GYMNEMA ALTERNIFLORUM (LOUR.) MERR. ASCLEPIADACEAE, AN ADDITION TO THE FLORA OF MADRAS

During renovation of some of C.E.C. Fischer’s early collections in the Herbarium of the Forest Research Centre, Coimbatore, a specimen from Alagar Hills, Madurai, marked Gymnema sylvestre Br. did not appear to be correctly identified. This was referred to the Central National Herbarium, Calcutta, where it was recognised as Gymnema alterniflorum (Lour.) Merr. In the regional Herbarium of the Botanical Survey of India, Coimbatore, a specimen, also from Alagar Hills, originally labelled Gymnema elegans W. and A. had been subsequently, correctly annotated G. alterniflorum (Lour.) Merr. According to Merrill (who refers to this under its synonym G. affine Decne.) the plant which was of Chinese origin was cultivated in the Botanical Garden at Calcutta, prior to 1844. However, no manual on the flora of India appears to have included this species, which is now found in Alagar Hills. Hence, this is now reported, with a short description as an addition to the flora of Madras.


Apoecynum alterniflorum Lour., Fl. Cochinch. 1790, 168.

Gymnema affine Decne. in DC Prodr. 1844, 8: 622.

Bushy climber. Stem and branches glabrous, lenticellate. Leaves petiolate, ovate, acuminate, glabrous, glossy above. Flowers axillary, umbellate, white, inodorous. Calyx 5-lobed, lobes ovate. Corolla campanulate, longer than the calyx, 5-fid; corolla tube enclosing the stamens. Stigma lobed. Follicles 2, many seeded.

Its prominently lenticellate smooth branches; glabrous glossy leaves and white flowers, distinguish this species from Gymnema sylvestre Br.


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Fig. 1. A. Section through the leaf showing the stroma and conidiophores arising out of it; B. A cluster of conidiophores; C. Hyaline, linear, septate conidia.

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