

THEMEDA SABARIMALAYANA — A NEW SPECIES OF POACEAE FROM KERALA, INDIA

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***Themeda sabarimalayana* P.V. Sreekumar & V.J. Nair, sp. nov.**

A *Themeda cymbaria* Hack. vaginis glabrissimis, spiculis involucribus aequipositis sparsim tuberculario-hirsutis, spiculis sessilibus longioribus, callis pilis brunneis, glumis infernis emarginatis vel truncatis, glumis superis acutis, aristis crassis longioribus differt. A *Themeda triandra* Forssk. paniculis decompositis congestis, spathis spatheolis spiculis et aristis brevioribus, racemis laxe fasciculatis, glumis superis acutis differt.

Perennials. Culms 50-200 cm high, erect, tufted; nodes glabrous. Leaves linear-lanceolate, 15-40 × 0.5-1.0 cm, acuminate, rounded at base, midrib prominent, margins serrulate. Sheaths keeled. Ligules ovate, acute, membranous. Panicles 30-60 cm long, lax, drooping. Involucral spikelets 2 pairs, inserted at same level in a raceme, lanceolate or narrowly elliptic-lanceolate, 4-6 mm long, sparsely hairy or glabrous; lower glume elliptic-lanceolate, 4-6 × 1 mm, acuminate, chartaceous, 9-13-nerved, sparsely hairy towards apex; upper glume lanceolate, 4-6 × 1 mm, chartaceous, 3-5-nerved, margins hyaline, ciliate in the upper half; lower floret empty; upper floret male; first lemma elliptic-lanceolate, 3-5 × 0.5-1.0 mm, hyaline, faintly 3-5-nerved, margins ciliolate in the upper half; epaleate; second lemma linear-lanceolate, c. 2.0 × 0.2 mm, hyaline, glabrous; stamens 3, anthers 2-3 mm long.

Sessile spikelet solitary, oblong-lanceolate, awned, 5-6 mm long, brownish; callus rufous-brown hairy, hairs 1-3 mm long; lower glume oblong-lanceolate, 5-6 × 1 mm, truncate and dentate at apex, coriaceous, 9-11-nerved, softly hairy; upper glume oblong-lanceolate, 5.0-5.5 × 1 mm, acute, chartaceous, 3-5-nerved, 2-keeled; first lemma elliptic-lanceolate, 3-4 × 0.5-1.0 mm, hyaline, faintly 3-5-nerved; epaleate; second lemma stipitate hyaline base of the awn, 1-2 mm long, 1-nerved; awn 15-30 mm long; palea ovate-acute, c. 0.5 × 0.3 mm, chartaceous; stamens 3, anthers 2-3 mm long; ovary c. 0.5 mm; styles 1.0-1.5 mm long; stigmas 1-2 mm long. Pedicelled spikelets 3 or 4 in a raceme, lanceolate or narrowly elliptic lanceolate, 4-6 mm long, acuminate; pedicels 1-2 mm long; glumes and florets more or less similar to those of the sessile spikelets.

Holotype : Kerala, Pathanamthitta District, on way to Sabarimala, ± 450 m, 23.12.1980, P.V. Sreekumar 69433 (CAL). *Isotypes* in K & MH.

Rare, along the forest margins and hill slopes.

Fls. & Frts. : November-December.

Notes : This species is named after its type locality.

At a glance this plant looks like *Themeda cymbaria* Hack., but the latter may be distinguished by its sheaths bearded on one margin, pairs of involucral spikelets inserted at different levels, involucral

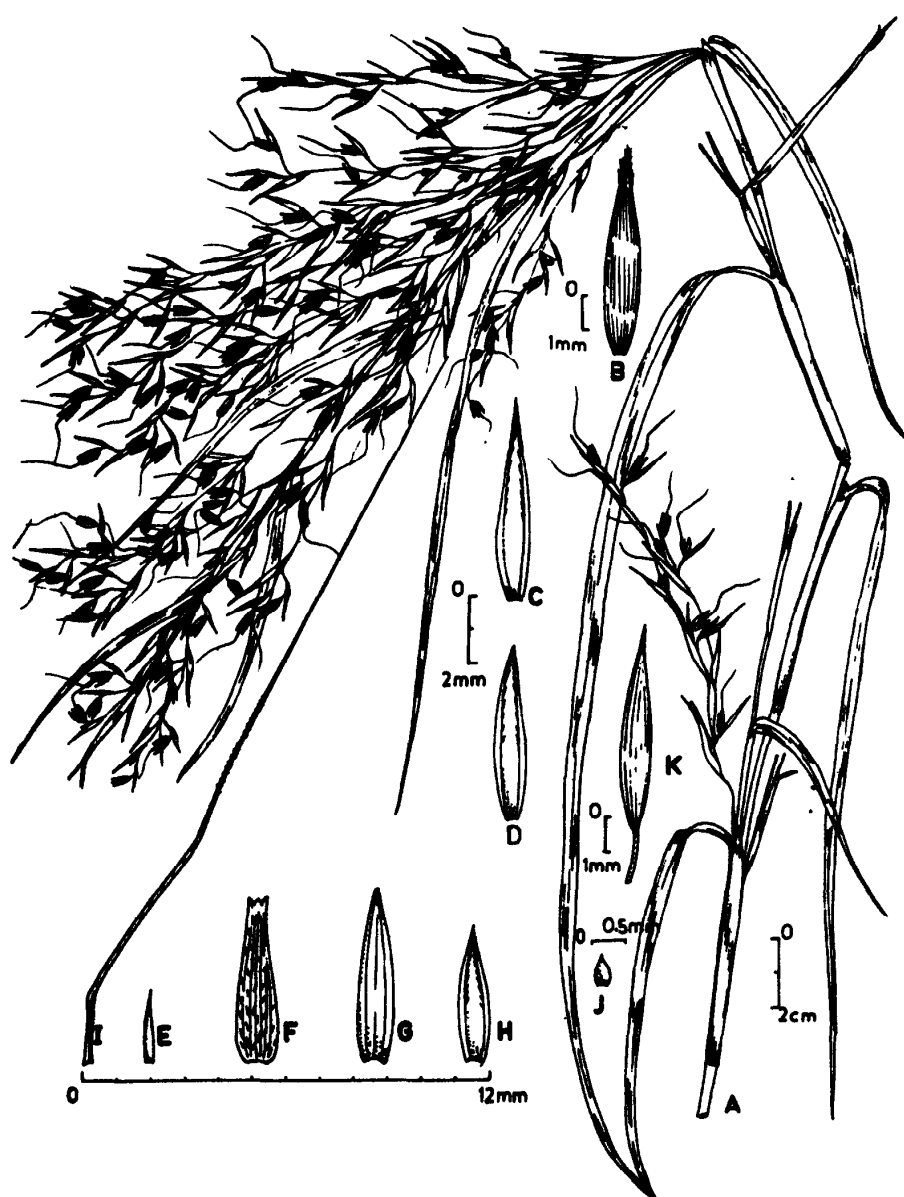
spikelets entirely glabrous, sessile spikelets c. 4-5 mm long, callus hairs soft, silky-white, lower and upper glumes of the sessile spikelets rounded at apex and awns short.

Eventhough, superficially this plant looks like *Themeda cymbaria* Hack., the floral characters show more similarity to *T. triandra* Forssk. But the latter is characterised by its lax, simple panicles, longer spathes and spatheoles, spikelets larger in dense

capitate clusters, involucral spikelets larger and densely hairy, sessile spikelets c. 8 mm long, both the glumes truncate at apex and awns very long, up to 6 cm.

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Figs. A-K : A. Habit. B. Lower glume of involucral spikelet. C. Upper glume. D. First lemma. E. Second lemma. F. Lower glume of sessile spikelet. G. Upper glume. H. First lemma. I. Second lemma. J. Palea of the second lemma. K. Pedicelled spikelet