

# NEW PLANT RECORDED IN INDIA IS INVASIVE WEED ELSEWHERE

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

*Strobilanthes reptans* appears has earned the Indian tag with the reputation of being an invasive weed in the Indo-Pacific islands. | Photo Credit: [Special Arrangement](#)

This is one find the botanists involved wish they had never had to record.

*Strobilanthes reptans* appears ornamental. But it has earned the Indian tag with the reputation of being an invasive weed in the Indo-Pacific islands.

Jatindra Sarma had come across this plant during a 2019 trip to Tipi in Arunachal Pradesh's West Kameng district. He brought a sample into cultivation for studying its floral morphology when he was posted as the Conservator of Forests based in northern Assam's Tezpur.

The taxonomical study of the plant with H.A. Barbhuiya and C.K. Salunkhe of Mumbai's Bhabha Atomic Research Centre and S. Dey Nagaland University's Department of Botany confirmed it as *Strobilanthes reptans*.

Their paper establishing the species as a new addition to the flora of India was published in *Rheedia*, the journal of the Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy.

Mr. Sarma, now the Chief Conservator of Forests in southern Assam, said the plant has not had any adverse effect on indigenous flora as it is restricted to a single locality measuring less than 1 sq. km. "Therefore, in the current scenario, no action needs to be taken to control its spread," he said.

The *Strobilanthes reptans* was found growing up to 20 cm tall on grassy hill slopes at 150 metres above mean sea level. It sported tubular white or pale violet flowers with darker veins from June to September, and yielded fruit from July to December.

"We could not trace its cultivation in India as the plant is a little-known ornamental. How the plant reached Tipi needs to be studied and because it was encountered in a semi-disturbed area, there is evidence for its escape (to other parts) and naturalisation," Mr. Sarma said.

The researchers said the plant could possibly have escaped from cultivation from Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia or Sri Lanka, where it has naturalised. The plant has also been recorded in Taiwan, Ryukyu islands of Japan, northern Australia, Singapore, Hawaii and a few other countries.

The study recommended further investigation and monitoring of the population of the *Strobilanthes reptans*.

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