

Nepenthes khasiana Hook. f. (Nepenthaceae) from Assam

Nepenthes khasiana, an endangered species, listed in Appendix I of CITES, is the only species of the genus known to occur in India. It is a rare endemic species hitherto recorded from Meghalaya. It is threatened due to several factors including wanton destruction of its habitat by coal mining and harvesting for medicinal preparations¹. In Meghalaya it is recorded from the Jarain area of the Jaintia Hills, the Baghmara area of the Garo Hills and adjacent area to the Khasi Hills²⁻⁴ (Figure 1). All these known localities were part of erstwhile Assam are now in 1972 created state of Meghalaya. Therefore, the present report from Vaitang Hebron village of Upper Kharthong (25°19'46.03"N, 92°49'13.57"E) of Dima Hasao district is the first report of the

occurrence of *N. khasiana* in the present Assam.

The specimens were identified using *Flora of Assam*⁵ and the voucher specimen is deposited in herbarium of the Department of Botany, Haflong Government College, Assam. It can be easily identified by its uniquely modified leaf pitchers (Figure 2) even in vegetative condition. Detailed description is given in *Flora of Assam*⁵.

The locality, Vaitang Hebron is a Biate village located approximately 150 km from Haflong, headquarter of Dima Hasao district in Assam with altitude ranging from 510 to 1115 m. The total geographical area of the village is about 1000 hectare, of which approximately 200 hectare of forest area has

been designated as Community Conserved Area (it is not known if *Nepenthes khasiana* occurs here). The rest of the terrain is an open scrub forest with several fallow patches of *jhum* (shifting cultivation). The population of Vaitang Hebron mainly depends on crops grown in *jhumed* areas. Traditional practice of long gaps of *jhum* cycle is now reduced with increased population over the years leading to destruction of significant area of pitcher plant habitat. Informal discussions with the villagers revealed that the species is known only to a few elderly and is locally known as 'Loisul Kola' or 'Jug Par' (Jug flower). It is also found that, *jhum* cultivators destroy them by cutting or uprooting the plants as they believe that this plant signifies bad fortune and should not be in close proximity to the settlement or cultivated area. Probably this could be a major cause for declining populations of the species. Although both *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation measures have been implemented in adjoining Meghalaya, the survival of this species in the wild in Assam is doubtful, if urgent steps are not taken to survey and document all the populations and bring about awareness of the importance and need for conservation of this species among local people as well as forest department.

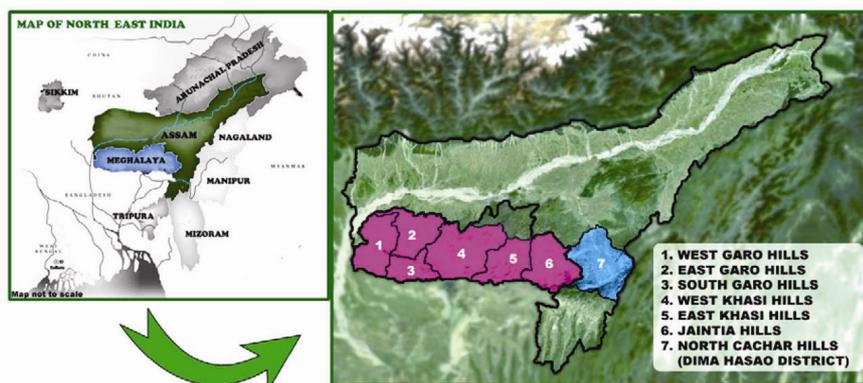


Figure 1. Distribution of *N. khasiana* in Meghalaya and Assam (Dima Hasao district).



Figure 2. Pitcher and female inflorescence of *N. khasiana*.

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