

Family Myrtaceae in Kashmir

Myrtus communis, L.-A New Record for the Shrub World of Kashmir Himalayas

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Abstract: During our floristic study on alien ornamental flora we recorded the occurrence of *Myrtus communis* belonging to family Myrtaceae for the first time from Kashmir Himalayas. The species is native to the Mediterranean region and has been introduced to Valley of Kashmir for its sweet fragrance and ornamental importance. This spectacular shrub finds a rich local distribution in the lawns, parks and gardens of the region, thus adding to the beauty of the Paradise on Earth, the Kashmir. With this addition, the alien flora of Kashmir Himalayas stretches to 572 species, 353 genera and 105 families. [Academia Arena, 2010;2(5):42-43] (ISSN 1553-992X).

Key words: *Myrtus communis*, alien flora, Kashmir, Himalayas, Myrtaceae

1. Introduction

Many studies on alien flora of Kashmir have been carried out from time to time by many taxonomists (Lambert 1933, Stewart 1972, Singh and Misri 1974, Naqshi, et.al 1976, Ara et al 1995, Dar, et.al 2002, Anzar et al, 2007). These workers reported the occurrence of alien taxa from this region and till date the alien flora of the region was known to consist of 571 species belonging to 352 genera and 104 families (Anzar et al 2007). Here we report the occurrence of *Myrtus communis* which is the first report for this species from Kashmir Himalayas. This is also the first record of the occurrence of family Myrtaceae in Kashmir. Thus, the alien flora of Kashmir Himalayas comprises of 572 species, 353 genera and 105 families.

2. Description

Myrtus communis L., Sp. Pl.: 471. 1753.

Evergreen, bushy, strong-scented, upright shrub, to 3 m high, usually arching with age: Leaves opposite, usually in 3's, simple, ovate-lanceolate, 2.5-5 cm. long, entire, acute, glossy, dark green, pinnately veined, short petioled, glabrous, aromatic when bruised: Flowers axillary, solitary, white or sometimes rose-tinged, bowl-shaped, to 2cm. across, bisexual, actinomorphic, epigynous, fragrant, with 2 cm long slender pedicels, calyx of 4-5 sepals with turbinate calyx tube; corolla 4-5 petalled, spreading; stamens

numerous, forming a white central tuft, free, in many series, longer than petals; ovary inferior; fruit oblong-ellipsoid bluish black berry, to 1 cm long. (Fig. 1)

Specimen number: Shabana and Dar 012.

Flowering time: July-September.

Distribution

Global: Mediterranean region, South West Europe, West Asia.

Local: Cultivated in many gardens and parks of Srinagar, Kashmir, India.

Common name(s): Common myrtle.

Habit of Growth: Upright

Rate of Growth: Slow

Habitat Preference: Full sun; fertile moist but well drained soil

Cold hardiness: Frost Hardy (withstand -5°C minimum)

Dimensions: Height 3 m; Spread 3 m.

Propagation: Both by seeds and cuttings.

Pruning: Not necessary but unwanted growth can be cut in late spring.

Landscape use: Very effective for a mixed or shrub border. They are also grown as free standing specimens or as foundation plantings or as informal hedges or screens. Also suitable as patio/container/house plants.



Figure 1. *Myrtus communis* a. Fruit; b. Flowering twig; c. V.S of Flower

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