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NOTE

REDISCOVERY OF NILGIRI MALLOW *ABUTILON NEELGERRENSE* VAR. *FISCHERI* T.K. PAUL & M.P. NAYAR (MALVACEAE) AFTER A CENTURY FROM SOUTHERN INDIA

Varsha Vilasrao Nimbalkar, Arun Prasanth Ravichandran & Milind Madhav Sardesai

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The genus *Abutilon* Mill. is one of the larger genera of Malvaceae with about 120 species distributed in tropical and warm temperate regions (Mabberley 2017). It is represented by 12 species and 12 infraspecific taxa (Paul 1993) in India, whereas Sivarajan & Pradeep (1996) have reported seven species from southern peninsular India.

As a part of the revisionary study of the genus *Abutilon* in India specimens of *A. neelgerrense* were collected from Suruli Falls, Theni District, Tamil Nadu, with flowers and fruits. The specimens with flowers were collected in the month of March and with fruit in the month of May. After scrutiny of relevant literature and study of the specimens, it was identified as *A. neelgerrense* var. *fischeri* T.K. Paul & M.P. Nayar and confirmed by consulting protologue and Type.

Paul & Nayar (1985) described the variety based on a specimen collected by C.E.C. Fischer on January 1910 (Fischer 1581, CAL), from Coonoor River bank, Nilgiri District, Tamil Nadu. Now this variety was collected from the Meghamalai Mountain range, near Suruli Falls, Theni District, Tamil Nadu (population of 30–40 mature individuals) after 109 years and is the first re-collection after type.

Comparative morphology with its allied variety *A. neelgerrense* var. *neelgerrense* is presented in Image 1.

REDISCOVERY OF NILGIRI MALLOW *ABUTILON NEELGERRENSE* VAR. *FISCHERI* T.K. PAUL & M.P. NAYAR (MALVACEAE) AFTER A CENTURY FROM SOUTHERN INDIA

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Abutilon neelgerrense var. *fischeri* T.K. Paul & M.P. Nayar

in Bull. Bot. Surv. India 25: 183. 1985 & Fasc. Fl. India 19: 90. 1988. Type: India, Tamil Nadu: Nilgiri District (then part of Coimbatore District), Coonoor River bank 1,200 ft, 10 January 1910, C.E.C. Fischer 1581 (Holotype: CAL!, Isotype: FRC!).

Shrub, ca. 1m high; stem and branches densely stellate pubescent mixed with short simple hairs. Petiole 8–10 cm long, stellate pubescent; stipules 6–15 mm long, linear, pubescent; lamina 8–10 × 4–5 cm, ovate, cordate at base, acute to acuminate at apex, crenate or dentate at margin, rarely obscurely entire, 7–8-nerved, pubescent on both surfaces, more so beneath. Flowers 2–5 in axillary cymes, rarely solitary; peduncles 8–12 cm long; pedicels 1–1.5 cm long, articulated near the apex. Calyx 6–8 mm across, campanulate, 5-lobed, divided to below the middle; lobes 5–10 × 4–7 mm,

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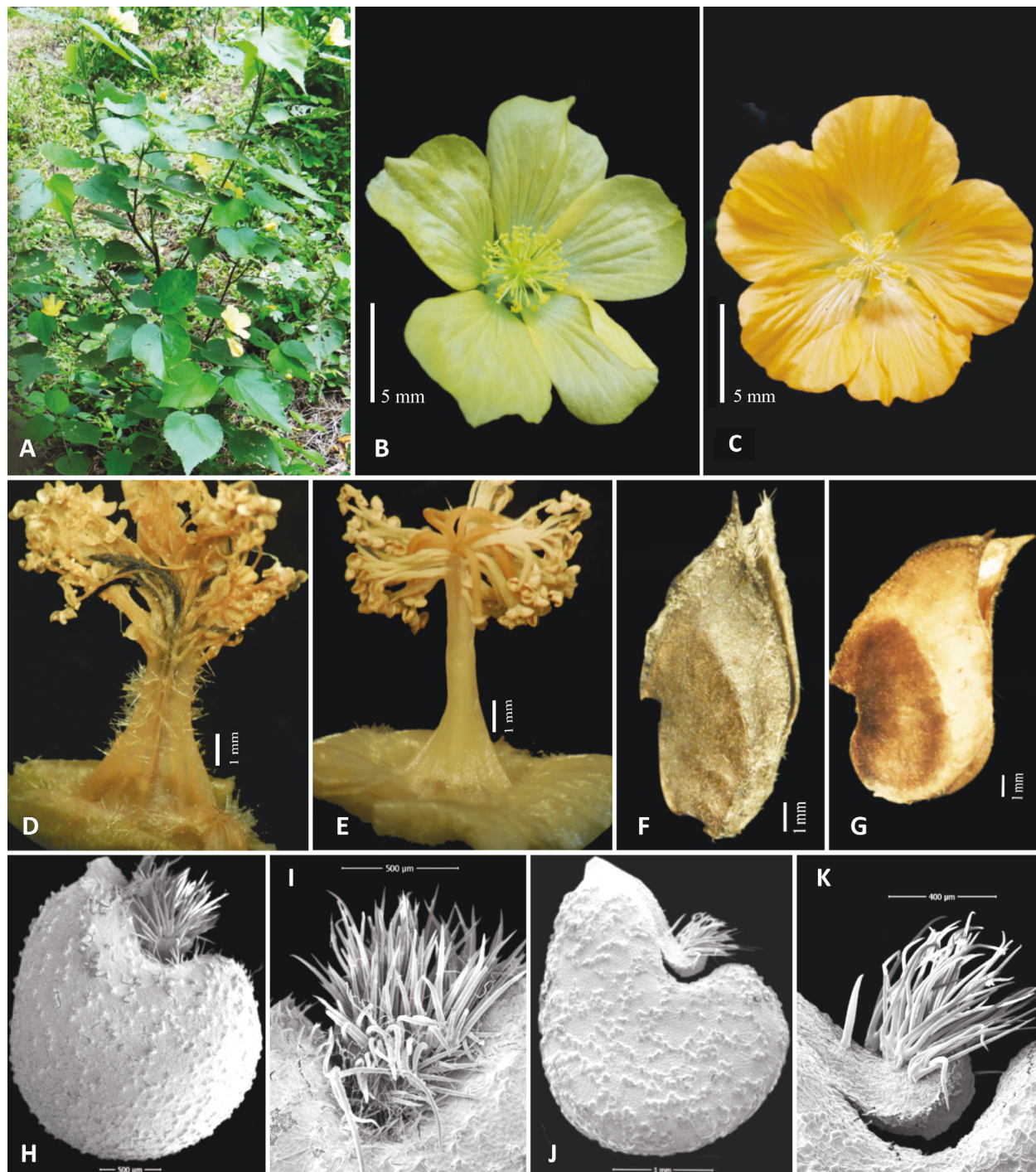


Image 1. Comparative photographs of varieties of *Abutilon neelgerrense*. var. *fischeri* T.K. Paul & M.P. Nayar: A—Habit | B—Flower | D—Staminal tube | F—Mericaip | H—SEM photograph of seed | I—SEM photograph of seed showing hairs on hilar region. var. *neelgerrense*: C—Flower | E—Staminal tube | G—mericaip | J—SEM photograph of seed | K—SEM photograph of seed showing hairs on hilar region. © A–C - Arun Prasanth R. and D–G - Varsha V. Nimbalkar.

ovate-lanceolate, acute to acuminate, 3-nerved with prominent midvein, pubescent on both surfaces. Corolla ca. 1.5cm across, pale yellow; petals 5, 12–15 × 6–10 mm, obovate, truncate at apex, sometimes pointed and slightly reflexed, glabrous, ciliate on margins at the base.

Staminal column 5–6 mm long, densely pubescent, antheriferous at apex, free filaments, 2–3 mm long, yellow, glabrous. Ovary ca. 3.5 × 3 mm, ovoid, densely pubescent, 8–10-loculed, 2–3-ovules in each locule; style 8–10-branched, branches 7–8 mm long; stigmas

Key to the varieties

- 1a. Corolla dark yellow; staminal tube 7–8 mm long, glabrous, filaments forming clusters; mericarp curved at apex var. *neelgherrense*
- 1b. Corolla pale yellow; staminal tube up to 5mm long, stellate hairy, filaments free; mericarp not curved at apex var. *fischeri*

capitate. Schizocarps ca 1.5cm in diameter, subcylindric, erect at apex; mericarps 8–10, ca. 15 × 5 mm, laterally compressed-reniform with ca. 3mm mucro, ventral side of base compressed forming notch, densely pubescent with simple and stellate hairs. Seeds 2–3 in each mericarp, reniform, hilum pubescent.

Flowering: November–March; fruiting: January–May.

Distribution: India (Tamil Nadu: Nilgiri and Theni districts), endemic.

Habitat: It occurs from 300–1500 m altitude in moist semi-shady situations along forested hill slopes.

Specimen examined: MMS1643 (BSI, CAL, MH, SPPU), 19.v.2018, 9.659°N, 77.305°E, 400m, Suruli Falls, Tamil Nadu, India, coll. Arun Prasanth R.

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