

## A New species of *Brachystelma* R.Br. (Asclepiadaceae) from Maharashtra, India

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### Abstract

*Brachystelma naorojii* Tetali *et al.*, *sp. nov.* from Maharashtra is described and illustrated.

### INTRODUCTION

During a survey of rare plants of the Maharashtra State, we came across a tuberous Asclepiadaceae member which was thought to be a species of *Ceropegia*. However, when flowered we realised that the species belonged to the genus *Brachystelma*. A perusal of relevant literature and critical examination revealed that it is a new species. The finding was later confirmed by Dr. D.J. Goyder, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, England. The new species is described and illustrated here.

***Brachystelma naorojii*** P. Tetali, D.K. Kulk., S. Tetali *et* Kumbh. *sp. nov.* (Fig. 1).

Affinis *B. kolarensis* Arekal *et* Ramakrishna. Differt plantae plerumque megalotuberum, megafoliorum, flore sine atropurpuris puntatis, atropurpuris loborum coronarum, megapollinitus, floriscentis inita aestate.

Allied to *B. kolarensis* Arekal & Ramakrishna. But differs in larger tubers and leaves, flowers without purple spots, large cupular corona with dark purple corona lobes, bigger pollinia and flowering during summer.

Type: India, Maharashtra, hill slopes of Gavadewadi near Pandav Dhara, 3 km south from Shindewadi Phata on Pune-Satara National Highway (NH-4). July 1993. *P. Tetali* 72A (Holo - AHMA); *ibid.*, *P. Tetali* 17895, 17896 (Para - K).

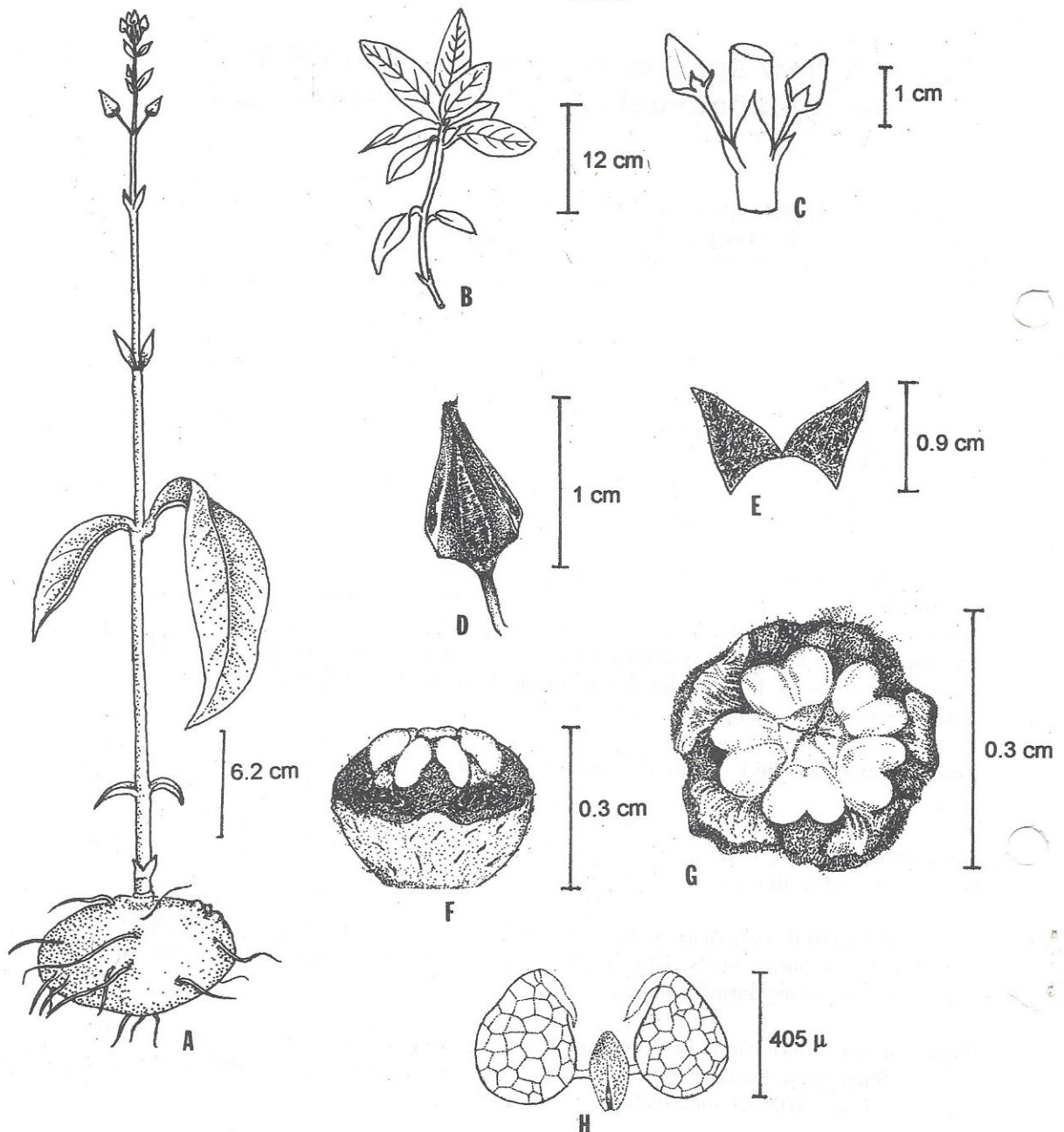
P. Tetali *et al.*

Fig. 1. *Brachystelma naorojii* P. Tetali *et al.*: A. Plant in flowering state; B. Plant in vegetative state; C. Bracteate flowers; D. Opened flower; E. Corolla - inner view; F. Corona - lateral view; G. Corona - top view; H. Pollinium.

***Brachystelma naorojii* sp. nov. (Asclepidaceae)**

A slender erect perennial, herb, 30-55 cm in height. Roots tuberous, round or ovate when young, flattened in mature plants, fleshy, 7-9 x 4-6 cm. Stems glaucous green, occasionally tinged with purple, usually unbranched with deltoid leaf scales, sparingly pubescent, occasionally with appressed hairs. Latex watery, yellowish-green, bitter. Internode between first and second pair of leaves 5-30 cm long, the first pair of leaves always smaller, about 3-6 cm from above the tuber, one of the opposite leaves in the pair is always small. Leaves sessile, opposite-decussate, glabrous above and pale beneath, lamina 1.5-9 x 0.5-4 cm, lanceolate, ovate-oblong or ovate-lanceolate, apex acuminate, margin ciliate, hairs swollen at base. Flowering nodes with opposite, 2-3 mm long scale leaves. Flowers bracteate, two, on either side of the scale leaf, green turning to brick red, reddish-violet and finally to reddish-purple, darker and puberulus within, hairs white. Pedicels 5-7 mm long, sparsely hairy. Calyx 5-partite, lobes 5, 1.5-2 mm long. Corolla deeply 5-fid, lobes 0.9-1 cm long, thickly hairy on the inner side. Corona cupular, 5-lobed, lobes with long white hairs, margin dark purple, lower portion of the corona white, 2.3-3 x 3 mm, sparsely hairy, obtusely five angled, coronal lobes produced into 5 inner lobes incumbent and adpressed on the stamen. Stamens 5, pollinia globose, yellow 405  $\mu$ m long, style-apex pentagonal. Follicles single or in pairs, 6 cm long, tapering at the apex. Seeds comose, dark brown with light brown margin, 0.8-1 cm long, coma silky white, upto 2 cm long.

*Habitat:* Rare, on partially degraded hill slopes and open hill tops among grasses. The hill slopes are used for cattle grazing. The entire area has been declared as D-category Industrial zone by Maharashtra State in order to promote industrial growth.

*Flowering and Fruiting:* May - June.

*Etymology:* The new species has been named after late Mr. Naoroji Godrej, a noted industrialist to commemorate his keen interest in plant conservation.

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