

Taxonomical identification of *Ratalawulu* – *Pouteria campechiana* Sapotaceae

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There is controversy regarding the identity of the yellow *lavalu* in Sri Lanka. It has been confirmed by taxonomical studies that this *lavalu* is *Pouteria campechiana* (Sinhala: *Ratalawulu*). This is the only yellow *lavalu* (*ratalawulu*) found in Sri Lanka. Samples were collected from, Kadawata, Kurunegala, Makola, Maharagama, Nawala and Peradeniya (Yamaha, Colombo, Kurunegala and Kandy districts) Plant specimens were examined for venation, shape and margin of leaf, characteristics of fruit and inflorescence and compared with data of Verdcourt and Meijer, Barlow as well as specimens in the National Herbarium, Peradeniya by a phytotaxonomist. Past studies identified *ratalawulu* specimens as that of *Chrysophyllum roxburghii*, however descriptions of the fruit and photographs do not match this identification. The fruit pulp of *Chrysophyllum roxburghii* is white in colour and has negligible carotenoid content. The fruits collected for analysis in this study represent by far, the most common home garden *lavalu* in Sri Lanka, which according to Verdcourt and Meijer is called *ratalawulu*, has 1-6 seeds and was introduced to Sri Lanka from Central or South America.

Table 1: Leaf characteristics to differentiate plants collected from *Chrysophyllum roxburghii*

Characteristic	Plant collected (<i>Pouteria campechiana</i>)	<i>Chrysophyllum roxburghii</i>
Simple/compound	Simple	Simple
Shape	Oblanceolate; length: 10 – 22.5 cm; width: 2.5-6.6	Elliptic; length: 7.5-12.5cm; width: 2.5-3.3 cm
Base	Acute; sides even	Acute; sides uneven
Apex	Cuspidate	Short cuspidate
Margin	Entire	Broadly wavy
Venation	Pinnate; ~ 1 cm between veins; 11-21 veins; Veins prominent on lower surface	Pinnate; closely veined; ~0.5 cm between veins; 12-25 veins; veins prominent on lower surface
Arrangement	Alternate	Alternate
Attachment	Petiolate; Petiole 1.5-3 cm	Petiolate; petiole ~0.5 cm
Inflorescence	Up to 5 flowers*; 0.8 – 0.9mm in length; 0.5 – 0.7mm in width	> 20 flowers*; ~1mm in length; ~ 1mm in diameter

*Characteristics regarding flowers corresponded to that of Verdcourt and Meijer, 1995)

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