

**Taxonomy and Diversity of the Lesser-Known Varieties of *Ficus virens*
(Moraceae) from The Western Ghats**

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Abstract

The genus *Ficus* (Moraceae) which comprises around 115 taxa distributed in India is a dominant genus among the angiosperms. A comprehensive revision of the genus *Ficus* L., from the Western Ghats, recorded 36 taxa of *Ficus*. Encountered two interesting specimens were identified as varieties of *Ficus virens*. *Ficus virens* Aiton is one of the most common and widely distributed species of *Ficus* in the world. Which shows great complexity in the morphological characters and hence more complex in the taxa. Whereas the *Ficus virens* var *matthewii*, is a new record for Kerala and *Ficus virens* var *dispersa*, a new report to India. These two varieties of *Ficus virens* showed significant differences from the common variety *Ficus virens* var *virens*. A detailed taxonomic description of all the three varieties along with an identification key and images are provided here.

Keywords: Distributional record, *Ficus virens*, *Urostigma*, Western Ghats.

Introduction

The genus *Ficus* L., (Moraceae) is a highly diversified genera with respect to the habit pattern and life forms. The genus is mainly distributed in the tropical and subtropical regions of the world (Chaudhary *et al.*, 2012; Mohapatra *et al.*, 2020). The presence of the specialised inflorescence - hypanthodium, minute flowers and morphological complexities make the genera problematic. The global revision of the genus by E. J. H. Corner since 1930, reduced the number of species to ca. 750. The first detailed work on the genus from India was carried out by G. King (1887) and recorded 113 species and 47 infraspecific taxa of *Ficus*. The genus remained unnoticed except few regional works. BSI initiated a revisionary work on the genera and reported 115