

**A NEW PLANT RECORD OF BUXUS FROM CHITRAL**

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**Introduction**

During examination of material in the herbarium of Pakistan Forest Institute, (PFI-B), plants collected from three localities in Chitral District were identified as *Buxus microphylla* Sieb. and Zucc. The plant was referred to Mr. I.C. Hedge of Edinburgh for confirmation who named it *B. wallichiana* Baill. var. *microphylla* Hook.f. The taxon represents a new record for Pakistan and is reported.

**Review of Literature**

Hooker (1885) described this taxon as *B. sempervirens* Linn. var. *microphylla* from Kumaon on dry rocks at altitudes of 3300-3600 m, with *B. japonica* var. *microphylla* Muell, as its synonym. Brandis (1906) reported the plant from North-East Kumaon and Western Nepal at the same altitude under the name of *B. sempervirens* Linn. var. *microphylla*. Later on, the name *B. sempervirens* Linn. hitherto a European element, wrongly used for an Indo-Pakistan subcontinent material, was dropped and the taxon was split up into two species, viz. *B. papillosa* C.K. Schneid. and *B. wallichiana* Baill, the former being endemic to Pakistan and the latter occurring in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal and Bhutan. Osmaston (1972) recorded *B. wallichiana* Baill. var. *microphylla* Hook.f. from the inner valleys of North Almora (India) at 3000—3600 m, growing in the crevices of rocks. Neither Rechinger (1966) nor Ghafoor (1974), in their accounts on Buxaceae, recorded this taxon from Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

**Description**

*B. wallichiana* Baill. var. *microphylla* Hook.f. in Fl. Brit. Ind. Vol. V.p. 267. 1885.

A dwarf evergreen shrub upto 1 m high. Bark dark brown, rough, corky. Young twigs clothed with minute hairs. Leaves 1 (-1.25) cm long, oblong or spatulate (or orbicular or oblanceolate), round or obtuse or retuse, fleshy, greenish grey to yellowish green with appressed tomentum; margins revolute, hairy; midrib hardly conspicuous on lower side; veins not discernible on both surfaces; petiole minute, upto 3 mm long, hairy. Flowers in dense axillary 0.5—0.75 cm long racemes, greenish yellow, 2-3 mm long, the terminal female. Stamens exerted. Capsule upto 1 cm long, including horns, trilocular, walnut brown, minutely hairy. Seeds 4-5 mm, oblong, black, shining. (Fig.1 and 2) Flowering period, May-July. Fruiting period, July-September.

The taxon differs from both *B. wallichiana* Baill, proper and *B. papillosa* C.K. Schneid. in being dwarf spreading shrub with fleshy leaves less than 1.25 cm long, almost as long as broad, with an inconspicuous midrib on the lower side and totally indistinct nerves on both.

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**Habitat and Distribution**

A dwarf shrub growing in three adjacent valleys within a restricted area at about 1600 m in degraded deodar forests in Chitral District.

**Material examined**

Chitral; Brir, in rock crevices on limestone mountains at 1600 m, 13.9.1971, A.R. Beg, 12014 (PFI-B); Bumbrait at 1600 m, 26.7.72, A.R. Beg, 12017 (PFI-B); Mir Kandi at 1500 m, 10.5.75, Ilahi Bakhsh, Chit. 2079 (PFI-B).

It is interesting to note that the plant grows at much lower altitudes in Pakistan and much higher in India. Moreover, it is absent in between the area from Chitral (Pakistan) to Almora (India) where, however, *B. wallichiana* does grow. Also, while this taxon has been collected from a semi-arid tract in Pakistan, *B. wallichiana* Baill., proper invariably grows on moist hills in the Indo-Pakistan sub continent.

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