

SPERMACOCE MAURITIANA OSEA GIDEON (RUBIACEAE) - FROM WEST BENGAL

While collecting plants from different parts of Dakshin Dinajpur and Coochbehar districts of West Bengal, we have collected specimens of a plant species belonging to the family Rubiaceae. On critical examination the specimen is identified as *Spermacoce mauritiana* Osea Gideon.

This species is so far reported from different states of India like Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tamil Nadu, Kerala & Andaman under the name *Spermacoce decandollei* Deb & Dutta (Deb & Dutta, 1984). It is mostly collected from the hilly places of these states. But it is now being reported for the first time from West Bengal plains.

The nomenclature, short description of the plant along with ecological and ethnobotanical notes are given below. *Spermacoce mauritiana* Osea Gideon in Kew Bull. 37(4): 547.1983. *Borreria repens* DC., Prodr. 4:542. 1830. Type : Mauritius, Sieber, Fl.Maurit.IINo.144 (holotype G, microf. CAL 1) Baker and Bakh.f., Fl. Java 2:353.1965. *Bigelovia parviflora* Sieber, Fl. Maurit.no.144. 1825, nom.mud.,non Spreng 1825, non *Spermacoce repens* Willd. ex Cham and Schlecht. in Linnaea 3:348. 1828, nec *S. repens* Sesse and Moc. Fl.Maxic. (ed-1). 25.1892, nec *S. repens* Larranaga and Larranaga in Pub. Inst. Hist. Geo. Mrug. 2:62.1923. *Spermacoce ocymoides* Sensus auct. mult. (e.g. Verdc., Fl.Trop.E.Afr. 1:361. 1976, p.p.) non Burm. f. (1768).

***Spermacoce decandollei* Deb and Dutta in Jour. Econ. Tax. Bot. 5(5) : 1044. 1984.**

Erect or ascending annual herb, 8-30 cm. long. Stem quadrangular and four winged, sparsely to fairly pilose. Stipular sheath 2 mm × 0.5 mm, bristle 4-5, variable (3-8), linear, 1-2 mm in length. Leaves elliptic to ovate oblong, 0.5-1.5 × 0.2-0.8 cm, entire, acute at apex, cuneate at base; primary and

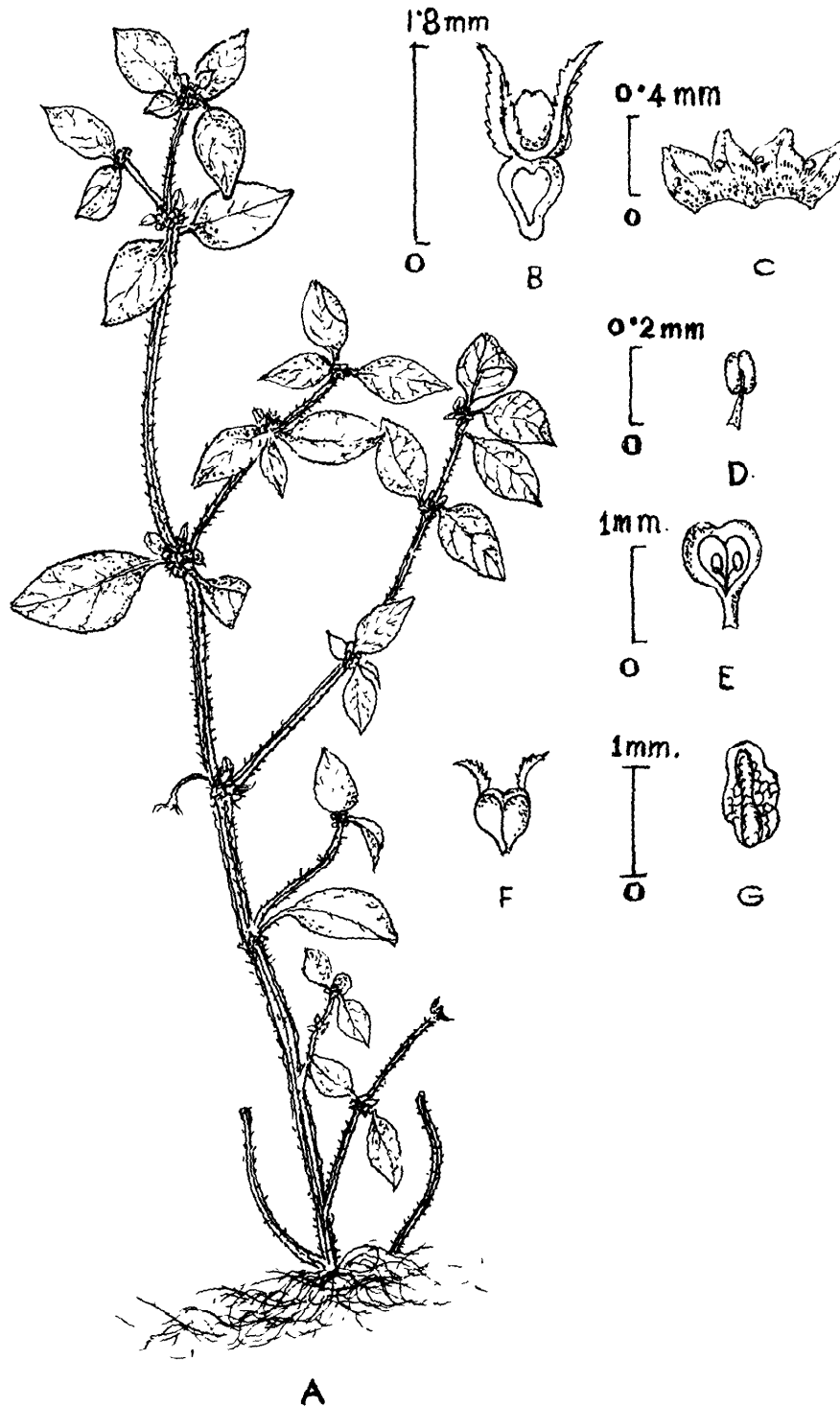
secondary nerves inconspicuous on ventral side, prominent with fairly tomentose hairs on dorsal side, ventral side becoming brownish when dry and dorsal side pale greenish; subsessile or shortly petiolate, petioles slender or slightly flattened, 1-1.5 mm long. Flowers ca 1.8 mm long in terminal or axillary bracteate heads; bracts 4, linear lanceolate ca 2 mm; bracteoles many linear, ca 1.5 mm. Calyx lobes-2, inserted on two narrow lateral side of compressed ovary; lobes ca 1.5 mm long linear, denticulate along margins. Corolla white to creamy white; tube 0.2-0.3 mm long; limbs 4, ovate triangular, 0.3-0.4 mm × 0.2-0.3 mm, acute, hairs forming an annular ring at mouth. Stamens 4, included; filaments attached at sinus of corolla lobes, filiform; anthers 2 lobed, oblong, ca 0.3 mm. Ovary obovate, slightly compressed posterior anteriorly, 1-1.2 mm long; style short, ca 1 mm long; stigma bilobed. Capsule with laterally placed 2 long recurved calyx lobes, dehiscent septicidal; septum splitting irregularly. Seeds oblong ellipsoids; ca 1.5 mm long × 0.5-0.6 mm width, ventrally elongated grooved, dorsally convex, dark brown to black.

Fl. & Fr. : Almost throughout the year.

Specimens examined : INDIA : Assam, 21.11.1957, G. Panigrahi, 11320. Meghalaya : Nangphow (Shillong), 09.09.1976, N.C. Saha, 13461. Kerala : Trivandrum, 13.09.1977, N.C. Nair, 51056. West Bengal : Balurghat (Dakshin Dinajpur), 28.8.95, S. Mitra, 2461. Jamalda (Coochbehar), 22.8.95, S. Bandyopadhyay, 2940 Megipur (Coochbehar), 24.08.95, S. Bandyopadhyay, 3024.

Ecology : It is occasionally found to grow in the shady and marshy places in association with *Lindernia crustacea* (Linn.) F. Muel.; *Murdania nudiflora* (Linn.) Breanan.

Ethnobotany : Rabhas of Coochbehar use the leaf paste to cure mastitis.



Figs. 2 A-G : *Spermacoce mauritiana* : A- habit sketch of the plant. B- Flower, C- Splitted corolla lobe, D- Single Stamen, E- L.S. of ovary, F-Fruit, G-Seed.

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THE CORRECT ASCRIPTION OF THE COMBINATION *STACHYTARPHETA CAYENNENSIS* (VERBENACEAE)

The combination *Stachytarpheta cayennensis* has been traditionally ascribed to Vahl (1804) with the epithet spelt variously. Brenan (1950) stated, "Vahl spelt the epithet '*cajanensis*'—a version so different from the original as in effect to constitute a new name and a quite unjustifiable one. Link's later 'compromise'—'*cayanensis*' does not affect the problem". Hence, Brenan (1950) ascribed the combination to Schauer (1847) who in his opinion was the first author to transfer Richard's epithet "*cayennensis*" to *Stachytarpheta* even though Schauer spelt the generic name *Stachytarpha* and attributed the combination to Vahl. However, it seems that it was Kunth (1817) who first used the epithet "*cayennensis*". But he too attributed the combination to Vahl and spelt the epithet (*Verbena*) "*cajanensis*" in the basionym. following Brenan, Hepper (1963) ascribed the combination to Schauer. Nair *et al.* (1982), who reported the occurrence of *S. cayennensis* in India, also ascribed the combination to Schauer.

It is clear that Richard while describing the species derived the specific epithet from the name of the type locality—Cayenne, the capital of the then French Guiana. Vahl (1804), when transferred the species to the genus *Stachytarpheta* though spelt the specific epithet as "*cajanensis*" in the proposed combination and in the epithet bringing name as (*Verbena*) "*cajanonsis*" (use of "o" in the place of "e" is, probably, a printer's error), he gave a full and direct reference to the author of the basionym, its original place of publication and the

type locality—"Act. Soc. h. n. par. 1. p.105., Habitat in Cajenna, Richard". It may be seen from the above that Vahl (*I.c.*) spelt the geographical name "Cayenne/Cayenna" as "Cajenna" simply to transcribe the name into Latin for he only replaced the letter "y", foreign to classical Latin alphabet, by the letter "j". Without going into the controversy whether transliteration of the specific epithet "*cayennensis*" to "*cajanensis*" conforms to Latin usage, contrary to Brenan (1950), it can be safely presumed that Vahl's specific epithet is a Latinized version of the geographical name—'Cayenne', from which Richard too derived his specific epithet. Since use of the letter 'y' is permissible in Latin plant names (Art. 73.4), the original spelling of the specific epithet has to be restored while attributing the combination to Vahl (Art. 73). The correct author citation is provided below.

***Stachytarpheta cayennensis* (Rich.) Vahl, Enum. Pl. 1 : 208. 1804 (as "*cajanensis*") ; Kunth in HBK, Nov. Gen. Sp. 2 : 280. 1817 ; Link, Enum. Pl. Hort. Berol. Alt. 1 : 18. 1821 (as "*Stachytarpha cayanensis*") ; Cham. in Linnaea 7 : 243. 1832 (as "*cajanensis*") ; Walp., Repert. Bot. Syst. 4 : 5. 1845 (as "*cajanensis*") ; Schauer in DC., Prodr. 11 : 562. 1847 (as "*Stachytarpha*") ; Bocquillon in Adansonia 3 : 241. 1863 ; Briq. Engl. & Prantl, Nat. Pflanzenfam. 4(3a) : 154. 1895 ; Briq. in Annuaire Conserv. Jard. Bot. Geneve 7 & 8 : 317. 1904 ; Hall. f. in Meded. Rijks-Herb. 3 : 20. 1918 ; Danser in Ann. Jard. Bot. Buitenzorg 40 : 3. t. 2. 1929 (as "*cajanensis*") ; Mold. in Lilloa 4 :**