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A new species of *Didymocarpus* Wall. (Gesneriaceae) from Arunachal Pradesh, India

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ABSTRACT: *Didymocarpus nautiyalii* M.Khanal, D.Borah & Dev.Kumar (Gesneriaceae) is described as a new species from Shi-Yomi District, Arunachal Pradesh, Northeast India. It resembles *D. albiflorus* Souvann. & Phonep. in its habit, leaves, few-flowered inflorescences and slightly pouched infundibuliform corolla with an expanded mouth, but differs in its much shorter stem, sessile to very short petioles, coriaceous lamina, 1–3-flowered cymes, smaller campanulate calyx, shorter bluish-purple corolla, and a glabrous ovary. The species is assessed as Data Deficient according to the IUCN Red List criteria.

KEY WORDS: Didymocarpoideae, *Didymocarpus albiflorus*, *Didymocarpus nautiyalii*, Eastern Himalaya, endemic.

INTRODUCTION

Didymocarpus Wallich (1819: 378) is a large genus of Gesneriaceae comprising approximately 104 species, distributed from the Himalaya through Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and southern China to the Malay Peninsula and northern Sumatra (POWO, 2026). The type species is *D. primulifolius* D.Don from Nepal, and the Himalayan region together with northeastern India represents an important centre of diversity for the genus (Weber *et al.,* 2000).

In India, the number of *Didymocarpus* species was reported as 23 by Möller (2017). Subsequently, several new species have been described and additional species recorded, bringing the currently accepted number of Indian species to 27, including the new species described here (Prasanna, 2023; Rhuthuparna and Gowda, 2024; Taram *et al.,* 2025). For Arunachal Pradesh, Taram *et al.* (2025) recorded 6 species of *Didymocarpus*; however, additional species are likely to occur in the region. Botanical collections in northeastern India were largely concentrated during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and declined considerably in the subsequent decades. As a result, several areas remain poorly explored or under-collected. In recent years, renewed botanical exploration has yielded notable discoveries. Several species of *Didymocarpus* described as new to science: *D. moellerii* A.Joe, Hareesh & M.Sabu (Joe *et al.*, 2016), *D. sinoindicus* N.S.Prasanna, Lei Cai & V.Gowda (Prasanna *et al.,* 2020) and *D. vickifunkiae* V.Gowda & N.S.Prasanna (Prasanna and Gowda, 2021). In addition, species described many decades ago and previously known only from type collections have been rediscovered and recollected e.g. *D. adenocarpus* C.E.C.Fisch., *D. lineicapsa* (C.E.C.Fisch.) B.L.Burtt, *D. parryorum* C.E.C.Fisch., and *D. wengeri* C.E.C.Fisch. (Prasanna and Gowda, 2020), *D. hookeri* C.B.Clarke (Borah and Singh, 2021) and *D. medogensis* W.T.Wang (Taram *et al.,* 2025).

During a botanical exploration in April 2025 in Shi-Yomi District of Arunachal Pradesh, India, a distinct population of an unidentified *Didymocarpus* was discovered on forested slopes within subtropical moist evergreen forest. Although the plants superficially resembled a *Henckelia*, the presence of seasonal stems arising from dormant renewal buds and a polished, cup-shaped calyx confirmed their placement in *Didymocarpus*. A critical examination of the relevant literature and herbarium specimens revealed that these specimens do not correspond to any previously described species of the genus. Accordingly, the taxon is described here as a new species. A detailed description and coloured photographs are provided, along with notes on its similar species, phenology, habitat and a preliminary conservation assessment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Populations of the species were documented during a

Table 1. Morphological comparison of ***Didymocarpus nautiyalii*** with its related species.

Characters	*Didymocarpus nautiyalii*	*D. albiflorus*
Stem	2–5 cm	17 cm
Petioles	sessile to up to 0.6 cm	0.5–6.0 cm long
Lamina	coriaceous	membranous
Calyx	campanulate, 3–4 mm long, 5-lobed to the middle of the tube	funnelform, 7.5–12 mm long, shallowly 5-lobed near the apex
Corolla	bluish purple, 2.0–2.2 cm long	white, 3–3.5 cm long
Ovary	glabrous	sparsely glandular puberulent

floristic survey conducted in Shi-Yomi District, Arunachal Pradesh, India. Field photographs were captured *in situ* using a digital camera (Sony Alpha 6400) and detailed images of dissected floral parts were obtained using digital macrophotography. Voucher specimens representing the observed range of morphological variation were collected, with three individuals from each population selected for detailed morphological examination and herbarium preparation.

Morphological observations and morphometric measurements were made from fresh material dissected in the field using a steel scale and digital calipers. Specimens were collected during a single field season from the type locality, and measurements were taken from the available flowering individuals encountered during the survey. Geographical coordinates were recorded using a Garmin eTrex 32X GPS. Voucher specimens were pressed, dried and prepared following standard herbarium techniques (Alexiades, 1996) and deposited at CAL (holotype) and the G. B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment, North-East Regional Centre Herbarium (isotypes).

The comparative taxonomic study involved a critical review of relevant literature (Don, 1825; Clarke, 1874, 1883, 1884; Wang, 1982; Hilliard and Burtt, 1995; Weber and Burtt, 1997; Burtt, 1998; Wang *et al.,* 1998; Weber *et al.,* 2000; Hilliard, 2001; Wei *et al.,* 2010; Weber *et al.,* 2011; Nangngam and Maxwell, 2013; Adhikari, 2015; Sinha and Datta, 2016; Cai *et al.,* 2016; Möller *et al.,* 2017; Pandey *et al.,* 2020; Souvannakhoummane and Phonepaseuth, 2020; Tran *et al.,* 2020; Zhang *et al.,* 2020; Borah and Singh, 2021; Souvannakhoummane *et al.,* 2021; Adhikari and Möller, 2023; Prasanna, 2023; Taram, 2023; Taram *et al.,* 2025; Borah *et al.,* 2026; GRC, 2026) and examination of specimens and digital images from the herbaria (APFH, ARUN, ASSAM, BSHC, CAL, LBG, BM, E, K, and P). Morphological terminology follows Beentje (2010) and provisional conservation status was assessed in accordance with the guidelines of the IUCN Standards and Petitions Committee (2024).

TAXONOMIC TREATMENT

Didymocarpus nautiyalii M.Khanal, D.Borah & Dev.Kumar, ***sp. nov.*** **Fig. 1**

Type: INDIA. Arunachal Pradesh, Shi-Yomi District, Hone, 1142 m, 7 April 2025, *M. Khanal 2110* (holotype: CAL; isotype: CAL, G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment, North-East Regional Centre Herbarium).

Diagnosis: *Didymocarpus nautiyalii* M.Khanal, D.Borah & Dev.Kumar closely resembles *D. albiflorus* Souvann. & Phonep. in its habit, leaves, few-flowered cymes and slightly pouched, infundibuliform corolla with a clearly expanded mouth (Table 1). However, it is easily distinguished from *D. albiflorus* by its much shorter stem, 2–5 cm (vs. ca. 17 cm), sessile leaves or leaves with very short petioles 0.5–0.6 cm long (vs. 0.5–6.0 cm long), coriaceous lamina (vs. membranous), smaller campanulate calyx, 3–4 mm long, 5-lobed to the middle of the tube (vs. funnelform, 7.5–12 mm, shallowly 5-lobed near the apex), bluish-purple corolla, 2.0–2.2 cm long (vs. white, 3–3.5 cm long) and a glabrous ovary (vs. sparsely glandular puberulent).

Description: Perennial, lithophytic herbs, up to 8 cm tall. **Rhizome** 2–4 × 0.5–0.6 cm. **Stem** short, 2–5 × 0.3–0.4 cm, erect, densely pubescent. **Leaves** opposite, anisophyllous, 2–8 numbers, borne towards the apex of the stem, sessile to shortly petiolate; petioles (when present) 5–6 mm long, densely pubescent; lamina ovate to oblong, coriaceous, pubescent on both surfaces, adaxially light green, abaxially whitish-green; lamina of major leaf 5–9 × 3.5–5 cm, minor leaf 0.7–1.4 × 0.5–0.9 cm; apex acute to obtuse, margins bicrenate to serrate, base obtuse to rounded, lateral veins 6–10 pairs, opposite to subopposite, impressed adaxially and raised abaxially. **Cymes** axillary or pseudo-terminal, 1–3-flowered. Peduncle 2–3.5 cm long, pubescent; bracts 2–2.2 × 1.5–2 mm, opposite, green, broadly triangular to ovate, outer surface pubescent, inner surface glabrous, apex obtuse, margins entire. Pedicels 1–3 mm long, pubescent. **Calyx** 3–4 mm long, campanulate, 5-lobed up to the middle of the tube, outer surface pubescent, inner surface glabrous, lobes 1.5–2 × 1.3–1.5 mm, equal, triangular, green or pink, apex acute, margins entire. **Corolla** bluish purple, with or without white stripes in the throat and palate, 2.0–2.2 cm long, mouth 0.5–1.0 cm across, both surfaces glabrous, distinctly 2-lipped, lips divergent; upper lip 2-lobed, lobes equal, broadly ovate to orbicular, 2–4 × 4–5 mm, apex rounded, margins entire; lower lip 3-lobed, lobes sub-equal, broadly ovate to orbicular, 4–6 × 4–5 mm, apex rounded, margins entire; tube 1.1–1.4 cm, infundibuliform, slightly pouched. **Stamens** 2, 7–10 mm long, inserted 0.9–1 cm from corolla base; filaments 5–7

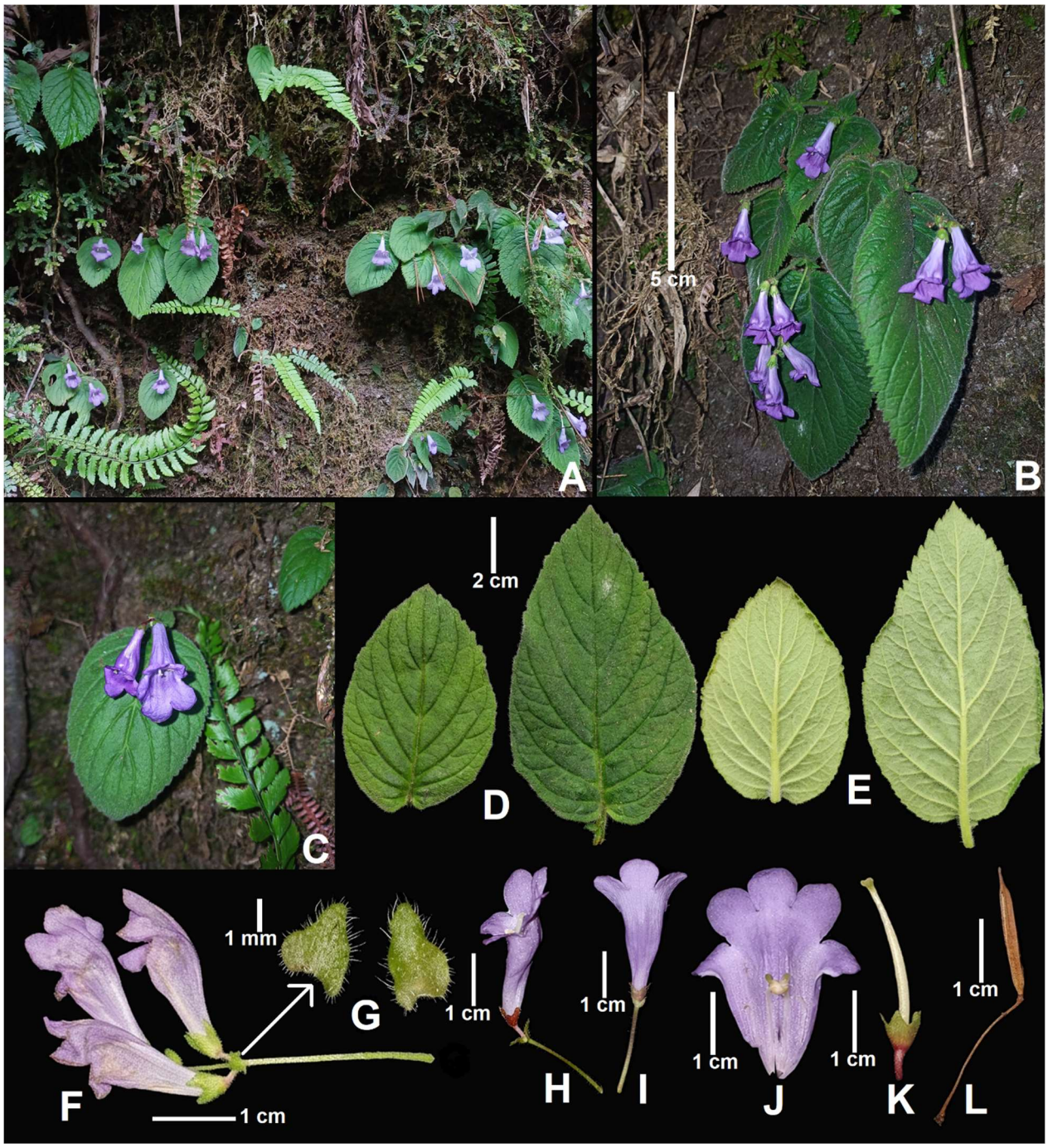

Fig. 1. ***Didymocarpus nautiyalii*** M.Khanal, D.Borah & Dev.Kumar, *sp. nov.* **A–C.** Habit; **D–E.** Leaves, front and back view; **F.** Inflorescence; **G.** Bracts; **H.** Side view of a flower showing the pouched corolla; **I.** Back view of a flower showing infundibuliform corolla; **J.** Dissected flower (inside view); **K.** Pistil with pedicel and calyx; **L.** Mature capsule.

mm long, glabrous; anthers 2–2.2 mm long, dorsifixed, coherent by their adaxial surfaces, pubescent abaxially, glabrous adaxially; staminodes 3, lateral staminodes 2–3 mm long, linear, bearing antherodes, glabrous, central staminode ca. 0.5 mm long. **Pistil** 1.5–1.8 cm long; ovary 1.1–1.3 cm long; style 0.3–0.4 cm long, glabrous; stigma capitate to bifid, pale yellow to greenish-white, ca. 0.1 cm long glabrous. **Disk** annular, ca. 1 mm high, glabrous, persistent. **Capsules** 1.7–5 cm long, linear, bivalved, dehiscing loculicidally, glabrous.

***Distribution and ecology*:** The new species is currently known only from the Shi-Yomi District of Arunachal Pradesh, India (Fig. 2). In Shi Yomi, the species was observed growing as a lithophyte on rocky

roadside cuttings and along the margins of a waterfall. It occurs in association with *Steudnera assamica* Hook.f., *Acmella oleracea* (L.) R.K.Jansen, *Impatiens arguta* Hook.f. & Thomson, *Impatiens drepanophora* Hook.f., *Mussaenda roxburghii* Hook.f., *Ophiorrhiza ripicola* Craib, *Peliosanthes* sp., *Nephrolepis* sp., *Elatostema* sp., and *Alpinia* sp.

***Habitat*:** The species grows on forest edges and shaded hill slopes in subtropical evergreen forests at elevations above 1000 m a.s.l.

***Phenology*:** Flowering occurs in April, while fruiting occurs from April to May.

***Etymology*:** The specific epithet "*nautiyalii"* honours Prof. Sunil Nautiyal, former Director of the G. B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment (GBPNIHE), India, in recognition of his contributions to Himalayan environmental research and conservation.

***Conservation Status*:** *Didymocarpus nautiyalii* is currently known from two small subpopulations in the Shi-Yomi District, Arunachal Pradesh, India, where only nineteen flowering individuals were observed. The species is lithophytic, growing on moist rock surfaces along roadside walls and near waterfalls within a subtropical evergreen forest. These sites are located close to a tribal hamlet and face ongoing human pressures, including road expansion and habitat disturbance. The estimated Area of Occupancy (AOO) is approximately 4 km², calculated using the GeoCAT tool (Bachman and Moat, 2012). Despite the apparent rarity of the species at the known sites, the surrounding region contains extensive areas of suitable habitat that remain poorly explored. Moreover, the plants are small and inconspicuous, often concealed within shrubby undergrowth and moist rock crevices, which may lead to under-detection during general floristic surveys. As current knowledge is based on limited field observations from a single field survey period, reliable information on the full distribution range, population size, population trends, reproductive biology, and potential threats remains inadequate. Given these uncertainties, the presently available data are insufficient to make a confident assessment of the extinction risk following the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria (IUCN Standards and Petitions Committee 2024). Therefore, *Didymocarpus nautiyalii* is best assessed as Data Deficient (DD). Further targeted field surveys in similar habitats, along with long-term monitoring of known populations and studies on the species' ecology and reproductive biology, are necessary to clarify its distribution, population dynamics and conservation status.

***Notes*:** *Didymocarpus nautiyalii* does not closely resemble any known species of *Didymocarpus* as circumscribed in Indian and adjacent regional treatments. It is readily distinguished by a unique combination of characters, notably its short stem with leaves clustered towards the apex, sessile to shortly petiolate leaves and few-flowered (1–3) cymes. The species is particularly remarkable in possessing a short, distinctly infundibuliform and pouched corolla tube (1.5–1.6 cm long; mouth 0.5–1.0 cm wide), in contrast to the narrowly tubular or gradually funnel-shaped corolla tubes typical of Indian species of *Didymocarpus*. A comparable corolla form is observed in species of *Palmatiboea* F.P.Liu & Yin Z.Wang (formerly included under *Didymocarpus* sect. *Heteroboea* W.T. Wang, auct. non. Benth.), which are stemless herbs restricted to China. In contrast, the Indian representatives belong to *Didymocarpus* sect. *Didymocarpus* and comprise caulescent taxa (Xu *et al*., 2026). *Didymocarpus nautiyalii* is compared here with *D. albiflorus* from Lao PDR. to which it is compared here.

Among species occurring in Arunachal Pradesh, a funnel-shaped corolla (tube gradually widening from base to throat) is observed in *D. cinereus* D.Don, *D. medogensis* W.T.Wang, *D. janakiae* Rhuthuparna & V.Gowda and *D. nautiyalii*. However, the corolla tube is much longer in the first three species. *D. medogensis* also differs in having the calyx free to the base, and *D. janakiae* in having an urceolate calyx. *D. nautiyalii* is therefore comparable to *D. cinereus.* However, it differs from *D. cinereus* in its much smaller stature (up to 8 cm tall vs. up to 30 cm tall in *D. cinereus*), short stem with leaves clustered towards the apex (vs. stout primary stem producing several slender secondary stems), leaves sessile to shortly petiolate (vs. long-petiolate), 1–3-flowered cymes (vs. many-flowered corymbose cymes), smaller, entire, eglandular bracts (vs. larger, minutely toothed and gland-dotted), distinctly infundibuliform corolla with a shorter tube, 1.1–1.4 cm long, and a relatively broad mouth, 0.5–1.0 cm across (vs. corolla tube longer, ca. 2–3 cm long, tubular, with a narrower mouth, ca. 0.3–0.5 cm across).

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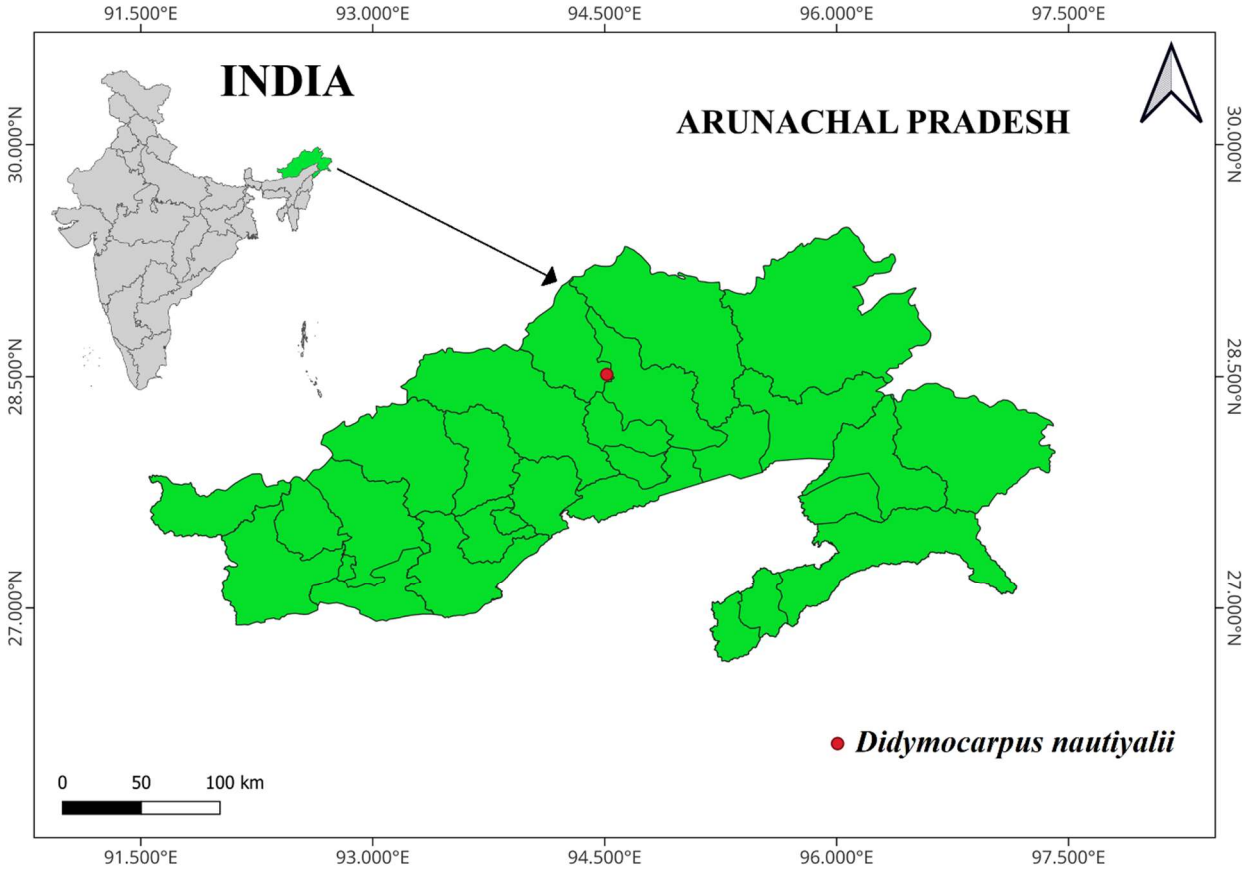

Fig. 2. Map showing the distribution of ***Didymocarpus nautiyalii*** M.Khanal, D.Borah & Dev.Kumar