

Introduction

Lasianthus Jack is a large genus of the family Rubiaceae with more than 180 species, predominantly in the Old World. In tropical Asia there are more than 160 species, only one extending to Australia. The greatest species diversity is found in tropical Asia. The species of the genus occur almost exclusively in the understory of primary forests. There are occasionally records from secondary or seriously disturbed forests or forest edges. *Lasianthus* species are an ecologically important element in tropical forests of Asia because they are usually present in large numbers in the forests. The species of the genus also show interesting distribution patterns, which may have significant implications to biogeography of tropical Asia and speciation in tropical rain forest.

The genus is regarded to be extremely difficult taxonomically. The flowers and fruits are small and often shed from herbarium specimens. There are few distinct diagnostic characters available for separating the species and the majority of the characters used are quantitative features of the organs such as leaves, stipules, bracts, and calyx lobes. It is therefore difficult to correctly determine a species by referring only to simple descriptions. Quite some earlier species and even newly recognized species have only been described from a single type collection or a few collections. Due to the rapid disappearance of primary forests in tropical countries, they often have never been collected again. Some types could not be found, while some were destroyed during the World War II. This makes it quite understandable that some taxonomists call the taxonomy of this genus a nightmare.

10 articles published in international journals are selected in the collected works on the main author's 20 years studies in the genus. They include revisions on the genus of Malesian region (Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Singapore and Solomon Islands together), Thailand, China, and some new species descriptions.