

THAI RESEARCHERS DISCOVER NEW PLANT GENUS IN TENASSERIM MOUNTAIN

By **Khaosod English** - April 4, 2025 6:19 pm



The species name "flaviflora" refers to its yellow flowers.

BANGKOK — In a groundbreaking botanical discovery, researchers from Kasetsart University and officials from the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation have jointly announced the discovery of a new plant genus and species named "Somnuekia flaviflora," commonly known as "Por Sri Somnuek."

The discovery was revealed on March 4 during a press conference attended by representatives from the Faculty of Forestry and Department of Botany at Kasetsart University, along with officials from the National Science Museum of Thailand.

The discovery of Por Sri Somnuek, a new plant genus and species found in the Tenasserim Mountain Range. The plant was named in honor of Somnuek Pong-umpai, a master professor of dendrology at the Faculty of Forestry, Kasetsart University.



The newly discovered plant genus has been named in honor of Somnuek Pong-umpai, a distinguished professor of dendrology at the Faculty of Forestry, Kasetsart University.

The scientific name, *Somnuekia Duangjai*, Chalermw., Sinbumr. & Suddee, was published as a new genus alongside the new species *Somnuekia flaviflora* in the scientific journal *PhytoKeys* (254: 221-243, 2025) under the title "*Somnuekia flaviflora* (Malvaceae, Brownlowioideae), a new genus and species from Thailand."

The species name "*flaviflora*" refers to its yellow flowers. The type specimen, collected by Chalermwong, Sinbumroong & Issarapakdee, is preserved at the Forest Herbarium (BKF).

Botanically, *Somnuekia flaviflora* is a tree that can grow up to 35 meters tall. It features brownish-gray or whitish-gray bark, with inner bark of light brown color. Young branches are densely hairy, while mature branches are almost smooth. The plant has simple, alternate leaves that are ovate to heart-shaped or somewhat pentagonal, measuring 9-21 cm wide and 10-24 cm long.



A new plant genus and species named "Somnuekia flaviflora," commonly known as "Por Sri Somnuek."

The inflorescence is a terminal panicle that can reach up to 40 cm in length, with parts covered in whitish-gray star-shaped scales. The flowers are perfect, with five yellow petals and 25-50 yellow stamens. The fruit is a short cylindrical capsule, 5-6 cm long, with five longitudinal ridges and dense star-shaped scales. Seeds are nearly round, dark brown, with short star-shaped scales.

Tenasserim Range stretches approximately 1,700 kilometers across Southeast Asia as part of the broader Indo-Malayan mountain system. Despite their modest elevation, these mountains serve as a significant natural boundary between Thailand and Myanmar, particularly in the northern and central sections of the range.

This significant discovery from the Tenasserim mountain range adds an important new genus to the world's botanical knowledge and highlights Thailand's rich biodiversity.