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Cover: Freshly emerged Footman Moth *Nepita conferta* from the cocoon on a brightly painted wall in the Nilgiris. Digital art on Procreate. © Aakanksha Komanduri.



Passiflora vesicaria var. *vesicaria* (Passifloraceae) - a new record for the flora of West Bengal, India

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The genus *Passiflora* L. (Passifloraceae), native to the New World, tropical, and subtropical Asia to southwestern Pacific, and naturalized in many countries beyond their native ranges, is comprised of 603 species (POWO 2025). The species are mainly herbaceous or woody perennial vines, rarely shrubs or trees. The vines climb with the help of tendrils and are notable for several unique traits such as extrafloral or sometimes petiole-based nectaries, bracts with glandular tips, a raised androgynophore, and a corona composed of one to seven filamentous rows. Many species also bear flowers with five-parted calyces and corollas, three united carpels, and five stamens (Ulmer & Macdougall 2004). As noted by Killip (1938), the genus displays exceptional variability in leaf form, surpassing most other plant groups in morphological diversity.

In India, the genus *Passiflora* is represented by 23 species (Santapau & Henry 1973) and very recently Undirwade & Bhuktar (2025) recorded another species, viz., *P. vesicaria* L. var. *vesicaria* in India, collected from Maharashtra. In West Bengal, it is represented by six species *P. edulis* Sims, *P. foetida* L., *P. napalensis* Wall., *P. quadrangularis* L., *P. suberosa* L. and *P. subpeltata* Ortega (Das 2015).

During a recent floristic survey in North 24-Parganas District of West Bengal, a few scattered natural populations of *Passiflora* species have been spotted and collected from different localities. The plant specimen was photographed using a Nikon D7500, 1400mm lens DSLR camera and dissection was done under Gemstar stereo zoom microscope. Herbarium specimens have been prepared by standard herbarium methods (Jain & Rao 1977) and deposited at Central National Herbarium, Botanical Survey of India (CAL). On a detailed morphological study with the help of protologue and description by Killip (1938), Feuillet & MacDougal (2003), Vanderplank (2013), and Undirwade & Bhuktar (2025), it has been identified as *Passiflora vesicaria* L. var. *vesicaria*, a native of South America.

Taxonomic Treatment

Passiflora vesicaria L. in Amoen. Acad. 5: 382.1760; Vanderplank in Curtis's Bot. Mag. 30(4): 349. 2013; Undirwade & Bhuktar in Rheede 35(1): 28–32. 2025. *P. hispida* DC. ex Triana & Planch. in Ann. Sci. Nat. Bot., ser. 5. 17:172. 1873 (Image 1).

Type: Jamaica, without locality, Patrick Brown s.n. (Holotype annotated by Linnaeus, Registration no. 508-

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4074, now in the Swedish Museum of Natural History) (Vanderplank 2013).

Prostrate or climbing herbs with tendrils, tendrils up to 20 cm long, hairy. Stems herbaceous, climbing; hirsute, green but turns yellowish at maturity. Leaves alternate, simple, suborbicular to ovate in outline, base cordate, lamina 5–12 x 6–10 cm, shallowly 5-lobed, rarely 3-lobed, lobes ovate, apex acute, margins serrulate to serrate, both sides pubescent, dark green, venations actinodromous, multi-costate reticulate; petioles slender, 4.5–7 cm long, hirsute; stipules- pinnatifid, glabrous, 6–8 mm long.

Flowers axillary, solitary, sometimes two together, 2–4 cm in diameter; pedicels 2–6 cm long, hirsute; bracts 6–9 cm long, extending over the berry, pinnatifid, persistent, terete, hairy. Calyx tube short, campanulate; sepals five, basally united, ovate-lanceolate, 1.3–2 x 0.4–0.6 cm. Petals five, oblong-lanceolate, white, 1–1.6 x 0.4–0.5 cm. Coronal filaments in 3–4 in series, inner series small, purple, 1–2 mm long, outer series 1.3–1.5 cm long, white with purple tinge. Operculum narrow, 2 mm long, glabrous, white. Androgynophore brownish-white, straight, glabrous, 6–10 mm. Anthers dorsifixed,

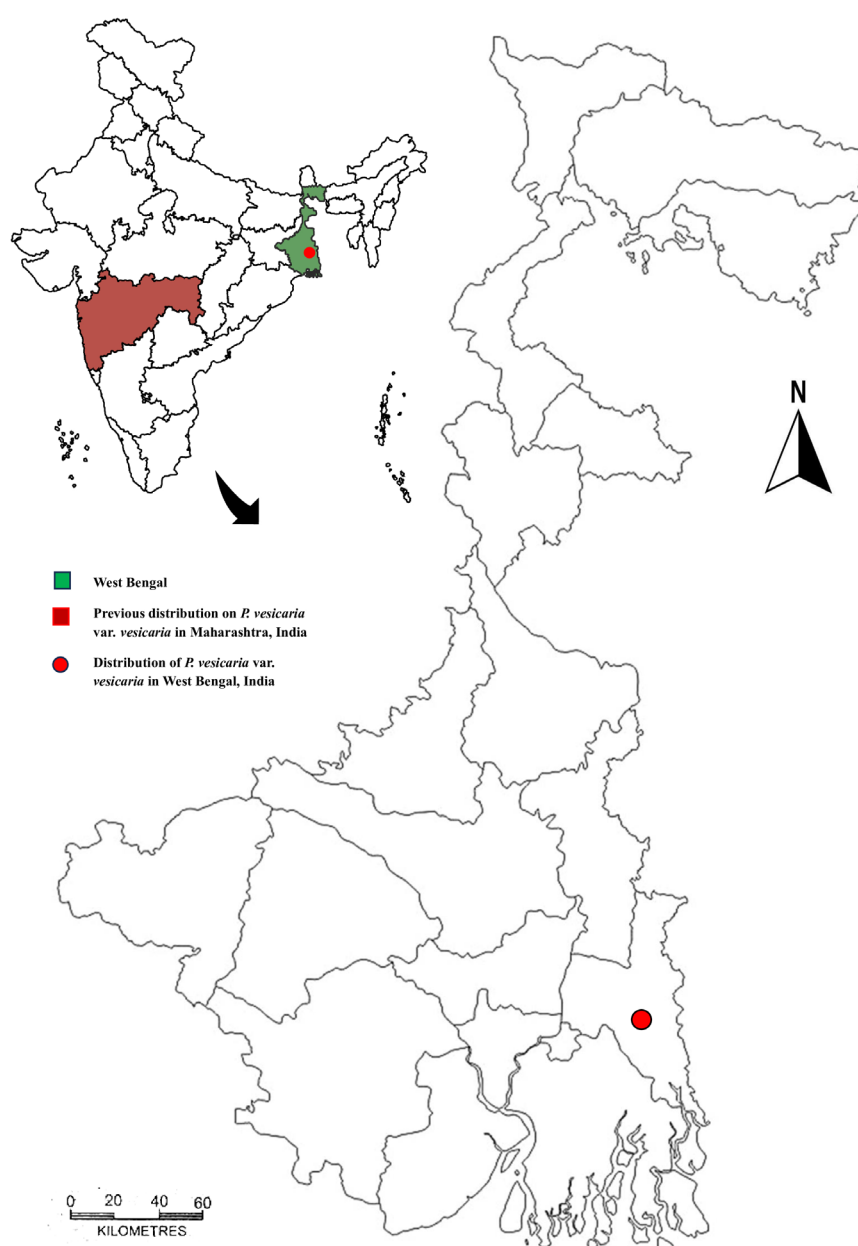


Figure 1. Distribution map of *Passiflora vesicaria* var. *vesicaria* L. in West Bengal, India.

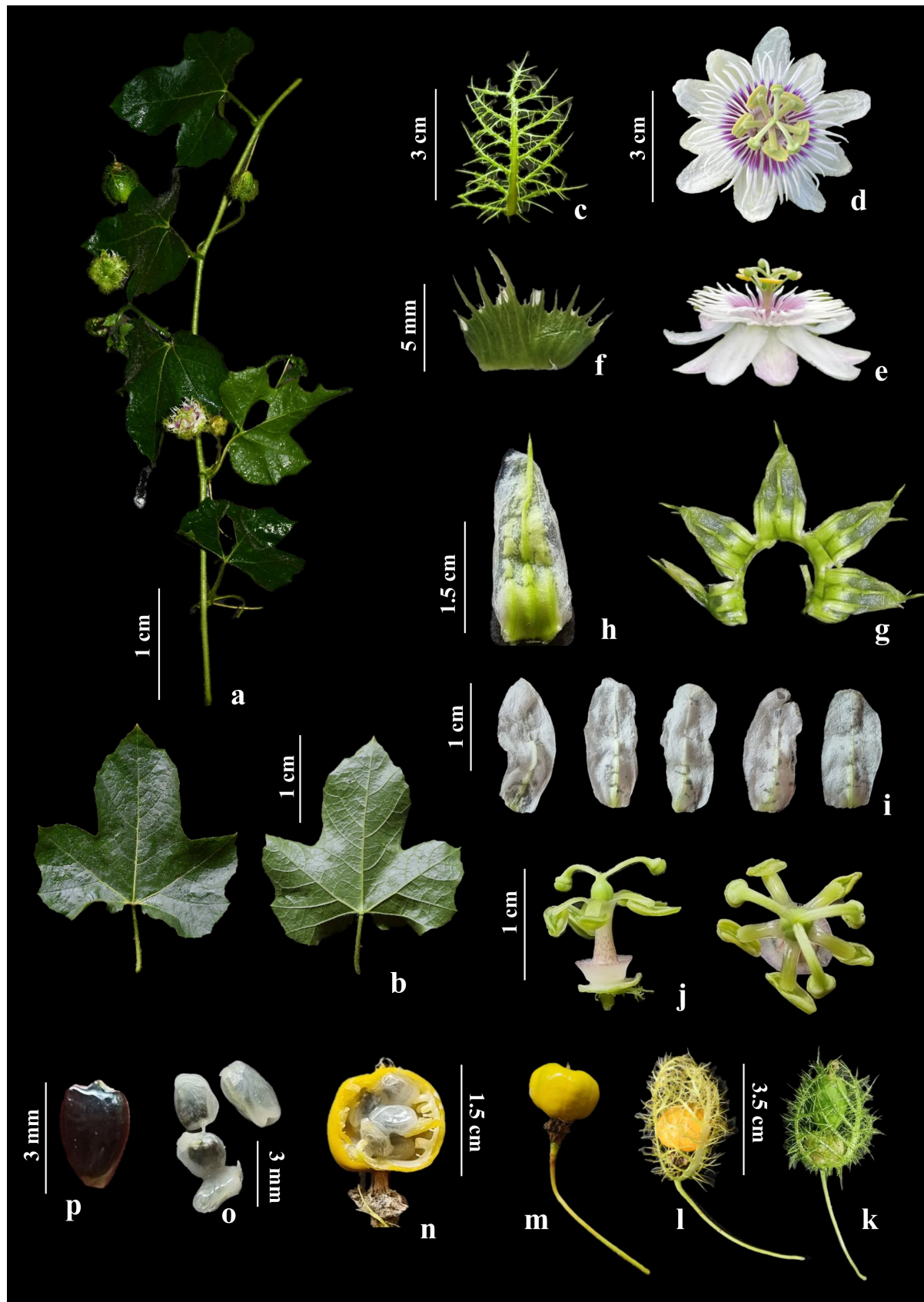


Image 1. *Passiflora vesicaria* L. var. *vesicaria*: a—Flowering branch | b—Leaves | c—Bract | d—e—Flower | f—Stipule | g—Calyx | h—Sepal | i—Petals | j—Androgynophore | k—l—Immature & matured fruit | m—Matured berry | n—L.S of berry | o—Seeds with aril | p—Seed. © S. Chowdhury.

Table 1. Morphological difference between *Passiflora vesicaria* var. *vesicaria* & *Passiflora foetida* var. *foetida*.

<i>P. vesicaria</i> var. <i>vesicaria</i>	<i>P. foetida</i> var. <i>foetida</i>
Leaves mostly 5-lobed, rarely 3-lobed	Leaves shallowly or somewhat deeply 3-lobed
Stems hirsute	Stems mostly glabrous
Pedicels hirsute	Pedicels glabrous
Inner series of corona filaments purple, outer series white with purple tinge	Inner series of corona filaments white to pale cream, outer series pink to pale purple
Mature berries orange-yellow	Mature berries dark green

greenish-yellow, 2–3 mm long. Ovary subglobose, 1–2 mm in diameter, glabrous, carpels three, pale green to yellow; styles three, 4–5 mm long, pubescent near base; stigmas three, capitate. Berries ovoid to globose, 1.5–2 x 0.8–1 cm, glabrous, enclosed inside bracts, green, turns orange-yellow at maturity. Seeds oblong to ovate, 3–4 x 1.5–2 mm, dark brown-black, aril semi-transparent juicy, 0.5 mm in thickness.

Flowering & Fruiting: December to April.

Habitat: Growing in roadside, fallow fields, and among scrub jungles.

Distribution: India: Maharashtra, West Bengal (reported here) (Figure 1); Native of tropical America and West Indies, introduced in many old-world tropical countries.

Specimen examined: INDIA: West Bengal, North 24 Parganas District, Bamunmura, 22.70° N 88.51° E, 20.iv.2025, S. Chowdhury 20 (CAL); N. 24 Parganas, Badu, 22.93° E 88.42° N, 24.iv.2025, S. Chowdhury 21 (CAL); Kamduni, 22.64° N 88.52° E, 04.v.2025, S. Gupta 22 (CAL); Kharibari, 22.56° E 88.36° N, D. Mondal 23 (CAL).

Notes: *Passiflora vesicaria* L. var. *vesicaria* belongs to the subgenus *Passiflora* section *Dysosmia* DC. (Fullet & MacDougal 2004). This species is a very close relative of *P. foetida* L. which is widely distributed in most parts of India. *Passiflora vesicaria* var. *vesicaria* can easily be identified by having 5-lobed leaves and matured berry

orange-yellow in colour, while its allied species *Passiflora foetida* var. *foetida* has strongly 3-lobed leaves and a mature berry green in colour.

Passiflora vesicaria L. var. *vesicaria* differs from *P. foetida* L. by the following characters tabulated in Table 1.

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