

***MECARDONIA PROCUMBENS* (MILL.) SMALL, AN ADDITION TO THE SRI LANKAN SCROPHULARIACEAE JUSS.**

Deepthi Yakandawala^{1*} and Kapila Yakandawala²

¹Department of Botany, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya

²Department of Horticulture and Landscape Gardening, Wayamba University, Makandura, Gonawila, Sri Lanka.

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Scrophulariaceae Juss. is an Eudicot family of the Asterids under the order Scrophulariales (APG II, 2003). The distribution of the family is cosmopolitan and it harbors 269 genera and about 5100 species (Mabberley, 1997). The Scrophulariaceae is represented in Sri Lanka by 21 genera and 57 species (Senaratne, 2001). The Sri Lankan species have a wide distribution in the wet, intermediate and dry zones of the country, from sea level to about 2335 m. The majority of them are annuals growing along the borders of tanks and ponds and in and along ridges of paddy fields in the wet lowlands and the dry zone (Cramer, 1981).

The present record of *Mecardonia procumbens* (Mill.) Small adds a new genus and also a new species to the Sri Lankan Scrophulariaceae. The genus *Mecardonia* Ruiz & Pavón was first described by Hipólito Ruiz López and José Antonio Pavón in 1794 (Mabberley, 1997).

Mecardonia procumbens (Mill.) Small was found growing in a location close to Kandy, along Lewella-Madawala Road, 1600 m altitude, of the intermediate zone in the Central Province, in April 2006.

Mecardonia

Mecardonia Ruiz & Pavón, Fl. Peruv. & Chil. Prodr. 95. 1794; Syst. Veg. 164. 1798. Type: *M. ovata* Ruiz & Pavón.

Pagesia Raf., Fl. Ludov. 48. 1817. Type: *P. leucantha* Raf. = *Mecardonia acuminata* (Walt.) Small.

Erect or creeping herbs, annual or perennial, much branched, mostly glabrous, sometimes blackening on drying, gland-dotted, stems angled. Leaves opposite, mostly serrate, basally

narrowed, with prominent costa; petiole indistinct. Flowers solitary, axillary, the pedicels elongate, subtended by 2 basal bracts, the bracts often leaf-like. Flowers yellow or white, the calyx 5-lobed mostly to the base, the lobes often equal in length, quite unequal in width, the outer sepals much wider, corolla yellow or white, campanulate and somewhat bilabiate, glabrous outside, bearded at the mouth within; stamens 4, didynamous, inserted on the corolla throat, the anthers with thecae held apart on short arms; stigma 2-lobed, lamelliform, the ovary 2-locular, many-ovulate. Seeds numerous, oblong, reticulate.

Mecardonia procumbens (Mill.) Small, Fl. Southeast U.S. 1065, 1338. 1903; Adams, Fl. Pl. Jamaica 663. 1972; D'Arcy in Ann. Miss. Bot. Gard. 66: 240. 1979; Rosso in Candollea 42: 456. 1987; C.J. Saldanha, in Saldanha & Nicolson, Eds., Fl. Hassan Distr. Karnataka, India, Amerind Publ. New Delhi. – Figure 1 (a – f) and Figure 2 (a – c).

Erinus procumbens Mill., Gard. Dict. ed. 8, No. 6. 1768.

Lindernia dianthera Swartz, Prodr. Veg. Ind. Occ. 92. 1788.

Monniera procumbens (Mill.) Kuntze, Rev. Gen. Plant. 2: 463. 1891.

Bacopa procumbens (Mill.) Greenm., Publ. Field Columbian Mus., Bot. Ser. 2: 261. 1907; Edwin, Publ. Field Mus. Nat. Hist., Bot. Ser. 13 (5B):481. 1971.

Herpestis procumbens (Mill.) Urb., Symb. Antill. 4:558. 1911, non Spreng. 1819.

Mecardonia dianthera (Swartz) Pennell, Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Philadelphia 98: 8. 1940.

*Corresponding author E. mail: deepthiy@pdn.ac.lk

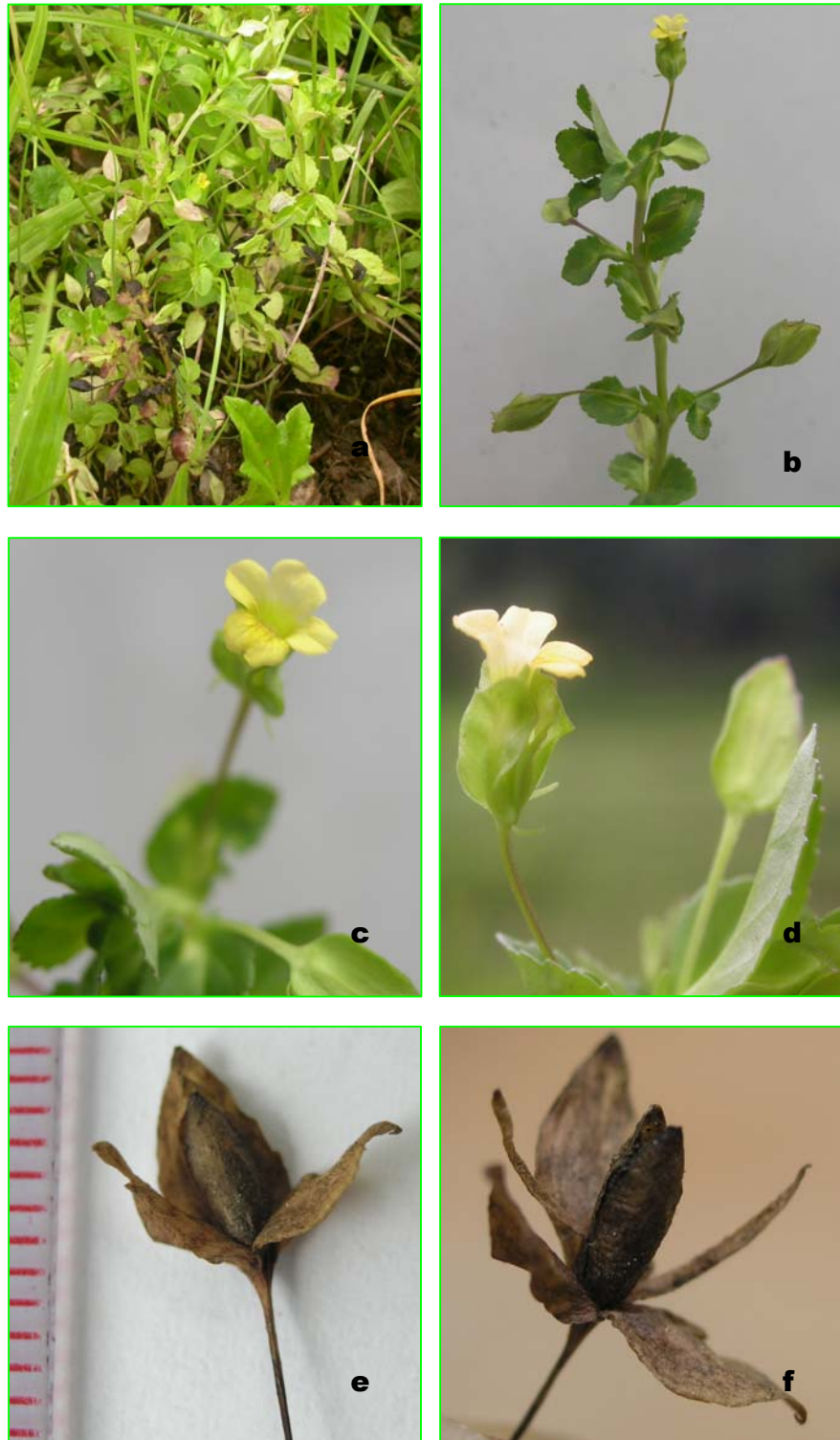


Figure 1. (a) – Habitat. (b) – Habit x 1. (c) and (d)– Front and side view of a flower x 15. e and (f)– capsule with the open persistent calyx.

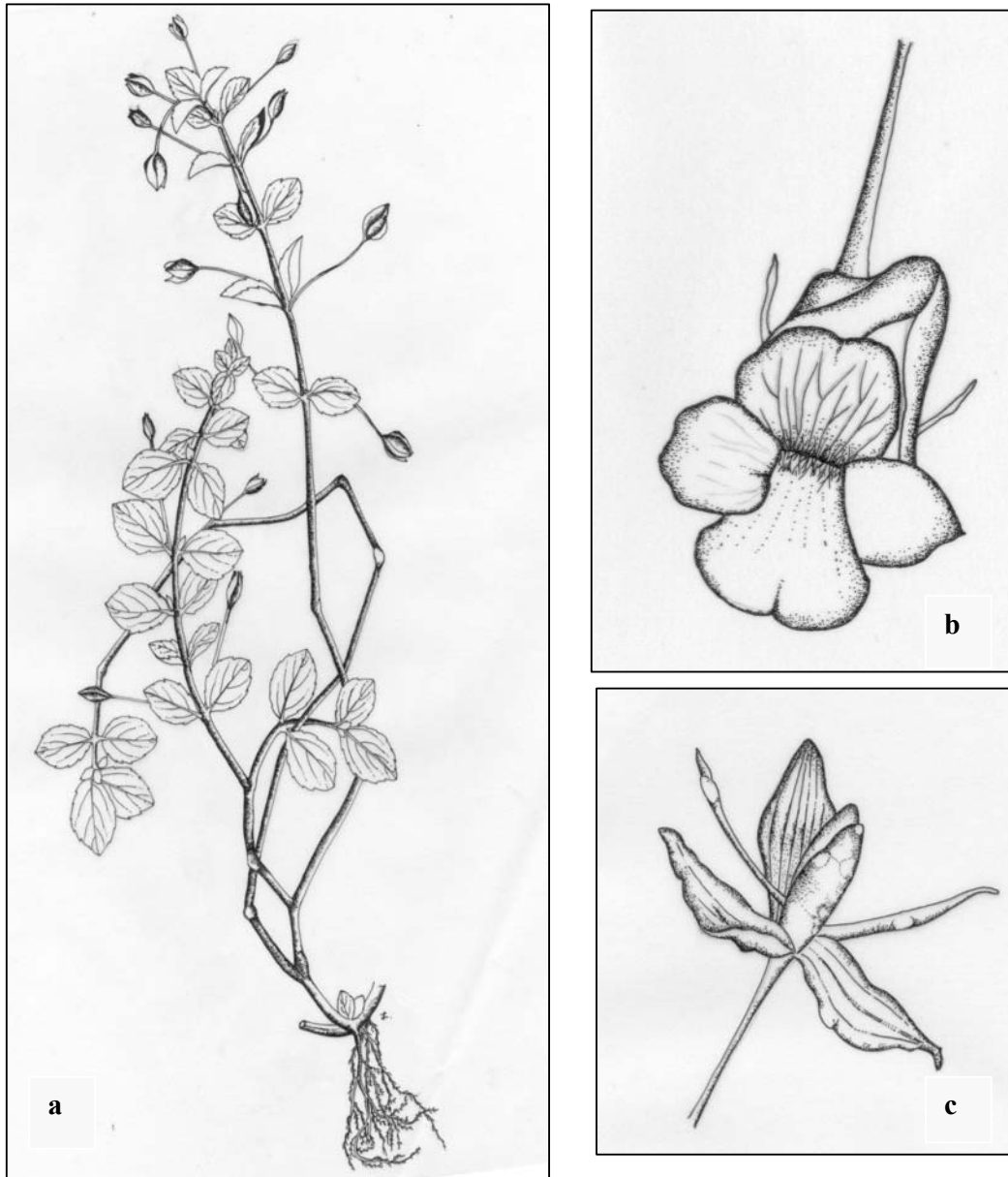


Figure 2. (a) – Habit x 1, b – flower x 15 and c – capsule x 10 with the persistent calyx open.

Erect or ascendant glabrous ephemeral herb, often branched from the base, rooting at lower nodes, brownish black after drying. Stem sharply quadrangular, glabrous. Leaves opposite, glabrous, short-petioled or petioles indistinct, elliptic to ovate-elliptic, 10-25 x 6-12 mm, apically obtuse, basally cuneate or obtuse. Flowers bisexual, zygomorphic, axillary, solitary; pedicel thin, glabrous, 4-6 mm long (longer in fruit, 6 – 18 mm), bracts 2-4 mm long, linear,

mostly entire, located at the base of the pedicel. Sepals free, with acute base, glabrous, 5 – lobed, 6 - 10 mm long; the 3 outer lobes ovate – oblong, attenuate at apex, subobtusate at base, the 2 inner ones shorter, much narrower, linear; corolla bilabiate, yellow with purple lines on upper lip, slightly longer than the calyx; upper lip emarginate. Stamens 4, didynamous; anther cells divaricate. Ovary superior, narrowly ovoid; style filiform, 1.3 mm long, curved at apex. Fruit a

capsule, narrowly ellipsoid, 2 – valved, glabrous, 5 - 6 mm long, dehiscent loculicidally and septicidally from apex, calyx accrescent, the outer sepals becoming 9 mm long and 5 mm wide. Seeds numerous, tuberculate, yellow or greenish brown, oblong with obtuse or truncate apex and subobtusate base, ca. 0.8 mm long.

Origin: Tropical America.

Distribution: Sierra Leone, Cameroon; Tropical N. & S. America, India.

Ecology: In open, frequently wet places such as in and along the ridges of paddy fields with other Scrophulariaceae. Flowering April – July.

Specimens: Kandy District: Hathanga, Lewella – Madawala Road, Kandy. Yakandawala and Yakandawala 51 (PDA).

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