

***SESBANIA SERICEA* (WILLD.) LINK (LEGUMINOSAE : PAPILIONOIDEAE) –  
A NEW RECORD FOR INDIA**

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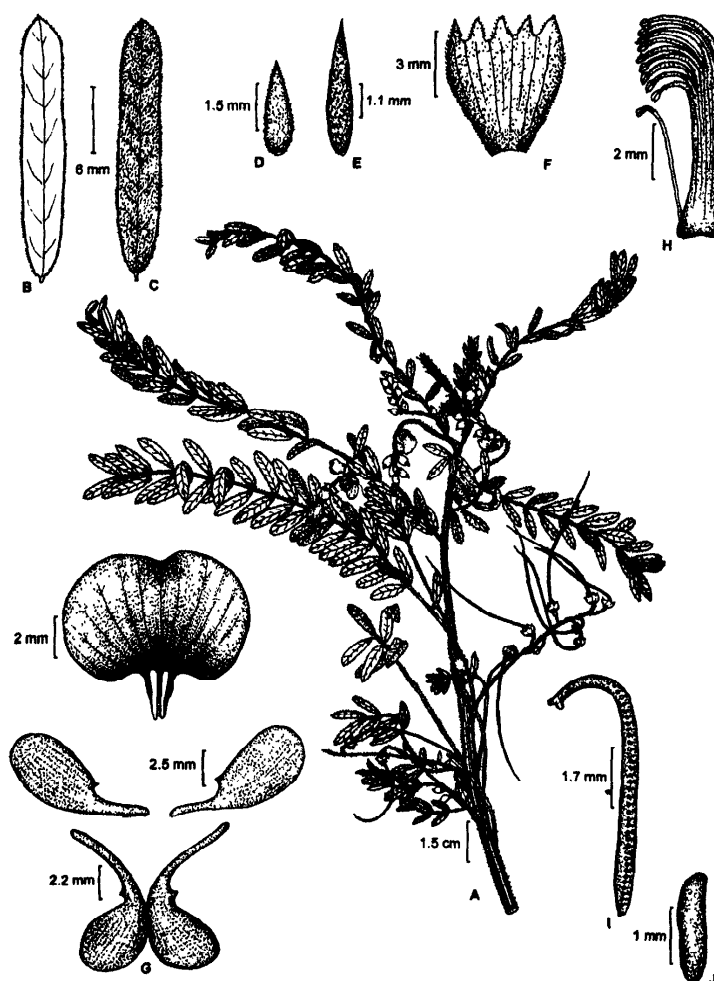
*Sesbania* Adans. (nom. cons.) is economically important genus with c. 50 species widely distributed in the tropics and subtropics, (Mabberley, 1997). Ten species and one variety have been reported under this genus from India (Sanjappa, 1992) and there are four species in Kerala (Sasidharan, 2004).

During a plant exploration trip to Southern Kerala for the project 'Mangroves of Kerala' the senior author collected a *Sesbania* species from Ayiranthengu, a natural Mangrove formation in Kollam district of Kerala. It was growing very close to the Tidal Mangroves in this area along with sedges and grasses. On a close examination and critical study, it was identified as *Sesbania sericea* (Willd.) Link, a species hitherto not recorded from India. A widely distributed species, *S. sericea*, as rightly pointed out by Gillett (1963) 'owes part of its wide distribution to man' The area is very close to a fishing harbour and an 'Ashram' in Amritapuri where many domestic and foreign tourists visits and hence its introduction to this area by man intentionally or unintentionally cannot be ruled out. As the plant was found occurring in a wider area, it looks as if the plant might have been growing there unnoticed for many years as in the case of many other areas of its distribution in Sri Lanka and America (Gillett, 1963). The nativity of this species is a disputed, some suggest its West African origin, others stated Sri Lanka as the home of *S. sericea* (Gillett, 1963).

To facilitate easy relocation and field identification, a detailed illustrated account of this species is provided.

***Sesbania sericea* (Willd.) Link**, Enum. Hort. Berol. 2: 244. 1822; DC., Prodr. 2: 266. 1825; *S. aculeata* (Willd.) Poir. var. *sericea* Hook.f., Fl. Brit. Ind. 2 : 115. 1876; Prain, J. Asiat. Soc. Bengal 6 : 368. 1897; J.B. Gillett, Kew Bull. 17: 133. 1963; Rudd in Dassan. & Fosberg, Rev. Handb. Fl. Ceylon 7 : 141. 1991. *Caronilla sericea* (Willd.) Enum. Hort. Berol. 773. 1809. *Sesbania pubescens* DC. Prodr. 2:265. 1825. *Agati sericea* (Willd.) Hutch., Annual Rep. Missouri Bot. Gard. 4 : 75. 1893.

Unarmed herbs or subshrubs, annual or biennial, c. 3 m tall; stems angular, striate, sericeous to glabrescent. Leaves paripinnate, 5-16 cm long; leaflets 20-25 pairs, oblong, rounded or subobtusate at base, rounded and mucronate at apex, entire along margins, 1-2.5 × 0.3-0.4 cm, glabrous above, pubescent beneath; midrib prominent beneath, lateral nerves faint; stipules linear-subulate, 2-4 mm long, early deciduous, pubescent outside. Inflorescence an axillary raceme 2-6 cm long, 2-6(-8) flowered; axis softly silky or pilose. Flowers c. 1 cm long; pedicels 0.3-0.5 cm long, silky pilose; bracts and bracteoles linear-lanceolate, acuminate at apex, c. 4.5 mm long, pale green, early deciduous. Calyx campanulate, 5-lobed, c. 5 mm long, glabrous except at the puberulent base and margin; lobes triangular-deltoid, 0.7 mm long, pale green. Petals yellow; standard petal orbicular, broader than long, cordate at base, slightly retuse or emarginate at apex with narrow, wedge-shaped, truncate appendages at base inside; claw c. 2 mm long; wing petals obovate, 5-7 × 2.5-3.5 mm; claw c. 2.5 mm long; keel petals c. 7 mm long including c. 3-4 mm long claw, 4-5 mm wide incurved. Stamens 9 + 1; staminal sheath c. 7 mm long; filaments free towards apex, incurved; anthers c. 0.4 mm long, introrse. Ovary linear, glabrous, many ovuled; style c. 2 mm long, glabrous, incurved; stigma capitate. Pods straight or slightly curved, shortly stalked, 10-16 × 2-3 cm, septate to c. 5 mm apart, glabrous. Seeds 15-30, oblong, c. 2.5-3 × 1-1.5 mm, brown.



**Fig. (A-J) :** *Sesbania sericea* (Willd.) Link : **A.** Habit; **B.** Leaf adaxial face; **C.** Leaf abaxial face; **D.** Stipule abaxial face; **E.** Bract abaxial face; **F.** Calyx; **G.** Corolla; **H.** Androecium; **I.** Pistil; **J.** Seed.

*Fl. & Fr.:* October February.

*Distribution :* India: Kerala, Ayiramthengu; Africa, Southern United States; Belize; West & East Indies; South America; Sri Lanka.

*Habitat :* Marshy areas near backwaters, common.

*Specimen examined :* Kerala, Kollam district, Ayiramthengu, 6.12.2006, *M. Mohanan*, 120188.

*Note :* This species is closely allied to *S. bispinosa* (Jacq.) W.F. Wight but in the former, the leaflets are glabrous, stem prickly, the blade of standard petals longer than wide and not cordate at base and in the latter, the blade of the standard petals.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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