

# Rare tree species spotted in Kerala district

## JNTBGRI launches conservation efforts

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The Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanical Garden and Research Institute (JNTBGRI) has kicked off efforts to conserve a new, very rare tree species of the genus *Buchanania* discovered in Thiruvananthapuram district.

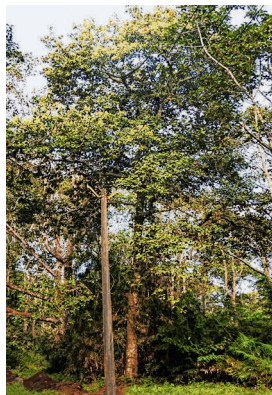
Just two mature specimens and several seedlings of *Buchanania abrahamiana*, as the species has been named, have so far been identified from two localities in the district, prompting the JNTBGRI to transfer a few seedlings to its Threatened

Species Park for conservation.

Belonging to the genus *Buchanania* (family *Anacardiaceae*), the new species is named after A. Abraham, the founder and first director of the Palode-based JNTBGRI who passed away in 1994. A paper by E.S. Santhosh Kumar and S. M. Shareef of the JNTBGRI detailing the find has appeared in *Annales Botanici Fennici* published by the Finnish Zoological and Botanical Publishing Board.

### Palode and Nanniyode

So far *Buchanania abrahamiana* has been encountered in just two localities; Palode and Nanniyode. Growing to a height of 17 metres, this rare tree inhabits dry deciduous



*Buchanania abrahamiana*

forests. Researchers found only two mature specimens in addition to several seedlings of varying ages in the two places.

“The total number of individuals known from these localities is less than 50, and the population occupied an area less than 4

sq km,” the paper noted. *Buchanania abrahamiana* has a smooth bark, creamy-white flowers and a ball-shaped fruit. Flowering and fruiting occurs during November-April. According to the paper published in the *Annales Botanici Fennici*, the local people consume the ripe fruit pulp and the seed kernels from the tree raw. Physically, the new species resembles *Buchanania lanzan* (known locally as *Moongapezhu*), and *Buchanania barberi*, an exceedingly rare tree species whose conservation and propagation had won international attention for the JNTBGRI.

The genus *Buchanania* has some 25 to 30 species distributed across continental Asia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Samoa.