

# Researchers unravel floral biodiversity

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Four new balsam species discovered in Arunachal Pradesh during an expedition to the Himalayas

T. NANDAKUMAR  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Throwing fresh light on the uncharted biodiversity in India's north-eastern region, researchers from the University of Calicut in Kerala have reported the discovery of four new species of balsam from various locations in Arunachal Pradesh.

The team came across the new species while scouring the Eastern Himalayas as part of an expedition supported by the Department of Science and Technology and the International Association for Plant Taxonomy, Slovakia.

Commonly known as jewel weeds because of the diverse colour of the flowers, balsams are distributed throughout the Eastern Himalayas and the Western Ghats, Sri Lanka, South East Asia, Africa and Madagascar. The genus is scientifically named as *Impatiens*, signifying the impatient nature of



**Bright and beautiful:** *Impatiens haridasanii* and *Impatiens nilalohitae*. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the fruits which explode suddenly when touched.

The researchers have published their findings in the international journals *Phytotaxa* and *Webbia*.

Reported from Pongchan, *Impatiens Haridasanii* was named after Haridasan, former scientist, State Forest Research Institute, Arunachal Pradesh, for his contribution to the taxonomy of the north-eastern States. The species is characterised by small pure yellow flowers

and hairy leaves. *Impatiens pseudocitrina*, discovered from Anjaw district, sports bright yellow flowers with small red spots on the throat and a long spur at the back. The species name denotes the similarities with *I. citrina*. A magnificent species discovered from the Lower Dibang valley, *Impatiens nilalohitae* grows to a height of more than one metre and has dark purple flowers with pale yellow throat and green stalk. The name *nilalohitae*

denotes the dark purple colour in Sanskrit.

Another spectacular balsam, *I.roingensis*, was found growing in Roing and Upper Siang. The plant has clustered white flowers with yellow patch on the mouth and hooked spur.

According to the authors, road widening works, deforestation and other development activities are posing a threat to the natural habitat of the new species.

The researchers have also

reported the rediscovery of another species *I. agastyamalayensis* from the Western Ghats after a gap of more than a century.

India is home to more than 230 balsam species.

Earlier this year, scientists had reported the discovery of *Impatiens arunachalensis*, a critically endangered species, from the Upper Siang district. Another balsam species *Impatiens walongensis* has been reported from Anjaw district.