

Western Ghats offer major additions to flora

Botanical Survey of India says 202 species were discovered across the country in 2020

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The Botanical Survey of India, in its new publication *Plant Discoveries 2020* has added 267 new taxa/ species to the country's flora.

The 267 new discoveries include 119 angiosperms; 3 pteridophytes; 5 bryophytes, 44 lichens; 57 fungi, 21 algae and 18 microbes.

In 2020, 202 new plant species were discovered across the country and 65 new records were added.

With these new discoveries the latest estimate of plant diversity in India stands at 54,733 taxa including 21,849 angiosperms, 82 gymnosperms, 1,310 pteridophytes, 2,791 bryophytes,



Green gem: Leaves and bark of the *Syzygium anamalaianum*, a new tree species of the Western Ghats. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

2,961 lichens, 15,504 fungi, 8,979 algae and 1,257 microbes.

“The year 2020 will remain marked in global histo-

ry for the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the havoc it caused and still continues in 2021. This overwhelming addition of 267

plant taxa to Indian flora, which were discovered as either new species or as new distributional records for India, is nowhere less than the average number of new plant discoveries made from India during the past one-and-half decade,” said A.A. Mao, Director of the Botanical Survey of India.

Balsam blossoms

Among the new discoveries this year, nine new species of balsam (*Impatiens*) and one species of wild banana (*Musa pradhanii*) were discovered from Darjeeling and one species each of wild *jamun* (*Syzygium anamalaianum*) from Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu and fern (*Selaginella*

odishana) were recorded from Kandhamal in Odisha. There are 14 new macro and 31 new micro fungi species recorded from various parts of India.

An assessment of the geographical distribution of these newly discovered plants reveals that 22% of the discoveries were made from the Western Ghats followed by the Western Himalayas (15%), the Eastern Himalayas (14%) and the Northeast ranges (12%). The west coast contributed 10% while the east coast contributed (9%) in total discoveries; the Eastern Ghats and south Deccan contribute 4% each while the central highland and north Deccan added 3% each.