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Ruellia elegans Poir. (Acanthaceae): A new plant record for Eastern India

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ABSTRACT

Ruellia elegans Poir. (Acanthaceae), a tropical Brazilian species, is added here to the flora of Odisha and Eastern India from Bhubaneswar. Nomenclature, brief botanical description, phenology, distribution and photograph of the species have been provided.

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The genus *Ruellia* L. (Acanthaceae) is represented by 150 species and distributed in tropical and sub-tropical parts of the world (Mabbeley, 1997). Out of this, 9 species are recorded to occur in India (Naithani, 1990; Kumar, & Murugan, 2009; Brintha *et al.*, 2015) and so far only one species from Odisha state (Saxena & Brahmam, 1995). While carrying out botanical exploration in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, some specimens of the family Acanthaceae were collected, which on critical study were identified as *Ruellia elegans* Poir. So far, it is known to occur in Andaman Nicobar Islands, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Hence, it is reported here as a new distributional record for Odisha states and also for eastern India. For an easy identification, a brief description, updated nomenclature, phenology and photographs have been provided. The specimens have been deposited in the Herbarium at Regional Resource Centre (RPRC), Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Ruellia elegans Poir., Encyl. Suppl. 4:727. 1816; Kumar, & Murugan, J. Indian Bot. Soc. 88 (3&4):102. 2009; Brintha *et al.*, Science Research Reporter 5(1): 40. 2015. *Ruellia formosa* Bonpl. Pl. Aequinoct. 1:167. t.48 1843. *Arrhoxylum formosa* (Bonpl.) Nees Fl. Bras. 9:62. 1847.

Annual or perennial, erect herbs up to 60 cm high; branchlets quadrangular, ascending, multiple branches, pubescent. Leaves simple, opposite, elliptic-oblong or ovate-lanceolate, 5-10 × 2.5-4 cm long, cuneate to attenuate at base, apex at acuminate, margin obscurely crenate or entire, sparsely scabrous adaxially, sub-coriaceous, glabrous abaxially; lateral nerves 6-8 pairs, prominent; petiole less than 1 cm long, flat, pubescent. Inflorescence axillary, raceme, up to 15 cm long; peduncle up to 10 cm long, pubescent. Flowers 4.5 cm across, red, bisexual, regular, sub-sessile; bracts one pair for each branch, 1.3 × 0.4 cm long, oblong, pubescent. Calyx valvate, 5, less than 1.5 cm long, tube very short, base united; calyx lobes un-equal, linear, each lobe 1-1.3 cm long, green, densely villous. Corolla tubular, 4.5 cm long, slightly bent, red, villous; 5-lobed, lobe obovate to obtuse, 1 cm across, glabrous. Stamens 4, didynamous; filaments connate at middle, unequal, *ca.* 8-15 cm long, glabrous; anthers 5 mm long, oblong, dithecous, versatile, yellowish white. Ovary disc, elliptic, 4 mm long, pubescent; style 4.2 cm in long, linear, glabrous, pinkish white; stigma bifid, dark pink.

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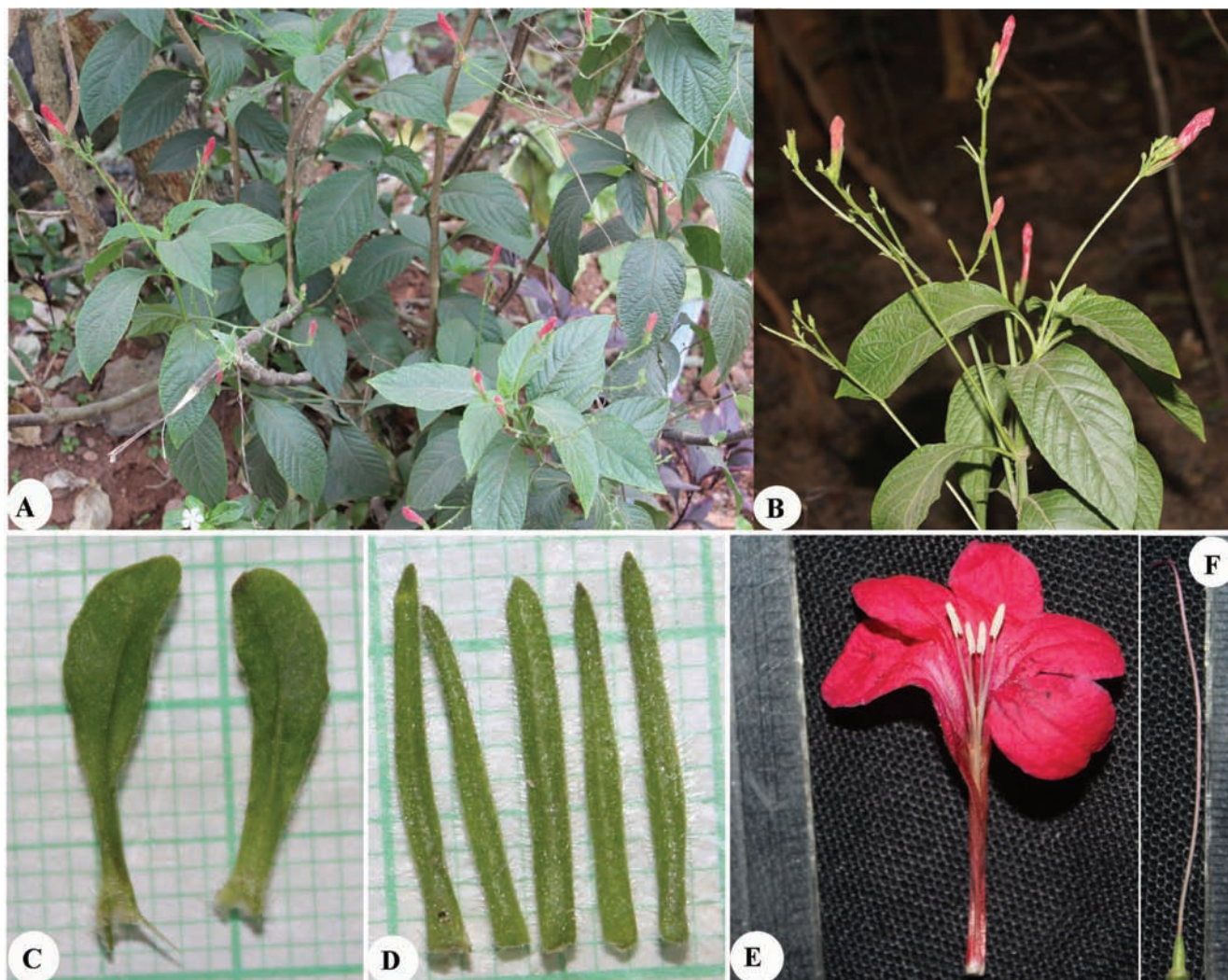


Fig. 1. *Ruellia elegans* Poir. (Acanthaceae): A. habit, B. flower twig, C. bracts, D. calyx, E. split of corolla, F. pistil

Flowering and Fruiting: September - December

Ecology: In the wild, it grows in marshy localities along forest edges and water canals in semi-evergreen forests. Most likely, the species was introduced to Bhubaneswar along with soils and seeds of other garden ornamental plants and got naturalized.

Distribution: INDIA (Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Odisha), BRAZIL

Specimens examined: INDIA, Odisha State, Khurda District, Bhubaneswar, IRC village, N20°18'356" E085°40'758", Kalidass & Murugan 9497 (RPRC), Dt. 21. 10. 2016.

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