Astraea lobata (Euphorbiaceae), a new record for India

S.P. Gaikwad, R.D. Gore and K.U. Garad*
Life Science Research Laboratory, Walchand College of Arts and Science, Solapur – 413 006, Maharashtra, India.
*E-mail: garadku@gmail.com

Abstract

Astraea lobata (L.) Klotzsch (Euphorbiaceae) is recorded for the first time from India. It occurs on roadsides near Akkalkot in the Solapur district of Maharashtra. A detailed description with illustration of the species is provided here.

Keywords: Astraea lobata, India, New Record

Introduction

Croton L. comprises c. 1200 species and occurs throughout tropics and subtropics. It is best represented in the Americas and West Indies; c. 65 species occur in continental Africa, c. 125 in Madagascar and c. 150 species in Asia (Webster, 1993; Schmelzer, 2007). Balakrishnan & Chakrabarty (2007) dealt 16 species from India.

During a floristic survey in Solapur district of Maharashtra, authors came across an interesting population of Croton on roadsides near Akkalkot. It did not match with any Indian species of Croton. On critical examination and perusal of relevant literature (Chakrabarty & Balakrishnan, 1992; Webster, 1993; Govaerts et al., 2000; Balakrishnan & Chakrabarty, 2007; Schmelzer, 2007), it was identified as Croton lobatus L. which is currently treated under Astraea Klotzsch. It is native to South America and West Indies. This species is also reported from Bangladesh (Khan & Khan, 2002). Its occurrence in Maharashtra forms a new distributional record for India. Hence, a detailed description with illustration is provided to facilitate its identification.


Fig. 1, 2

Annuals, monoecious, 60 – 70 cm high, branched. Stems ribbed, stellate-hairy when young. Leaves alternate, sometimes opposite towards apex, 2.5 – 10 cm long, deeply 3 – 5-lobed; lobes oblanceolate to obovate, crenate-serrate at margins, acuminate at apex, sparsely stellate-hairy to almost glabrous, 3 – 5-nerved at base; basal glands absent; petioles 6 – 15 cm long; stipules, filiform, small. Inflorescences a raceme, axillary or terminal, to 12 cm long, slender; male and female flowers intermixed on inflorescences or sometimes male flowers in upper half and female flowers in lower half. Flowers unisexual, 5-merous, regular, yellowish green. Male flowers: Buds globose; pedicels slender, 1 – 2 mm long. Sepals elliptic, c. 1 mm long, obtuse at apex. Petals slightly shorter than sepals, obovate, obtuse

Fig. 1. Astraea lobata (L.) Klotzsch: a. A twig; b. Male flower; c. Female flower; d. Seed.
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Fig. 2. Astraea lobata (L.) Klotzsch: a. Habit; b. Flowering twig; c. Seed.

Notes: During the present study Astraea lobata was found near Akkalkot in Solapur district of Maharashtra. It might have been introduced in India by pilgrims because Akkalkot is a famous place of pilgrimage and visited by thousands of pilgrims from various parts of India and other countries.

Astraea lobata is an alternative host of nematodes (Meloidogyne spp.) of fungi causing powdery mildew, and of cucumber mosaic virus (Schmelzer, 2007). Hence, there is a threat of introduction of plant diseases along with this species in India.

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