Ouratea neuridesii (Ochnaceae), a new species from central Cuba

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Abstract


Ouratea neuridesii is described as a species new to science, endemic to the mountains of Trinidad (Guamuhaya massif), central Cuba, and illustrated. It is easily distinguished from all other Cuban Ouratea species by its short, rigid branches and dense foliage as well as short, few-flowered paniculate inflorescences.

Additional key words: taxonomy, endemism, Topes de Collantes, mogote vegetation.

Ouratea Aubl. is a genus of trees and shrubs with simple, alternate leaves and entire, deciduous stipules. Between the secondary leaf veins, which are arcuate-ascending and become parallel to the leaf margin distally, the inter-secondary veins are either sub-parallel or densely reticulate. The flowers, borne in paniculate inflorescences, are bright yellow, bisexual, actinomorphic, pentameric, with free sepals and petals, 10 stamens, 5 carpels inserted on a columnar receptacle, apically united to form a single central style or less frequently each with its distinct style. The fruits are drupaceous, each mature carpel separating to form a fleshy, bright blue or black drupe, all borne on the receptacle or torus, which becomes enlarged, fleshy and red-coloured.

The genus Ouratea is most numerous in northwestern South America. In Cuba 7 species and 2 nothospecies were known (Berazaín 2003, 2006): 3 in E Cuba (O. revoluta (C. Wright ex Griseb.) Engl., O. xolismifolia Britton & P. Wilson and O. striata (Tiegh.) Urb.), 3 in W Cuba (O. elliptica (A. Rich.) M. Gómez, O. schizostyla Berazaín and O. ×acunae Borhidi) and 3 in both W and C Cuba (O. agrophylla (Tiegh.) Urb., O. nitida (Sw.) Engl. and O. ×savannarum Britton & P. Wilson). During botanical expeditions to the Trinidad Mountains (or Guamuhaya massif), a plant was collected that differs notably from all other Cuban Ouratea species and pertains to a new species.
Fig. 1. Ouratea neuridesii – photograph of the holotype specimen.
Ouratea neuridesii I. Castañeda, sp. nov.
Holotype: Castañeda & Noa 9064 (ULV; isotypes: B, HAC, HAJB, ULV). – Fig. 1-2.

A ceteris speciebus cubensibus hujus generis ramis brevibus rigidis foliisque crebris primo intuitu distinguitur. Folia parva venis intersecundariis reticulum densum formatibus; inflorescentiae pauciflorae, breviter paniculatae, rhachide ad 4 cm longo.

Small, up to 3 m tall tree with short and rigid branches. Leaf blade ovate to elliptical, measuring (3.3-)3.7(-4) × (1.5-)1.8(-2) cm, coriaceous, acute and sometimes slightly emarginate, base cuneate, margins entire and revolute; secondary veins somewhat prominent, arcuate-ascending; inter-secondary veins forming a dense reticulum. Inflorescences terminal or subterminal, short, corymbose-paniculate, few-flowered, with an up to 4 cm long rachis and up to 2.5 cm long lower branches. Pedicels 5 mm long. Sepals imbricate, ovate, mucronulate, measuring 3.8-4 × 1.8-2 mm, deciduous. Petals imbricate in the bud, bright yellow, obovate-orbicular, measuring 3.8-4 × 3-3.5 mm, membranous, with erose margin. Stamine 10; anthers subsessile, 4-angular, 2.6 mm long, papilllose, opening by two apicals pores. Ovary 5-merous, borne on a columnar receptacle 1-2 mm long; style gynobasic, 2.8 mm long. Fruit unknown.

Specimens seen. – Cuba: Prov. Sancti Spiritus: Trinidad, Mountains of Trinidad, Topes de Collantes [“Collante”], “Loma Mi Retiro”, north slope, near the top, 800-900 m, mogote vegeta-

Fig. 2. Ouratea neuridesii – A: branch apex with leaves and inflorescence; B: sepal; C: petal (abaxial surface); D: anther; E: pistil. – Scale bars: A = 1 cm, B-D = 1 mm; drawing by Fredy Hernández Martínez from the holotype.
tion complex, 29.4.2006, Castañeda & Noa 9064 (B, HAC, HAJB, ULV); ibid., 22.5.1999, Castañeda & Vera 6840 (HPVC); ibid., 15.11.1991, Noa & al. 4422 (HPVC).

Eponymy. – The epithet honours Neurides Vera Roca, connoisseur of the flora of the Mountains of Trinidad, who gave support to numerous botanists exploring that territory.

Affinities. – Ouratea neuridesii resembles O. xolismifolia Britton & P. Wilson, endemic to the Sierra Maestra range in E Cuba, in its small leaves and inflorescences, and densely reticulate inter-secondary leaf venation. However, it differs from this and all other Cuban species of the genus in its short and rigid branches, dense foliage, up to 4 cm long leaf blades and corymbose-paniculate, terminal or subterminal inflorescences with an up to 4 cm long rachis.

Characterization of the habitat. – The species grows in the vegetation complex characteristic of mogotes (steep-sided karstic hillocks): a low, open forest, with a dense shrubby undergrowth and abundant epiphytes. Among the associated species one may mention Erythroxylum clarense Borhidi & Muñíz, Gyminda latifolia (Sw.) Urb., Mahonia tenuifolia Loud. ex Steud., Karwinskia potrerilloana (Borhidi & Muñíz) Borhidi, Casearia silvestris subsp. myricoides (Griseb.) J. E. Gut., Eugenia clarenensis Britton & P. Wilson, Picramnia reticulata Griseb, Coccothrinax trinitensis Borhidi & Muñíz and various species of the orchid genera Pleurothallis and Lepanthes.

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