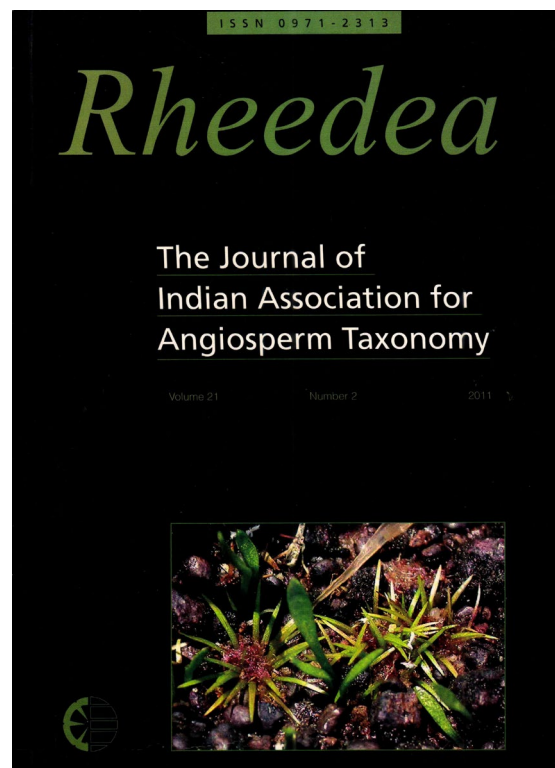




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Sunil C.N. & A.K. Pradeep



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Sisyrrinchium (Iridaceae): A new genus record for India

C.N. Sunil and A.K. Pradeep^{1*}

Department of Botany, S.N.M. College, Maliankara, Kerala – 683 516, India.

¹Calicut University Herbarium, Department of Botany, University of Calicut, Kerala – 673 635, India.

*E-mail: akpradeep1@rediffmail.com

Abstract

The genus *Sisyrrinchium* L. (Iridaceae) represented by *Sisyrrinchium rosulatum* E.P. Bicknell is reported for the first time for India from Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu, India. Detailed description, illustration and relevant notes on the species are provided.

Keywords: Genus Record, India, Iridaceae, *Sisyrrinchium rosulatum*

Introduction

The genus *Sisyrrinchium* L., popularly called “Blue-eyed grass” has c. 80 species distributed in Central and South America with some species extending to Hawaii, New Zealand and Great Britain (Chowlewa & Henderson, 2002; Mabberley, 2008). The authors, during their floristic investigations in South India, located an extensive population of a species of this genus along the grassy slopes near Pykara in Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu. The specimens were studied in detail and later referred to Dr. Peter Goldblatt, an expert on Iridaceae in Missouri Botanical Garden; after critical studies he determined it as species of *Sisyrrinchium* (Pers. comm. dated 22 July 2008). The authors tentatively determined it as *S. albidum* Raf.; subsequently while reviewing an earlier version of this note, Prof. Kathleen L. Hornberger, Widener University, Chester, USA opined it could be *S. rosulatum* E.P. Bicknell. Further studies confirmed it as *S. rosulatum*, the annual “blue-eyed grass” (Hornberger, 1991). The collection represent the first ever record of the genus and species for India. It might have reached Southern Peninsular India probably by human agency. A detailed botanical description and illustration of the species is provided to facilitate easy identification.

Sisyrrinchium rosulatum E.P. Bicknell, Bull. Torrey Bot. Club 26: 228. 1899; Hornberger, Sida 14: 601. 1991; Chowlewa & Henders., Fl. N. America 26: 358. 2002.

Fig. 1

Caespitose annuals, up to 30 cm high, dark green to light green when dry. Rhizome cylindrical, c. 4 × 0.4 cm, woody, tapering towards base, often producing runner-like branches to 45 cm long, black; roots fibrous, numerous, spreading, light brown

to dark. Stems erect to ascending, simple or 2 or 3-branched, compressed and narrowly winged. Leaves distichous, generally shorter than the stems; the blades falcate-ensiform, 5 – 18 × 0.2 – 2.5 cm, dark green, scabrous at margins, acute at apex, 5 or 6-nerved; cauline leaves shorter than the basal. Inflorescence terminal, few-flowered rhipidia; rhipidial spathe 2 – 2.5 cm long, slender, foliaceous; outer bract slightly falcate at apex, often 1 – 1.5 times longer than the inner bract. Flowers urceolate, 8 – 10 × 10 – 12 mm, creamy-white with dark yellow centre and purple eye-rings; pedicels slender, up to 1.2 cm long, recurved after pollination. Tepals 6, 2-whorled, free (but appears fused and tubular up to the middle and this portion is clothed with gland-tipped hairs externally), oblanceolate, 8 – 10 × 1 – 1.5 mm, rounded at base, apiculate to aristulate at apex, 1 – 5 dark purple-nerved. Stamens 3; staminal tube 1.5 – 1.8 mm long, glandular-hairy towards the base, yellow; anthers 0.2 – 0.25 mm long, yellow, extrorse. Ovary subglobose, with short stipitate glandular hairs of moderate density, 3-loculed; ovules numerous, 2-seriate in each cell, axile; style 3-fid above middle, usually included in the staminal tube; stigma capitate, c. 0.2 mm, exerted, hirsute, yellow. Capsules globose to subglobose, 3 – 4 mm across, pale beige to straw-coloured. Seeds numerous, angled, rugose, black with a shallow depression.

Flowering & Fruiting: April – December.

Distribution & Habitat: *S. rosulatum* is known from the coastal areas of the southern United States and Central America. It is also known to be naturalized in Madagascar, and now reported from the

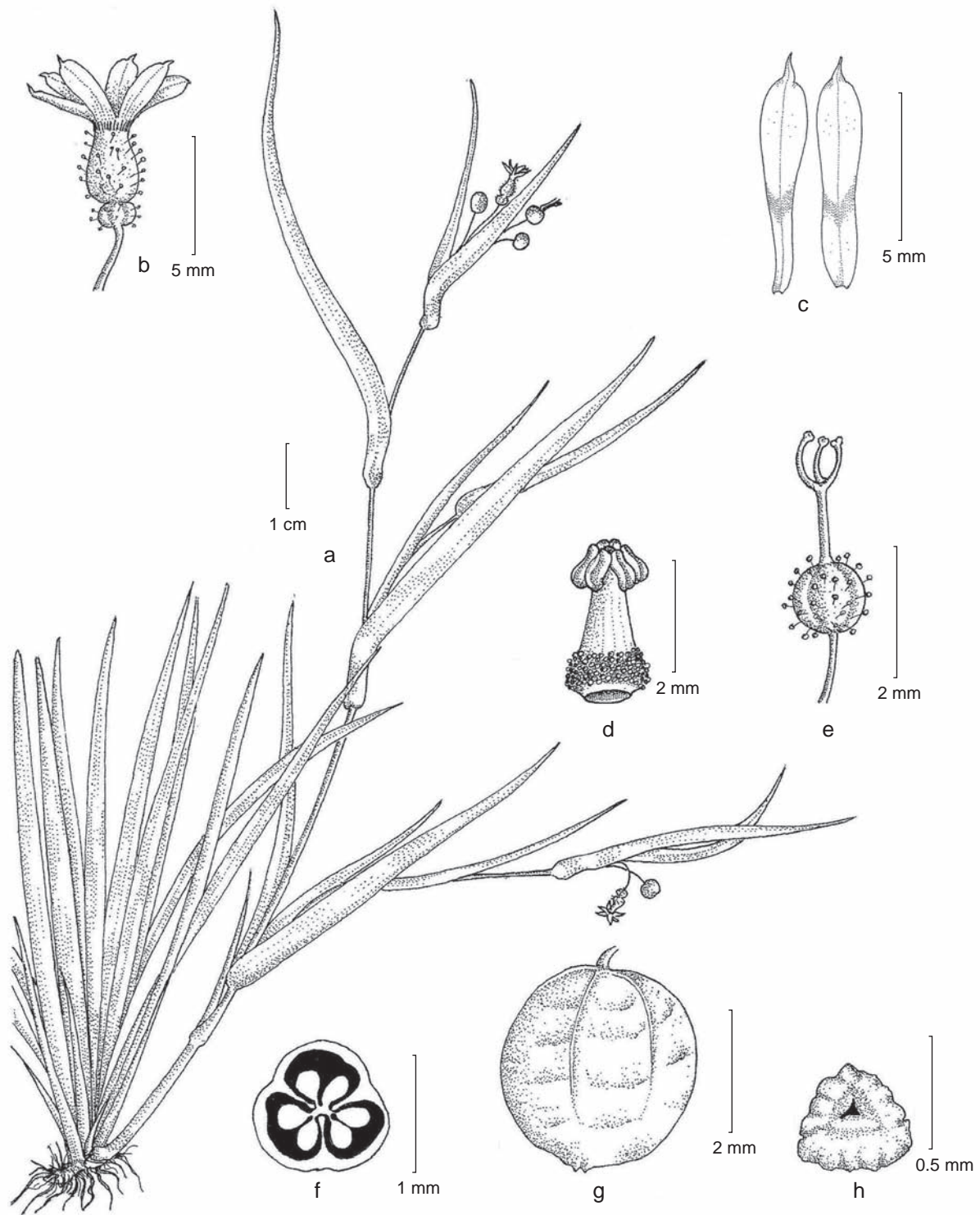


Fig. 1. *Sisyrrinchium rosulatum* E.P. Bicknell.: a. Habit; b. Flower; c. Tepals; d. Staminal column; e. Pistil; f. C.S. of ovary; g. Fruit; h. Seed (all from *Sunil* 315, CAL).

Nilgiris in Peninsular India. It is found growing in hill slopes and meadows dominated by sedges and grasses.

Note: *Sisyrrinchium rosulatum* is most striking for its stems with 1 – 3 nodes, creamy-white flowers with an yellow centre and purplish eye-rings, basally inflated and stiptate-glandular staminal tube, and globose to subglobose capsules beige when dry with purple to brown stripes along the sutures.

Specimens examined: INDIA, **Tamil Nadu**, Nilgiri district, Pykara, c. 1200 m, 6.4.2004, *Sunil* 315; Ooty, Shooting Point, 1.12.2005, *Sunil* 4235; Pykara, c. 1200 m, 25.12.2009, *Pradeep* 90087 (CALI).

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