



A new species of *Hibiscus* (Malvaceae) from Madagascar

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Abstract

Hibiscus fanambanensis, a new species from the north-east of Madagascar, is described and illustrated based on its morphological characteristics. It belongs to *Hibiscus* sect. *Azanza*.

Key words: *Azanza*, Hibisceae, *Hibiscus*, Madagascar, Malvaceae

Résumé

Hibiscus fanambanensis, nouvelle espèce du nord-est de Madagascar est décrite et illustrée à partir de ses caractères morphologiques. Elle appartient à *Hibiscus* sect. *Azanza*.

Mots-clefs: *Azanza*, Hibisceae, *Hibiscus*, Madagascar, Malvacées

Introduction

Hibiscus L. belongs to the family Malvaceae, tribe Hibisceae Rchb. The genus is well represented around the world in all tropical and warm temperate countries, and is composed of about 200 species (Bayer & Kubitzky 2003; Mabberley 2008).

The most recent complete treatment of the genus *Hibiscus* for Madagascar was published over 50 years ago in the Malvaceae volume of the "*Flore de Madagascar et des Comores*" (Hochreutiner 1955). In this work 46 species were recognised, divided among 11 sections of the genus. Since that time, the only taxonomic novelties to have been published are: a new combination - *H. partitus* (Hochr.) F.D. Wilson (Wilson 1999) and a new species - *H. lamalama* Callmänder, Buerki & Koopman (Callmänder *et al.* 2009). According to the Madagascar Catalogue (2010), *Hibiscus* is now represented in Madagascar by 49 species (of which 33 are endemic), but is in need of taxonomic review. The genus includes plants with a diversity of growth form, ranging from herbaceous annuals and perennials, some of which have become widespread weeds in disturbed places, to shrubs and even forest trees. Schatz (2001) noted that 12 of the Malagasy species can become relatively large trees, most of which are members of *Hibiscus* sect. *Azanza* DC., and frequently have a restricted distribution in Madagascar.

While undertaking routine specimen identification and curation in the Paris herbarium, we noticed an unidentified specimen from Madagascar that resembled published species of sect. *Azanza*, notably *H. mandrarensis* Humbert ex Hochr. (Hochreutiner 1949) and *H. mangindranensis* Hochr. (Hochreutiner 1953), but which seemed to possess a unique and distinct combination of characters. Further examination of the related species enabled us to confirm that the specimen represents an undescribed species of *Hibiscus*, but a thorough search in the herbarium and enquiries elsewhere failed to reveal any additional material of the plant.