic to south Western Ghats

G. warrierianum K.M.P.Kumar et al. was first described for science in 2015 from the Aralam Butterfly Sanctuary. It was named in honor of Padmabhooshan Dr. P. K. Warriar, the founder of the Kottakkal Arya Vaidyasala. Later floristic studies reported its occurrence in the Western Ghats region of Karnataka. However, its known distribution within Kerala is currently limited to the stretch between Periya Ghat and Paithalmala, and its global range is restricted to the Western Ghats from Kannur, Kerala, to Sirsi, Karnataka.





Diplocentrum recurvum Lindl.

Family : Orchidaceae

Distribution : Endemic to Peninsular India

Illustrated by : Devinandana (MSc 2023-2025)



Best wishes

