

## A new species of *Strobilanthes* Bl. (Acanthaceae) from South India

**E. S. Santhosh Kumar, M. Abdul Jabbar,  
A. E. Shanavas Khan, S. Binu and R. Raj Vikraman**  
Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute, Palode P.O.  
Thiruvananthapuram – 695 562, Kerala, India

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### Abstract

A new species of *Strobilanthes*, viz. *S. pushpangadanii* from Kerala, South India is described and illustrated.

### INTRODUCTION

The genus *Strobilanthes* Bl. comprising about 300 species is distributed from South East Asia to Africa (Wood, 1998), and is represented in India by about 150 species, out of which 45 are distributed in the Western Ghats of South India.

As a part of the studies on the germplasm collection and *ex-situ* conservation of the genus *Strobilanthes* at the Field Gene Bank of the Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (TBGRI), Thiruvananthapuram, the authors collected an interesting species from the Mankayam Hills in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. On critical studies it was found not matching with any of the known species of the genus. The specimens were further referred to Dr. Robert Scotland, University of Oxford, and he commented.... "it deserves a separate entity". It is described and illustrated here as a new species.

***Strobilanthes pushpangadanii* Santhosh, Jabbar *et* Shanavas, *sp. nov.* (Fig. 1).**

Affinis *Strobilanthes lanatus* Nees *et* *S. lawsonii* Gamble, sed differt *S. lanatus* folia acuminata-caudata ad apicem, denticulata ad margine, cuneata at basim, inflorescentia gracilis, bractea ovata et breviora (ad 9 mm longae), calyx breviora (ad 1.3 cm longae) et plus minusve, corolla bilabiata; sed differt *S. lawsonii* folia coriacea, inflorescentia non-interrupta breviora (ad 6.5 cm longae), calyx breviora (ad 1.3 cm longae), bractea acuta, ovata et capsula breviora (ad 1 cm longae).

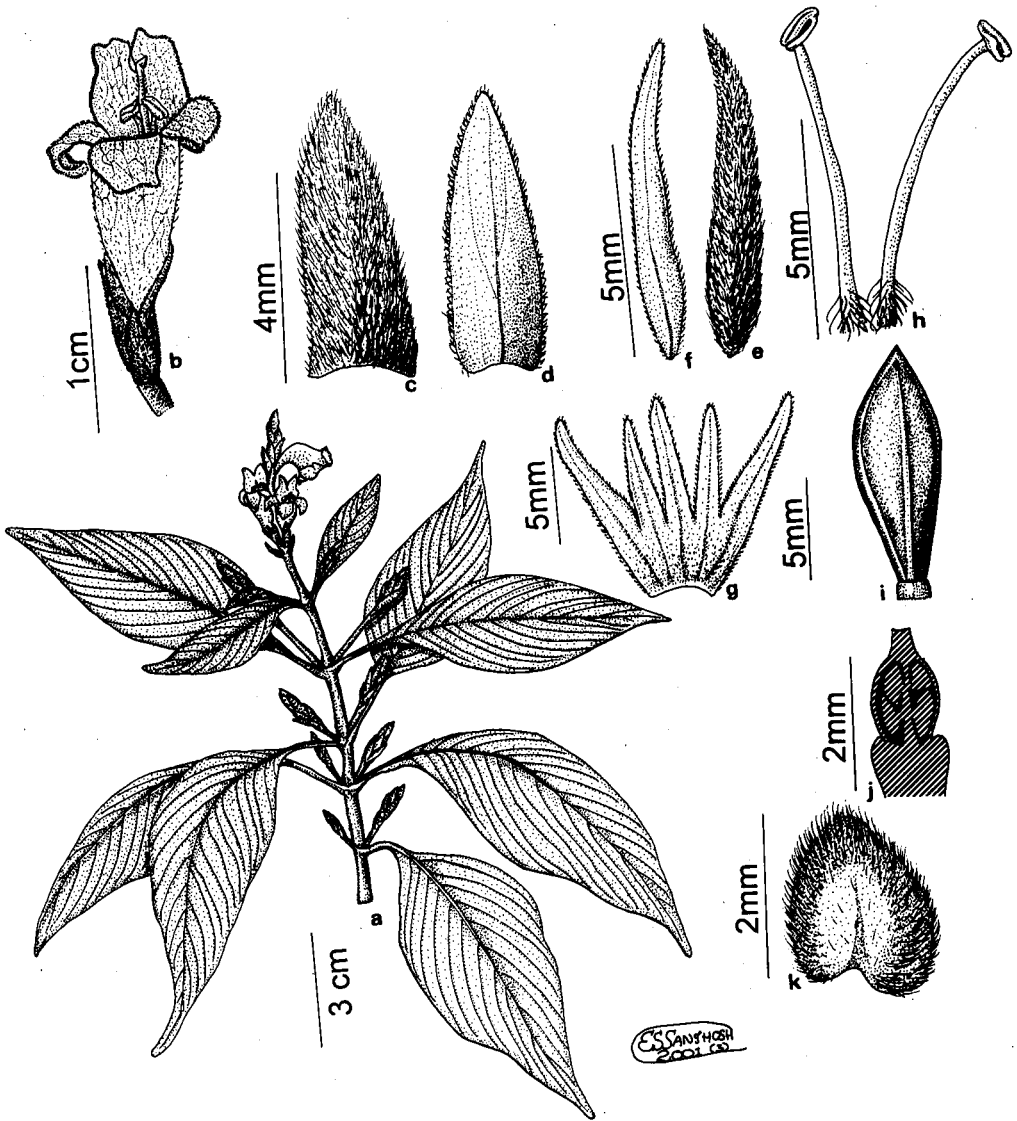
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Fig. 1. *Strobilanthes pushpangadanii* Santhosh, Jabbar *et* Shanavas: a. Habit; b. Flower; c & d. Bracts - dorsal and ventral view; e & f. Bracteoles - dorsal and ventral view; g. Sepals; h. Stamens; i. Capsule; j. L.S. of ovary; k. Seed.

### A new species of *Strobilanthes* Bl. from South India

*Type:* India, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram district: Mankayam Hills, 800 m, *Santhosh Kumar 14722* (*Holo-* TBGT; *Iso* - MH, CALI).

Woody shrubs. Stem woody, terete, cinnamomeous wooly when young, glabrescent on ageing. Leaves equal, 3-12 x 1-4.5 cm, elliptic-ovate, cuneate at base and shortly decurrent on the petiole, acuminate-caudate at apex, denticulate at margin, coriaceous, glabrous or sparsely pilose above, cinnamomeous adpressed wooly beneath; lateral nerves 8-13 pairs, impressed above, raised beneath. Inflorescence a simple or little branched spike, axillary and terminal; peduncle 3-6.5 cm long, cinnamomeous wooly; flowers arranged in opposite pairs; bracts ovate, acute at apex, 7-9 x 3-4 mm, glabrous within; bracteoles 2, linear, 5-6 x 1 mm, glabrous within, cinnamomeous wooly without. Calyx in flower 8-9 mm long, in fruits 1-1.3 cm long, lobed to half a way down; tube sericeous inside; lobes 5, linear-lanceolate, 4-6 x 1-1.5 mm, acute-obtuse at apex, glabrous inside. Corolla c. 2 cm long, light pink with dark purple nervation, more or less bilipped, villous without, pilose within tube cylindrical at base, gradually widening above, ventricose; lobes 5, two of them erect, others spreading, ovate, 6-7 x 3-4 mm, acute at apex. Stamens 2, included; filaments to 2.2 cm long, glabrous except the villous base. Ovary 2-celled, ovate-oblong, to 2 mm long, glabrous; style slender, sparsely hairy; ovules 2 in each cell. Capsule to 1 cm long, clavate, glabrous. Seeds 4, discoid, to 2.5 x 2.2 mm, villous near along the margins.

*Flowering and fruiting* : December – March.

*Habitat:* Usually seen along rocky cliffs above 800 m elevation in grasslands.

*Etymology* : The new species is named after Dr. P. Pushpangadan, former Director of the Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute and presently the Director, National Botanical Research Institute, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh for his valuable contributions to Botany.

*Other specimens examined:* INDIA, Kerala: Thiruvananthapuram district: Mankayam Hills, *Santhosh Kumar & Abdul Jabbar 14758* (*Paratype* – TBGT); TBGRI Field Gene Bank, *Santhosh Kumar 34483* (*Paratype* – TBGT).

*Note:* *S. pushpangadanii* is allied to *S. lanatus* Nees and *S. lawsonii* Gamble, but differs from the former by the leaves with acuminate to caudate apex, denticulate margins, cuneate at base, slender inflorescence, shorter ovate bracts (to 9 mm long), shorter calyx (to 1.3 cm long) and more or less 2-lipped corolla, and from the latter by the coriaceous leaves, non-interrupted inflorescence, shorter calyx (to 1.3 cm long), ovate-acute bracts, and shorter (to 1 cm long) capsules.

Bremekamp (1944) in his revision of the genus *Strobilanthes* recognized 64 segregate genera. In his sense the genus *Strobilanthes* does not occur in India. But his treatment is not widely accepted due to several reasons. According to his treatment, *S. pushpangadanii* should belong to the genus *Phlebophyllum*. But we prefer to treat this taxon under *Strobilanthes* (*sensu lato*).

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*S. pushpangadanii* generally flowers *en mass* once in 6 years. However, occasional blooms may also be encountered in few members of a population. The plant seldom sets fruits.

The attractive globose form and the shiny, woolly leaf underneath together makes *S. pushpangadanii* a beautiful wild ornamental plant suitable for woodlands garden. It can be easily propagated through tender stem cuttings.

**Acknowledgements**

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