

WILD JASMINES OF THE BAY ISLANDS

SUJATHA A NAIR AND D. B. SINGH, Central Agricultural Research Institute, Port Blair 744 101
(Andaman and Nicobar Group of Islands), India

A brief description of occurrence and availability of *Jasminum* species in Andaman and Nicobar Group of Islands has been enumerated in this paper.

Key words : *Jasminum*, wild species, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, occurrence

Jasmine (*Jasminum* spp.) is one of the most fragrant flowers cultivated by man since time immemorial. The flowers and buds are used for making garlands, and are used for adorning hair of women and for religious offerings. The flowers are highly valued in the perfumery industry for its concrete and absolute. Among the scented species, those widely grown are *J. grandiflorum*, *J. auriculatum*, *J. sambac*, *J. angustifolium*, *J. officinale*, *J. humile* and *J. pubescens*. In Malaysia, the flowers are used for scenting coconut hair oil. In China, Arabian jasmine is reported to be used for flavouring tea. The flowers and other parts of the plants are used for medicinal purposes as well.

Jasmines are native to tropical and subtropical regions. The genus *Jasminum* belongs to the family Oleaceae. A large number of species are centered around the regions comprising India, China and Malaysia (With India., 1959). Among these, about 40 species are reported to occur in India. The distribution pattern of *Jasminum* species provides a strong base to the claim that India may be one of the principal centres of origin. The references to the three cultivated species, viz., *J. auriculatum*, *J. grandiflorum* and *J. sambac* in ancient Tamil literature belonging to the period

of Sangam era prior to 500 BC suggests that South India may possibly be the home of at least some of these species which occur only in wild forms. About 90 species of Jasmine have so far been identified. The Andaman and Nicobar Group of Islands, about 1,200 km away from the Indian mainland in the South-East Bay of Bengal are situated between 6°45' N and 13°41' N latitudes and 92°12' E and 93°57' longitudes. The islands enjoy a true maritime climate with the temperature ranging between 23°C and 32°C. Annual rainfall is more than 3000 mm, distributed over nine months and the relative humidity varies between 68 to 85 per cent. The climatic conditions prevailing in these islands are conducive for the luxuriant growth and development of various ornamental species, including flowering and foliage plants. A number of flowering trees, creepers, ferns, orchids and other ornamentals are found growing in the wild.

The tropical rain forests of Andaman and Nicobar Islands harbour eight species of Jasmine having horticultural and perfumery value, and mostly grow wild in the forests and are staggling scandent shrubs having very attractive fragrant flowers. Some of these jasmine species can be grown as ornamental and decorative climbers in

the home gardens. Few of these species can also be used for making garlands and venis. Some of the wild *Jasminum* species present in the Bay islands are listed below along with the botanical description, distribution and status.

Jasminum andamanicum Bl. & Nair

The plant is a straggling and scandent shrub having pinnately trifoliolate leaves and is endemic to these islands. The common petiole is about an inch long having swollen base, leaflets 1-4 inches long 1.5-2.0 inches broad, ovate to elliptic, round at the base dark green, flowers white, present in clusters very fragrant in axillary pendulous cyme, corolla tube - 1-1 1/4 inches long, flowering mostly in January-March. This species is rare and found only in South and Middle Andaman Islands.

Jasminum caudatum Wall.

A scandent shrub, leaves pinnately trifoliolate, the common petiole about an inch long, swollen at the base, leaflets 2-4 inches length, 1-2 1/2 inches broad, ovate to elliptic and often broadly so, the central leaflet largest and on long petioles, flowers handsome fragrant, borne in axillary cymes, corolla, tube 1-1 1/4 inches long, the limb 1/2-1 inches across. Flowering in November-January.

Jasminum cordifolium Wall. ex. G. Don spp. *andamanicum* Srivast. & Kapoor

The plants are straggling and scandent climbers, leaves 2-4 1/2 inches long 1-2 inches broad ovate, finely acuminate, narrowed at the rounded base, dark green and glabrous, with lateral nerves boldly interarching at the margin. Petiole 1/1 to 1/2 inch long, flowers 1 inch in diameter in axillary or terminal trichotomous cymes, corolla tube 1/1 inch long, lobes 6-8, 1/2 inches long. Flowering is in January. Grows wild in South Andaman island (Baratang island). It is endemic to Andaman islands (Lakshminarasimhan and Rao, 1996).

Jasminum unifololatum Alakr & N.G. Nair

Scandent shrub with unifoliolate leaves and white flowers in paniculate cymes. It is rare (Nayar, 1994) and found in the North Andaman island (Saddle peak)

Jasminum multiflorum (Burn. f.) Andr

This is a very ornamental plant producing slightly fragrant white flowers and is in bloom through out the year. Found wild in the Great Nicobar island.

Jasminum ritchiei C.B. Clarke

A climbing scandent shrub found in the rain forests of Middle Andamans. The leaves are ovate, acuminate, glabrous, flowers white borne in 3-9 flowered often subpaniculate cymes. The leaves are used as a remedy for tooth-ache, wood for pipes tubes and flowers for treatment of piles.

Jasminum mauritianum Boj.

Scandent leaves pinnately trifoliolate, the common petiole 1-1 1/2 inch long; leaflets 1-3 inch long and about half as broad, broadly elliptic to ovate, somewhat shortly and bluntly apiculate, lateral nerves fine, interarching rather far from the margin. Flowers white, in ample terminal corymbose glandular cymes; corolla tube 1-1 1/4 inch long, the limb about 1/2 inch across. Found wild in Long Island (Khader and Kumar, 1995).

REFERENCES

- Khader, JBM M.A. and N. Kumar. 1995. Genetic Resources of Jasmine. In: *Advances in Horticulture*. Vol. 12, Eds K.L. Chadha and S. K. Bhattacharjee, Malhotra Publishing House, New Delhi, p 121-132.
- Lakshminarasimhan, P. and P.S.N. Rao. 1996. A supplementary list of angiosperms recorded (1983-1993) from Andaman & Nicobar islands. *J. Econ. Tax. Bot.*, 20 (1): 175-185.
- Nayar, M.P. 1994. Andaman & Nicobar Islands Death - traps of Endemic plant species. *Zoos' Print* 9(6): 5-11.
- With India. 1959. The Wealth of India. Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, New Delhi, p 279-292.