

**XIV. NOTE ON THE OCCURRENCE OF
MELIANTHA SUAVIS SUBSP. SUAVIS (OPILIACEAE)
IN THE PHILIPPINES**

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The small tree *Melientha suavis* Pierre subsp. *suavis* (Opiliaceae) is in the Philippines so far known from two localities in Mindanao, only (Misamis Or., Claveria; Cotabato, Port Lebak: Hiepko, 1979, 1984). During vegetation studies on Mt Pangasugan, Leyte, Eastern Visayas (Langenberger, 2000), it was found scattered along ridges between 250 and 530 m altitude.

The trees reached a height of about 8 m. The bark is greyish brown with fissures exposing the white inner bark. Fruits developed in February and became creamish yellow when ripe, very sweet and tasteful, but could be observed rotting on the trees. The high hunting pressure has led to a near extermination of local bird and primate populations (local farmers: pers. comm.). Twigs are hard to cut with pruning shears probably due to the high wood density. The fact that the timber is used for charcoal in Thailand supports this assumption. The occurrence of calcium carbonate cystoliths may be an additional reason. Another remarkable feature is the smell of broken twigs – it is very similar to that of European elder (*Sambucus nigra* L., Caprifoliaceae).

As Hiepko's maps show, the species has a disjunct distribution: Peninsular Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, with another subspecies in the Kinabalu area of Sabah.

Herbarium specimens have been deposited at the Visayas State College of Agriculture (ViSCA), Department of Plant Breeding and Agricultural Botany (DPBAB), Baybay, Leyte, 6521-A, Philippines (*Langenberger 366, 476, 630, 683, 733, 1218, 1426, 1496, 1578, 1785*).

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