

***DIOSPYROS ALBIFLORA* ALSTON (EBENACEAE): A NEW ANGIOSPERMIC RECORD FOR BANGLADESH**

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Abstract

Diospyros albiflora (Ebenaceae) is described and illustrated as a new angiospermic record for Bangladesh.

The family Ebenaceae consists of 5 genera and about 450 species, widespread in tropical and subtropical regions of both the Old and New Worlds (Cronquist 1981). In Bangladesh, *Diospyros* (Ebenaceae) is represented by 10 species, namely *D. blancoi* A. DC., *D. ferrea* (Willd.) Bakh., *D. lanceifolia* Roxb., *D. malabarica* (Desr.) Kostel., *D. melanoxyton* Roxb., *D. montana* Roxb., *D. nigricans* Wall., *D. pilosula* (A. DC.) Hiern., *D. stricta* Roxb. and *D. toposia* Buch.-Ham. (Ahmed *et al.* 2008). Recently a specimen of the genus *Diospyros* was collected from Mirzagong Upazila of Patuakhali district which has not been matched with the recorded species, and after critical study, it has been identified as *Diospyros albiflora* Alston. Although *Diospyros albiflora* Alston is very close to *D. malabarica*, it can be easily distinguished by its ascending very coriaceous fruiting calyx, rigidly coriaceous leaves, sub-ellipsoid to globose fruit with rather thick pedicel.

Diospyros albiflora Alston has not been previously recorded from any part of present Bangladesh (Clarke 1882, Prain 1903, Heinig 1925, Raizada 1941, Datta and Mitra 1953, Sinclair 1956, Khan and Afza 1968, Khan and Banu 1972, Khan and Hassan 1984, Khan *et al.* 1994, Mia and Khan 1995, Rahman and Hassan 1995, Uddin and Rahman 1999, Khan and Huq 2001, Rashid and Mia 2001, Uddin *et al.* 2003, Rahman 2004a, b and Islam *et al.* 2009). Hence, the occurrence of this species in Bangladesh is reported here for the first time.

A detailed taxonomic account along with illustration of the plant has been made based on the fresh materials. The collected specimen has been preserved in the Salar Khan Herbarium of the University of Dhaka.

Diospyros albiflora Alston in Trimen, Handb. Fl. Ceylon 6: 180 (1931). Dassanayake & Fosberg, Rev. Handb. Fl. Ceylon 3: 24 (1981). *Diospyros embryopteris* var. *nervosa* Thw., Enum. Pl. Zeyl.: 178 (1860); Trimen, Handb. Fl. Ceylon 3: 93 (1895); Wright, Ann. R. Bot. Gard. Peradeniya 2: 142 (1904); Kosterm., Ceylon J. Biol. Sci. 12(2): 92 (1977). **(Fig. 1)**

Local name: *Pechi Gab*.

A medium size tree, up to 25 m tall, with a few buttresses up to 1 m high. Bark rather smooth, dark purplish-brown. Twig rigid, rather thick, apical part and terminal bud with adpressed or sub-adpressed black to dark brown hairs. Leaves rigidly coriaceous, glabrous, ovate-lanceolate, occasionally ovate, 2.5 - 8.0 × 7 - 20 cm, shortly acuminate, base rounded, both surfaces very

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Fig. 1. *Diospyros albiflora* Alston. A. Habit sketch with a fruit ($\times 0.4$). B. Fruit ($\times 0.4$).

conspicuously, rather smoothly, prominently reticulate; midrib slender, impressed on upper surface, prominent on lower surface; lateral nerves 5-7 in each side of the midrib, arcuately ascendent, prominulous. Petioles slender, up to 1.6 cm long, narrowly channeled above. Inflorescence axillary, few-flowered; flowers 3 - 5 together on short pedicels; inflorescence and calyx with a black tomentum. Flowers white, calyx campanulate, deeply lobed. Fruits globose to subellipsoid-globose, 5 cm in diameter, pericarp leathery, 2 - 3 mm thick. Seeds 4, large, c. 3 cm long, wedge-shaped; endosperm equable. Base of the fruit surrounded by 4, very coriaceous, ovate-triangular, 2.5 - 3.0 cm long, acute, at the base c. 2.5 cm wide calyx lobes, where they meet at the base protruding as four sharp ridges.

Flowering and fruiting time: April - October.

Specimens examined: Patuakhali district, Mirzagonj, 16.05.2005, M. Sultana, MS 797 (DUH); Mirzagonj, 20.07.2010, M. Sultana, MS 1764 (DUH).

Distribution: Sri Lanka.

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