

A NEW SPECIES OF BLEPHARIS JUSS. (ACANTHACEAE)
FROM TAMIL NADU, INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

During identification and study of the materials of the genus *Blepharis* Juss. in the Central National Herbarium (CAL) of the Botanical Survey of India the authors came across some specimens (*Lawson 314*) from Tavancore, which was identified as *B. molluginifolia* aff. But critical study revealed that the typical *molluginifolia* is a different species from which the new taxon can be distinguished by several characters.

The species is named after M.A. Lawson who collected the specimen for the first time.

Blepharis lawsonii Giri et R.N. Ban., *sp. nov.* — Fig. 1.

Herba multo ramosa, repens. *Caulis* teres, pilis deflexis in una serie, saepe radicans ad nodos, internodia (3-)5-15(-25) mm longa. *Folia* simplicia, verticillata, plerumque 4 ad nodos, sessilia, obovata, (3-)5-7(-10) × (2-)2.5-4(-6) mm, coriacea vel subcoriacea, apice rotundata vel breviter mucronata, margine integra, nervis lateralibus obscuris, folia juniora saepe sparsim setosa. *Flores* axillares, solitarii, sessiles. *Bractae* 2, oblongae, 0.75-1.0 × 0.5-0.75 mm, apice apiculatae, trinerves, ad marginem versus apicem setoso-ciliatae, extus puberulae, intus glabrae. *Bracteolae* 8 (in 4 paribus) extus puberulae, intus versus apicem saltem 1/4 totae longitudinis pilosae, aliter glabrae, apice acuminatae, margine longiciliatae, reticulatae, nervi principales infra prominentes, par primum ovatum vel ovato-oblongum, 2.0-2.5 × 1.25-1.5 mm, trinerve, par secundum carinatum, lanceolatum vel ovato lanceolatum, 4.0-4.5 × 1.75-2.0 mm, trinerve, par tertium ovato-ellipticum vel oblongo-ellipticum, 5.5-6.0 × 2.75-3.0 mm, trinerve, par quartum carinatum, obovatum, 7.0-8.0 × 3.0-3.5 mm, trinerve. *Sepala* 4 in duobus paribus oppositis, membranacea, extus puberula, intus glabra, ad marginem ciliata, reticulata, paria exteriora majora, sepalum anterius oblongum vel oblongo-lanceolatum 8.5-9.5 × 2.5-3.0 mm, apice acutum, trinerve, sepalum posterius lanceolatum vel elliptico-lanceolatum 8.5-9.5 × 2.0-2.5 mm, apice bifidum, binerve, sepala paria interioris lanceolata, 7.0-7.5 × 2.0-2.5 mm,

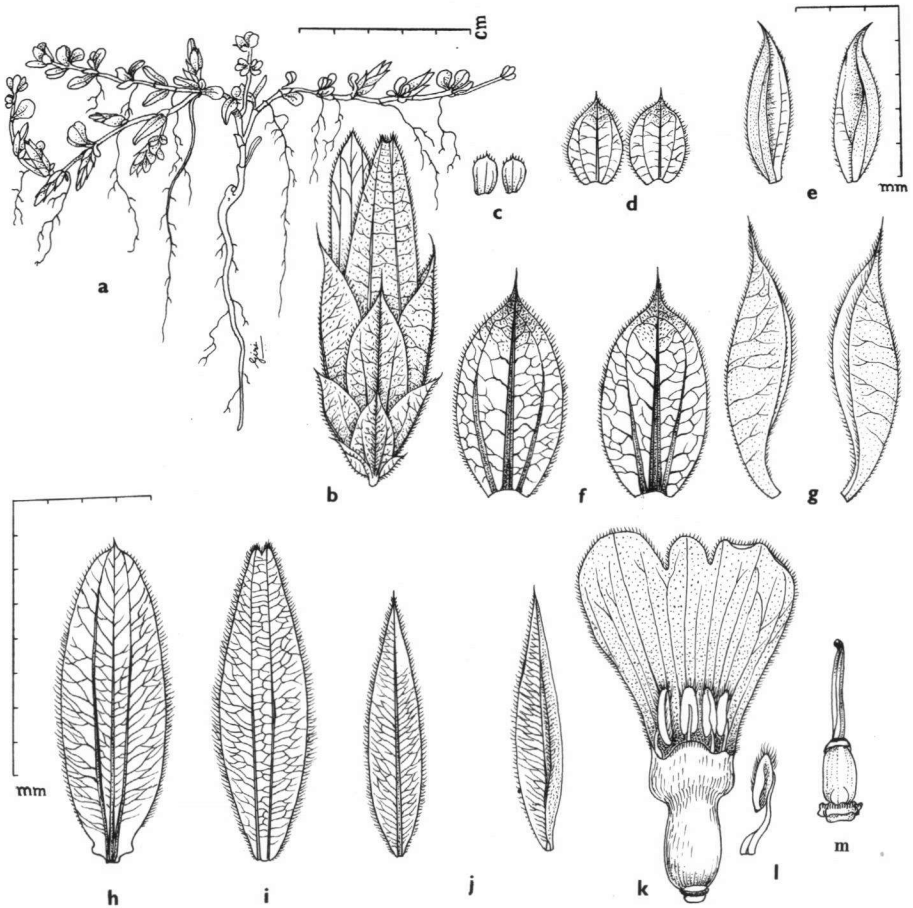


Fig. 1. — a. Habit; b. flower; c. bracts; d–g. bracteoles (1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th pair); h–i. outer pair of sepals; j. inner pair of sepals; k. corolla; l. stamen; m. gynoecium. — After M.A. Lawson 314, holotype.

apice acuminata, uninervia. *Corolla* bilabiata, tubus 3.5–4.5 mm longus, extus glaber, intus annulis pilorum plumosorum infra affixis staminum; labium superius perbreve vel rudimentarium, labium inferius bene evolutum, 5.5–6.5 mm e fauce tubi, trilobatum lobo medio parviore, extus dense puberulum, intus pilis albis deflexis vel uncinatis dense tectum, membranaceum, ad marginem ciliatum, subtiliter nervosum. *Stamina* 4, non diverse in magnitudine vel affixis, filamenta 1.25–1.5 mm longa, ad basin crassiora, glabra, prolongata super insertionem antherae; antherae 1.5–1.75 × 0.5 mm, uniloculares, longiciliatae ad marginem apicemque, dorsaliter glabrae vel sub-

glabrae. *Ovarium* cylindricum, 1.5 mm longum, glabrum, stylus 2.5–3.0 mm longus, glaber, styli basis deorsum producta, apicem ovarii cingens, cupulam inversam formans, stigma inconspicuum. *Ovarium* biloculare, ovulo singulo amplo in quoque loculo. *Fructus* non visus. — *Holotypus*: *M.A. Lawson 314* (CAL).

Much branched creeping herb; stem terete, with one line of deflexed hairs, often rooting at the nodes, internodes (3–)5–15(–25) mm long. *Leaves* simple, verticillate, usually 4 at nodes, sessile, obovate, (3–)5–7(–10) × (2–)2.5–4(–6) mm, coriaceous or subcoriaceous, apex rounded or shortly mucronate, margin entire, lateral nerves obscure, younger leaves often sparsely setose. *Flowers* axillary, solitary, sessile. *Bracts* 2, oblong, 0.75–1.0 × 0.5–0.75 mm, apex apiculate, trinerved, margin towards apex setose ciliate, outside puberulous, inside glabrous. *Bracteoles* 8 (4 pairs); outside puberulous, inside towards the apex at least 1/4th of the whole length hairy, rest glabrous, apex acuminate, margin long ciliate, reticulate, main nerves raised beneath, first pair ovate or ovate-oblong, 2.0–2.5 × 1.25–1.5 mm, trinerved; second pair keeled, lanceolate or ovate-lanceolate, 4.0–4.5 × 1.75–2.0 mm, trinerved; third pair ovate-elliptic or oblong-elliptic, 5.5–6.0 × 2.75–3.0 mm, trinerved; fourth pair keeled, obovate, 7.0–8.0 × 3.0–3.5 mm, uninerved. *Sepals* 4 in two opposite pairs; membranous, outside puberulous, inside glabrous, margin ciliated, reticulate; outer pair larger, anterior sepal oblong or oblong-lanceolate, 8.5–9.5 × 2.5–3.0 mm, apex acute, trinerved, posterior sepal lanceolate or elliptic-lanceolate, 8.5–9.5 × 2.0–2.5 mm, apex bifid, binerved; inner pair, smaller, lanceolate, 7.0–7.5 × 2.0–2.5 mm, apex acuminate, uninerved. *Corolla* bilabiate; tube 3.5–4.5 mm long, outside glabrous, inside with a ring of plumose hairs below the attachment of stamens; upper lip very short or rudimentary; lower lip well developed, 5.5–6.5 mm long from throat of the tube, trilobed, middle lobe smaller, outside densely puberulous, inside densely covered with hooked or deflexed white hairs, membranous, margin ciliated, finely nerved. *Stamens* 4, not differing in size and attachment, filaments 1.25–1.5 mm long, thicker at the base, glabrous, prolonged above the insertion of the anther; anthers 1.5–1.75 × 0.5 mm, one-celled, margin and apex long ciliated, dorsally glabrous or almost glabrous. *Ovary* cylindrical, 1.5 mm long, glabrous, style 2.5–3.0 mm long, glabrous, base of the style produced downwards encircling the top of the ovary forming an inverted cup-like structure, stigma inconspicuous. *Ovary* bilocular with one large ovule in each locule. *Fruit* not seen.

Distribution. India: Malabar Coast, Tamil Nadu, Cape Comorin, 21.xii.1893, *M.A. Lawson 314* (holotype, CAL); Cape Comorin; Tamil Nadu, 26.vi.1971, *T.A. Rao 8203* (CAL); Kerala Coast, Kovalum, 8.vi.1971, *T.A. Rao 8115* (CAL).

Ecology. Small prostrate herb growing along the granite rocky sea shore.

AFFINITIES

The species is closely related to *Blepharis exigua* (Zoll.) Valet. ex Back. but differs in much branched creeping habit with internodes very short, leaves smaller obovate,

bracts oblong, apiculate, bracteoles at least 1/4th of its length towards the apex hairy inside, lower lip of corolla densely hooked hairy inside and densely puberulous outside. In *B. exigua* the internodes are long, 2.5 to 5.5 cm, leaves larger, elliptic or elliptic-oblong, 1.5–5.0 × 0.5–2.5 cm, bracts ovate acuminate, bracteoles glabrous inside, lower lip of corolla sparsely hooked hairy inside and glabrous outside.

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