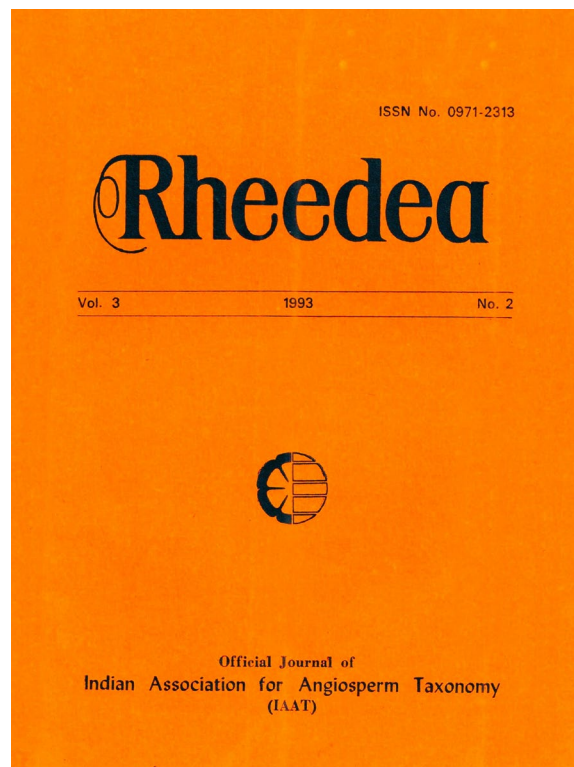




Synadenium grantii Hook.f. (Euphorbiaceae) – Fast naturalising in Indian subcontinent

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Synadenium grantii Hook. f. (Euphorbiaceae) - Fast
naturalising in Indian subcontinent

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Abstract

Synadenium grantii Hook. f., native of Zambesi Valley in East Africa, is almost naturalised in Indian subcontinent. In certain Indian Floras this species is wrongly treated under the genus *Euphorbia*.

The genus *Synadenium* was established by Boissier (in DC. Prodr. 15 (2): 182. 1862). Being members of the subfamily Euphorbioideae, *Synadenium* and *Euphorbia* are closely related, but the former can be easily distinguished by the involucre gland being united and fused into a single rim-like disc. However, in *Euphorbia* the glands have regular separate segments and the number varies from 4 to 10. The other character that distinguishes both genera, is the membranous wall in between the two clusters of male florets in *Synadenium*, which is absent in *Euphorbia*. Further, the gynophore of the female floret in *Synadenium* is surrounded by a membranous tube formed by the inner wall containing the male florets and this tube is lobed and fringed at the top. In the genus *Euphorbia* no such membranous tube encloses the gynophore in the female floret.

The genus *synadenium* is native of tropical Africa, and there are approximately 15 species in the world and only 1 in India.

Synadenium grantii Hook. f. in Bot. Mag. 93. f. 5633. 1867; N. E. Brown in Fl. Trop. Africa 6: 468. 1911; S. Carter in Kew Bull. 42: 669. 1987.

Type: Uganda, West Nile District, Madi, *Grant* 754 (Holotype in K!).

S. umbellatum Pax var. *puberulus* N. E. Brown in Fl. Trop. Africa 6: 465. 1911; S. Carter in Kew Bull. 42. 469. 1987, *pro. syn.*

Shrubs, usually up to 3 m high (rarely up to 10 m); stems branched, terete, non-spiny, fleshy; main stem 10—12 cm thick; bark of the older parts pale yellow; young branches terete, 1—1.5 cm thick, glabrous, fleshy. Leaves alternate, oblanceolate, to obovate, obtuse, apiculate at apex, cuneate at base, entire, ciliate along margins, 10—15 × 5—7 cm, pale green, slightly pinkish below, lateral nerves 14—20 pairs, dark green on veins; petiole *ca* 5 mm long. Cyathia

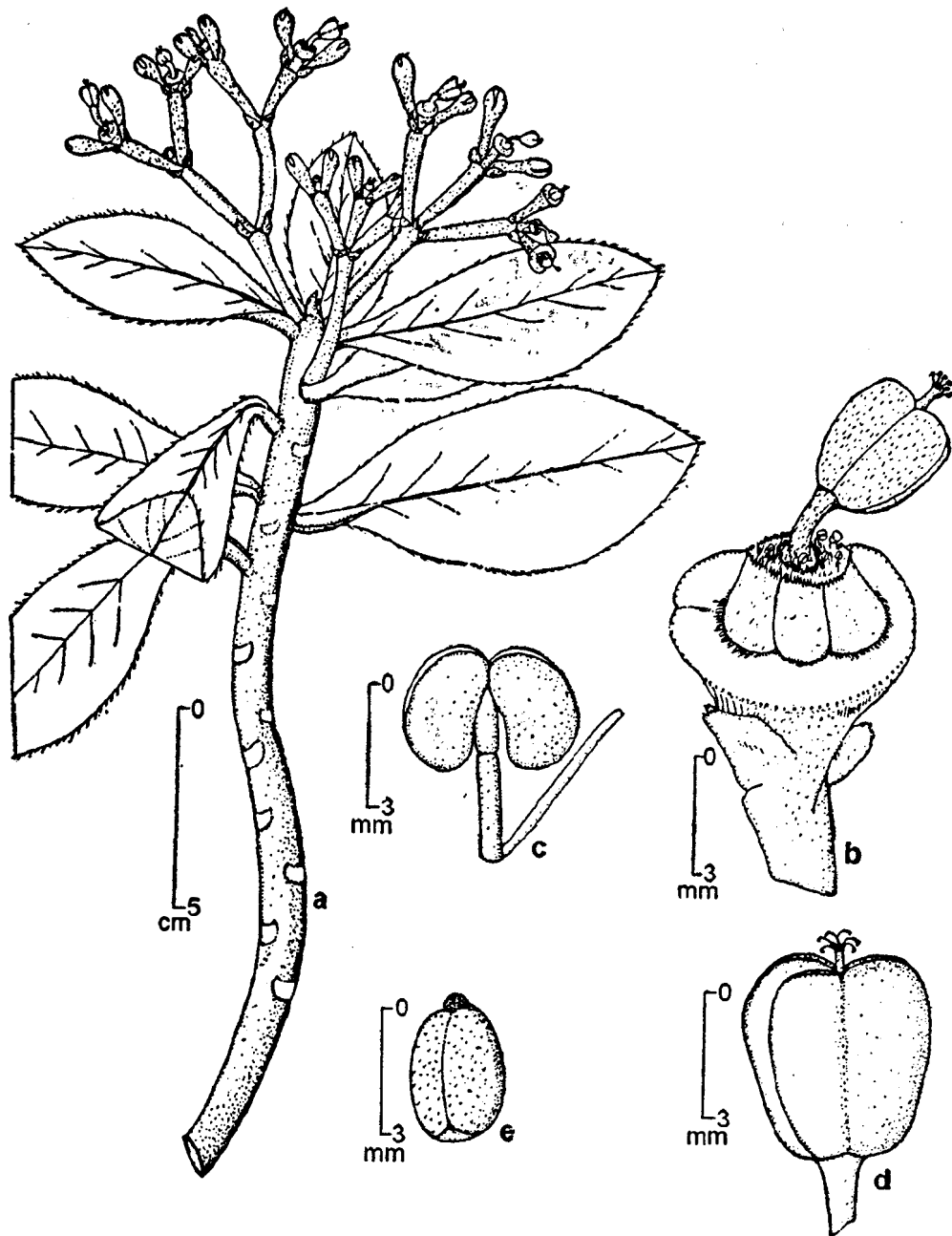


Fig. 1. *Synadenium grantii* Hook. f. a. flowering twig; b. cyathium; c. male floret; d. capsule; e. seed.

axillary, pseudo-umbellate; primary peduncle 2–3 times dichotomous, *ca* 3 cm long, primary and secondary peduncles sparsely hairy, pinkish in colour, bracts oblong, *ca* 4 mm long, red purple, puberulous; glands connate, rim-like entire or slightly wavy, sparsely puberulous outside, puberulous inside; involucre lobes 5, suborbicular, adnate to base of the gland, broadly oblong, toothed along margin. *Male florets* in 5 fascicles, 20–30 in each fascicle; bracteoles filiform, *ca*, 2 mm long; peripheral bracteoles sheath-like, lacinate, hairy, pinkish-margined; pedicels *ca* 1 mm long; filament articulate over the pedicel, red in colour; anther subglobose, *ca* 3 × 3 mm, hairy. *Female floret*: ovary *ca* mm in diam. hairy, reddish; styles 3, *ca* 2.5 mm long, connate up to middle, each deeply bifid. stigma capitate. Capsules *ca* 6 × 5 mm, keeled, pinkish. Seeds oblong *ca* 3 × 2 mm, testa smooth. (Fig. 1 a - e).

Distribution: Native of tropical Africa, introduced into Asia. In India, almost all states, at low elevations.

Habitat: Usually seen on fence, and it is also reported in evergreen forests, probably as an escape from villages nearby. Due to its pinkish upper leaves and cyathia it is also cultivated as a garden plant.

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