

Taxonomic contributions to the genus *Homalomena* (Araceae) in Western Malesia: three new species from Sumatra discovered through the ornamental plant trade

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Abstract

Three new species of Sumatran *Homalomena* Schott are described herein: *H. pachyderma* A.S.D.Irsyam & M.R.Hariri, *H. pulopadangensis* A.S.D.Irsyam & M.R.Hariri, and *H. uncinata* A.S.D.Irsyam & M.R.Hariri. These taxa first came to scientific attention through their circulation on social media as ornamental plants, wherein horticulturists and collectors share images of morphologically distinctive but unidentified specimens, highlighting the growing role of digital platforms in revealing undocumented biodiversity, especially in Sumatra. Detailed morphological examination demonstrates that these taxa represent species new to science, clearly distinct from all previously described Sumatran *Homalomena*.

Abstrak

Tiga spesies baru *Homalomena* Schott dari Sumatra dideskripsikan dalam penelitian ini: *H. pachyderma* A.S.D.Irsyam & M.R.Hariri, *H. pulopadangensis* A.S.D.Irsyam & M.R.Hariri, dan *H. uncinata* A.S.D.Irsyam & M.R.Hariri. Taksa tersebut pertama kali mendapat perhatian ilmiah melalui peredarannya sebagai tanaman hias di media sosial, ketika para hortikulturis dan kolektor membagikan foto spesimen dengan morfologi khas namun belum teridentifikasi. Hal ini menegaskan peran yang semakin besar dari platform digital dalam mengungkap keanekaragaman hayati yang belum terdokumentasi, khususnya di Sumatra. Meskipun awalnya dikenali dari bahan budi daya, kajian morfologi yang mendalam menunjukkan bahwa taksa ini merupakan spesies baru bagi ilmu pengetahuan, yang jelas berbeda dari semua *Homalomena* Sumatra yang telah dideskripsikan sebelumnya.

Introduction

The genus *Homalomena* Schott (Araceae) represents a taxonomically significant lineage that warrants continued taxonomic investigation, with Sumatra serving as a particularly important region for such studies. Hay (1999) highlighted Sumatra as one of the principal centres of diversity for the genus within Malesia. To date, more than 30 species of *Homalomena* have been described from this region, including five new species formally described in 2025 (Hariri & Irsyam 2025, Irsyam et al. 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, 2025d, POWO 2025; Muzzazinah et al. 2026). These new species were described and published separately to ensure that each could be thoroughly examined and accurately characterized, with complete morphological and diagnostic information

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provided once sufficient fertile material became available, given that their flowering periods occurred at different times.

The rise of social media has also played a pivotal role in bringing attention to undocumented members of the genus. Plant collectors and enthusiasts frequently share images of morphologically unusual but unidentified specimens, often prompting further taxonomic investigation. Notably, species such as *H. chikmawataiae* A.S.D.Irsyam & M.R.Hariri and *H. pistioides* A.S.D.Irsyam, M.R.Hariri & Raynalta were first recognized through the ornamental plant trade on social media (Irsyam et al. 2025a, 2025b). This underscores the increasing importance of digital platforms as complementary tools to field exploration, facilitating the detection and documentation of overlooked biodiversity in Sumatra.

A recent observational study at a privately managed nursery in Bogor, West Java, revealed three previously unrecognized species of *Homalomena* originating from Sumatra. This finding emphasizes the role of cultivated collections and private nurseries as valuable sources for uncovering taxa that remain undocumented in the wild. In parallel, these plants have also circulated on social media platforms, further accelerating their recognition. In this paper, we formally describe these taxa as species new to science.

Taxonomic Notes

All three newly described species can be assigned to the Chamaecladon Supergroup as circumscribed by Wong et al. (2013), an informal assemblage within *Homalomena* characterized by a relatively stable suite of morphological traits. Members of this group are generally small in stature, with several taxa exhibiting rheophytic adaptations, and they share key diagnostic characters including an unconstricted spathe, staminate flowers with 2–3 stamens, and interpistillar staminodes are much shorter than the associated pistils. The placement of *H. pachyderma*, *H. pulopadangensis*, and *H. uncinata* within this supergroup is strongly supported by their conformity to these defining features.

Taxonomic Treatment

Homalomena pachyderma A.S.D.Irsyam & M.R.Hariri, sp. nov.

Type: INDONESIA: WEST JAVA PROVINCE: Bogor, cultivated in a private nursery [ex North Sumatra, Central Tapanuli, Aek Nabobar], 26 April 2025, MR Hariri 1001 (holotype: FIPIA; isotype: BO).

Lithophytic medium sized *herbs*, c. 18 cm in height. *Stem* condensed, c. 3.4 cm long, c. 2 cm in diam.; internodes obscured by overlapping leaf bases. *Leaves* up to 6 together; petiole subterete in cross-section, up to 7.5 cm long, 4–7 mm in diam., c. 1/3 length of blade, dark brownish-green to pale-green; petiolar sheath adnate to petiole, 1/3 to 1/2 of petiole length, 2.0–4.2 cm long, pale green, margin inrolled, undulate, hyaline; blade asymmetrically oblong to elliptic, 17.0–20.6 × 9.0–11.6 cm,

coriaceous, base cuneate to subcordate, margin crispulate, revolute, apex with a cylindrical tip 2–4 mm long, adaxial surface papillose, dark green in mature leaves and lime-green in young leaves, abaxial surface lime-green in mature leaves and pale-green in young leaves, midrib impressed adaxially, prominently raised abaxially, lime-green; primary lateral veins 12–14 on each side, diverging at c. 60° from midrib, impressed adaxially, prominently raised abaxially, lime-green; secondary veins fine, arising from midrib; tertiary veins inconspicuous. *Inflorescences* up to 2 together, in a synflorescence, without detectable odour; peduncle inserted obliquely on spathe, short, up to 2 cm long, curved, asperous and longitudinally ribbed, yellowish green. *Spathe* c. 2.7 × 0.8 cm, apex with a terminal mucro to c. 5.5 mm long, not constricted, exterior lime green, asperous and longitudinally ribbed, interior yellowish green. *Spadix* sessile, c. 16.6 mm long, c. 3.6 mm in diam., fertile to tip; pistillate flower zone shorter than staminate flower zone, 1/6 length of spadix, c. 2.3 mm long; pistils few, in two whorls, densely arranged, irregularly ovoid to broadly ellipsoid, c. 1.7 mm in height, 1.8–1.9 mm in diam., translucent pale green to greenish-white; stigma sessile, c. 0.6 mm in diam.; staminode 1, almost globose with long stipe, c. 0.6 mm in height, c. 0.4 mm in diam., white; suprapistillar interstice absent; staminate flower zone c. 14.8 mm long, conical, curved, apex acute; staminate flowers densely arranged, 0.8–1.6 mm long, each consisting of 1–3 stamens; stamens 0.8–1.5 mm long; thecae globose, opening by a wide terminal pore, cream. *Fruiting spathe, fruits and seeds* not observed. (Fig 1).

Diagnostic features: *Homalomena pachyderma* is similar to *H. mobula* P.C.Boyce & S.Y.Wong in having succulent large leaves with rough adaxial surfaces, but it is readily distinguished by its smooth (vs glistening crystalline) petioles, proportionately longer petioles (1/3 vs 1/8 of the blade length), asymmetrically elliptic leaves (vs broadly oblanceolate), crispulate leaf margins (vs irregularly dentate), blades papillate adaxially (vs coarsely asperous), spathes that are longitudinal crested (vs. not), and spadix strongly curved (vs. straight), the pistillate zone covers 1/6 of the spadix length (vs 1/5), and irregularly ovoid to broadly ellipsoid in shape (vs globose-lageniform), translucent pale green to greenish-white (vs greenish with heavy reddish speckling), and staminate flowers with 1–3 stamens (vs consistently 2) (Table 1).

Distribution: Known only from cultivated plants sourced from Central Tapanuli, Aek Nabobar, in North Sumatra where the species is likely to be locally endemic.

Etymology: The specific epithet *pachyderma* is derived from the Greek words *pachys* (thick) and *derma* (skin), referring to the thick, leathery texture of the leaf blades.

Note: The initial material was collected from Aek Nabobar (North Sumatra: Central Tapanuli) on 7 February 2021 by Mudin Siregar and subsequently brought to Bogor for cultivation as a living collection. The type specimen was later prepared from this cultivated material.

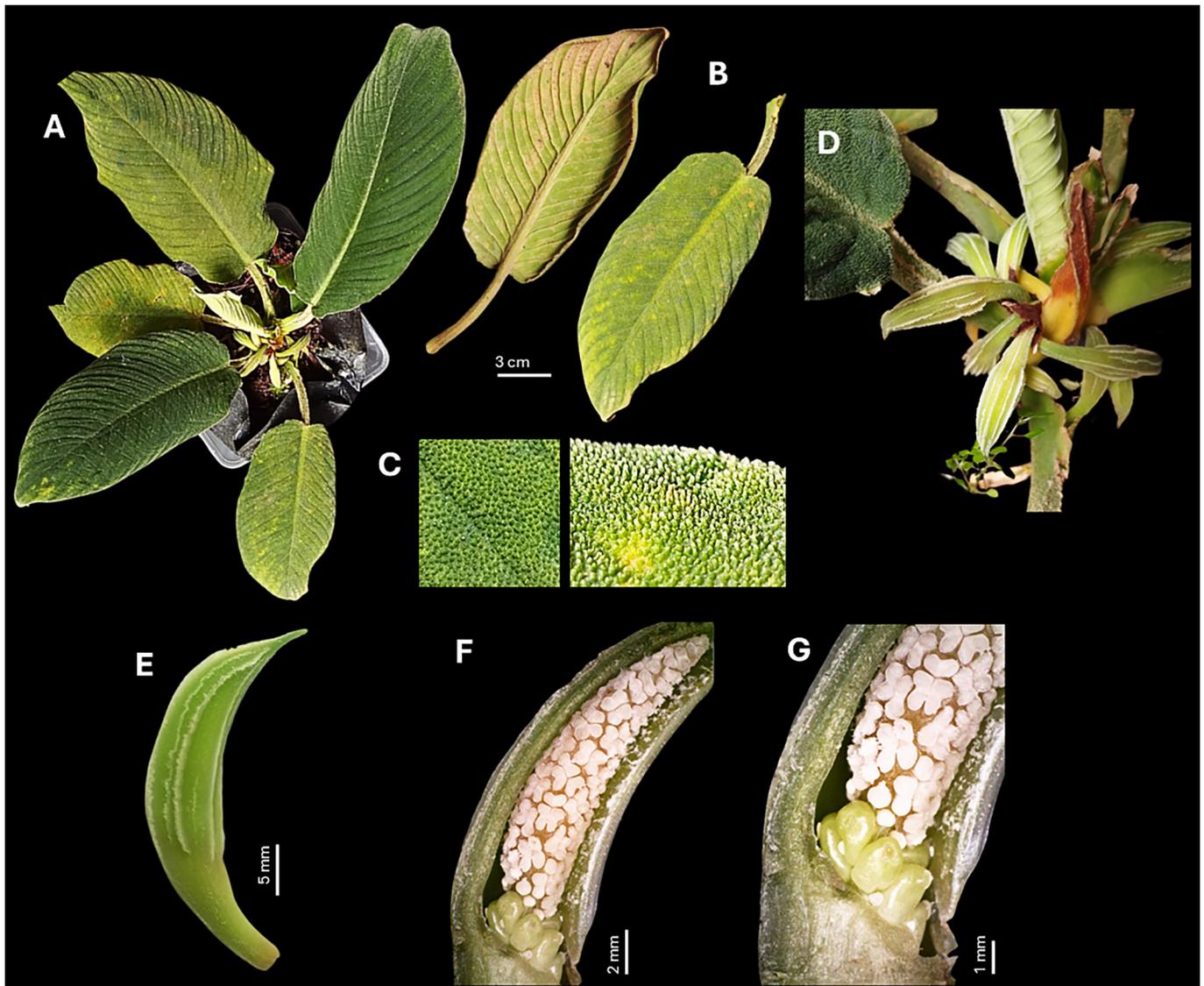


Figure 1. *Homalomena pachyderma* A.S.D.Irsyam & M.R.Hariri, sp. nov. A. Habit; B. Leaf showing both adaxial and abaxial surfaces; C. Papillae on the adaxial leaf surface; D. Inflorescences; E. Spathe; F. Spadix; G. Close-up view of pistils, staminodes, and staminate flowers. All photographs were taken using fresh material.

Table 1. Morphological comparison between *Homalomena pachyderma* and *H. mobula*.

Characters	<i>H. pachyderma</i>	<i>H. mobula</i>
Petiole shape in cross-section	subterete	stoutly subterete to D-shape
Glistening crystalline appearance on petiole	absent	present
Petiole length	1/3 of the blade length	1/8 of the blade length
Leaf shape	asymmetrically elliptic	broadly oblanceolate
Leaf margin	crispulate	irregularly dentate
Adaxial leaf surface texture	papillate	coarsely asperous
Primary lateral veins	12–14 pairs	12 pairs
The angle of primary lateral vein	60° from midrib	45° from midrib
The presence of longitudinal crest on the spathe	present	absent
Spathe colour	lime green externally and yellowish-green internally	reddish-brown externally and glossy deep red internally
Spadix shape	strongly curved	straight
Pistillate zone length	1/6 of the spadix	1/5 of the spadix
Pistil arrangement	2 whorls	2–3 whorls
Pistil shape	irregularly ovoid to broadly ellipsoid	globose-lageniform
Pistil colour	translucent pale green to greenish-white	greenish with heavy reddish speckling
Number of stamens per staminate flower	1–3 stamens	consistently 2

Homalomena pulopadangensis A.S.D.Irsyam & M.R.Hariri, sp. nov.

Type: INDONESIA: WEST JAVA PROVINCE: Bogor, cultivated in a private nursery [from material collected in the wild ex Sumatra: North Sumatra, Mandailing Natal Regency, Lingga Bayu, Pulo Padang KM. 5], 31 May 2025, *M.R. Hariri 1002* (holotype: FIPIA; isotype: BO).

Lithophytic tufted ascending-leaved *herbs*, up to 18 cm in height. *Stem* condensed, in larger plants erect, to c. 3.5 cm in height, c. 1.2 cm in diam., shoots pleioanthic; internodes obscured by overlapping leaf bases. *Leaves* many up to 10 together; petiole slender, canaliculate, 3.9–5.3 cm long, c. 2 mm in diam., c. 1/4 the length of the blade, sheathing in lower 1/3, with a prominent terminal geniculum 2–2.5 mm wide, straight or somewhat sigmoid, pale grey green; petiolar sheath fully adnate to petiole, wings triangular, 1.2–2 cm long, 6–9 mm wide at the base, spread flat, margins somewhat hyaline, greenish to dull brown-maroon; blade narrowly elliptic to oblanceolate or sub-falcate, leathery and brittle, 11.2–19.3 × 1.8–2.4 cm, emerging reddish-green, maturing to rather pale grey-green, base broadly cuneate, tip long-acuminate and apiculate for c. 2–3 mm, midrib impressed adaxially, prominently raised abaxially; primary lateral veins in 4–5 pairs, diverging at c. 30° from the midrib, impressed adaxially, conspicuously hyaline alate abaxially; interprimaries extremely fine; secondary veins arising from the midrib, very fine and not at all alate; tertiary veins inconspicuous. *Inflorescences* up to 3 together opening sequentially in a synflorescence; peduncles ascending, c. 2.3 cm long, c. 2 mm diam., dull reddish-brown. *Spathe* elongate-ovoid to narrowly fusiform, right margin overlaps the left, c. 2 cm long, c. 5 mm wide, not constricted, exterior yellowish-brown and green at the apex, interior pale yellowish-brown, apex blunt with a terminal mucro to 3 mm long. *Spadix* c. 15.5 mm long, c. 4.6 mm in diam., fertile to tip, sessile; pistillate flower zone c. 5.4 mm long, c. 1/3 the length of the spadix; pistils densely arranged, in 4 whorls, angular lageniform, c. 1.6 mm in height, 1–1.5 mm in diam., green, stylar region green; stigma sessile, button-like, 0.4–0.5 mm in diam.; staminode 1 each pistillate flower, claviform, c. 0.6 in height, c. 0.2 mm in diam., white; suprapistillar interstice absent; staminate flower zone c. 10.5 mm long, stout-conic, apex blunt; staminate

flowers densely arranged, each consisting of 2–3 stamens; stamens 0.6–0.9 mm long; thecae globose, 0.2–0.4 mm long, white, thecae opening by a wide terminal slit; pollen powdery, white. *Fruiting spathe, fruits, and seeds* not observed. (Fig 2).

Diagnostic features: *Homalomena pulopadangensis* is morphologically similar to *H. anthurioides* S.Y.Wong, P.C.Boyce & A.Hay by narrow leaf shape, the presence of genicula, longitudinal crest on primary lateral veins, and sessile spadix. However, it differs by its ascending leaf posture (vs pendulous), thicker petiole c. 2 mm in diameter (vs c. 1.5 mm), more robust geniculum 2–2.5 mm in diameter (vs 1.5 mm), 4 pairs of primary lateral veins (vs 3), inconspicuous tertiary veins (vs conspicuous, forming a faint tessellate reticulum), dull reddish-brown peduncle (vs glossy maroon), spathe elongate-ovoid to narrowly fusiform (vs ovoid), right margin of the spathe overlaps the left (vs left margin overlapping the right), yellowish-brown spathe with green at the apex on the exterior and pale yellowish-brown internally (vs uniformly pure white exterior and glossy white inner surface), a terminal mucro on the spathe c. 3 mm long (vs c. 0.5 mm), pistils arranged in 4 whorls (vs 2 or 3), angular lageniform pistils (vs cylindrical-globose), and claviform staminodes (vs ovoid). (Table 2).

Distribution: Known to us only from cultivation. The cultivated plants were sourced from Mandailing Natal Regency, Lingga Bayu, Pulo Padang KM. 5, in North Sumatra where the species is likely to be locally endemic.

Etymology: The specific epithet *pulopadangensis* refers to its type locality.

Note: *Homalomena pulopadangensis* is closely related to *H. anthurioides* sharing several key morphological characteristics, including narrowly shaped leaves, the presence of a well-defined geniculum, longitudinal crests along the primary lateral veins, and a sessile spadix.

The initial material was collected from Pulo Padang (North Sumatra, Mandailing Natal Regency, Lingga Bayu) by Mudin Siregar on 22 February 2025 and subsequently brought to Bogor for cultivation as a living collection. The type specimen was later prepared from this cultivated material.

Table 2. Morphological comparison between *Homalomena pulopadangensis* and *H. anthurioides*.

Characters	<i>H. pulopadangensis</i>	<i>H. anthurioides</i>
Leaf posture	ascending	pendulous
Petiole thickness	2 mm	1.5 mm
Geniculum width	2–2.5 mm in diameter	1.5 mm
Primary lateral veins	4 pairs	3 pairs
Tertiary veins	inconspicuous	conspicuous
Longitudinal crests on the primary lateral veins	present	present
Peduncle colour	dull reddish-brown	glossy maroon
Spathe shape	elongate-ovoid to narrowly fusiform	ovoid
Spathe colour	yellowish-brown externally and green at the apex, pale yellowish-brown internally	uniformly pure white exterior and glossy white inner surface
Spathe direction of folding	right margin of the spathe overlaps the left	left margin overlapping the right
Spathe terminal mucro length	c. 3 mm long	c. 0.5 mm long
Pistils arrangement	4 whorls	2 or 3 whorls
Pistil shape	angular lageniform	cylindrical-globose
Staminode shape	claviform	ovoid

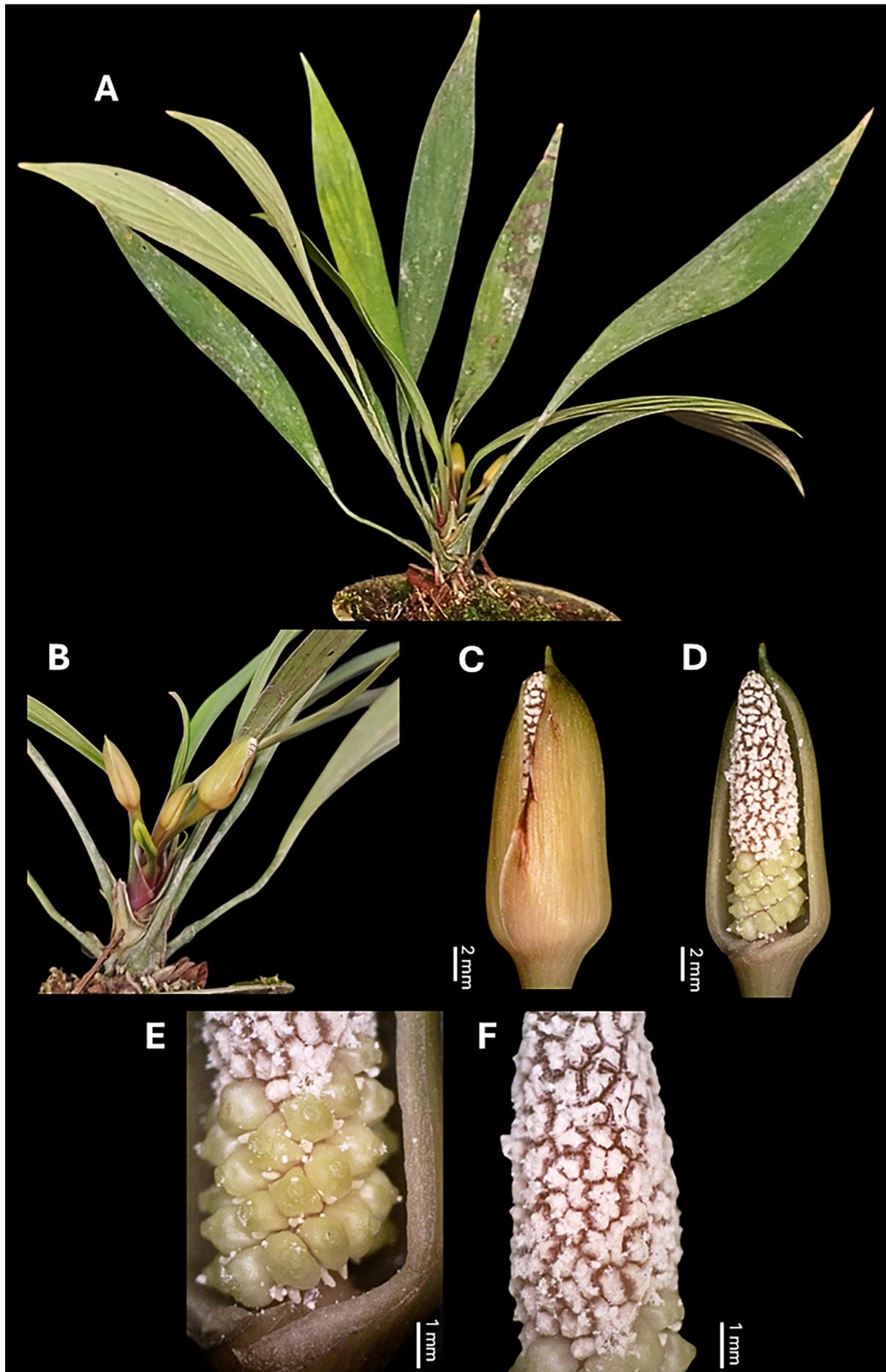


Figure 2. *Homalomena pulopadangensis* A.S.D.Irsyam & M.R.Hariri, sp. nov. A. Habit; B. Inflorescences (post-anthesis); C. Spathe; D. Spadix; E. Close-up view of pistils and staminodes; F. Close-up view of staminate flowers. All photographs were taken using fresh material.

Homalomena uncinata A.S.D.Irsyam & M.R.Hariri, sp. nov.

Type: INDONESIA: WEST JAVA PROVINCE: Bogor, cultivated in a private nursery [from material collected in the wild ex North Sumatra: South Tapanuli], 26 April 2025, *M.R. Hariri 1000* (holotype: FIPIA; isotype: BO).

Lithophytic small *herbs*, up to 11 cm in height. *Rhizome* c. 35 mm long, c. 4 mm in diam., greenish-brown; stem c. 10 mm long, c. 5 mm in diam.; internodes obscured by overlapping leaf bases. *Leaves* 9–13 together; sheath fully adnate to petiole, up to 1/2 petiole length, c. 1 cm long, margin entire, apex truncate, reddish; petiole shorter than the leaf blade, 1.6–2.3 cm long, c. 2 mm in diam., curved, ribbed, canaliculate, red to reddish-green; blade linear to sub-falcate, 3–8 × 0.3–0.6 cm, base cuneate to attenuate, margin entire, apex apiculate for ca. 1 mm long, adaxial surface sparsely covered with uncinata hairs approximately 1 mm long, dark green in mature leaves and yellowish-green in young leaves, abaxial surface glabrous, pale green, midrib impressed adaxially, prominently raised abaxially, greenish; primary lateral veins 1–2 on each side, impressed adaxially, prominently raised abaxially, green; secondary veins arising from midrib; tertiary veins inconspicuous. *Inflorescences* up to 2 together in a synflorescence; peduncle ascending, c. 2 cm long, red. *Spathe* c. 12.3 × 4.2 mm, not constricted, exterior verrucate, reddish-brown, interior smooth, reddish brown. *Spadix* conical, c. 10.5 mm long, c. 2.6 mm in diam., fertile to tip, sessile; pistillate flower zone shorter than staminate flower zone, c. 1/4 length of spadix, c. 2.5 mm long; pistils few, in three whorls, densely arranged, laterally compressed globose-lageniform, c. 1 mm in height, 1–1.1 mm in diam., reddish-white; stigma sessile, button-like, c. 0.2 mm in diam.; staminode absent; suprapistillar interstice absent; staminate flower zone c. 8 mm long, conical, apex acute; staminate flowers densely arranged, each consisting of 2–3 stamens, stamens 0.3–1.3 mm long; thecae 0.4–0.6 mm

long, ellipsoid, opening by a wide terminal pore, reddish-white. *Fruiting spathe*, fruits and seeds not observed. (Fig 3).

Diagnostic features: *Homalomena uncinata* exhibits affinity to *H. hasei* P.C.Boyce & S.Y.Wong by rosette-forming leaf arrangements and hairy adaxial leaf surfaces, but can be easily distinguished by its linear leaf blade (vs narrowly oblanceolate-elliptic), sparsely haired adaxial leaf surface (vs densely haired), uncinata-shaped hairs (vs straight to slightly curved), 1–2 primary lateral veins on each side (vs 5), inflorescences up to 2 together in a synflorescence (vs up to 7), reddish-brown spathe (vs green), spathe lacking a terminal mucro (vs with a terminal mucro), sessile spadix (vs stipitate), pistils arranged in three whorls (vs four whorls), reddish-white pistils (vs greenish-white), red stigma (vs greenish-white), absence of staminodes (vs present only in the basal row), staminate flowers comprising 2–3 stamens (vs 2), and reddish-white thecae (vs cream). (Table 3).

Distribution: The cultivated plants were sourced from Tapanuli Selatan, in North Sumatra where the species is likely to be locally endemic. No further details are known.

Etymology: The specific epithet *uncinata* refers to the presence of hooked hairs on the adaxial leaf surface.

Note: *Homalomena uncinata* shows close affinity to *H. hasei*, as both species possess a rosette leaf arrangement and hairy adaxial leaf surfaces. However, they differ in the density and morphology of the hairs. In *H. uncinata*, the hairs are sparse, thick, and uncinata. In contrast, *H. hasei* has a denser indumentum composed of slightly thinner, sub erect hairs with non-hooked tips. The initial material was collected from Tapanuli Selatan (North Sumatra) by anonymous local people, without a clearly recorded date, and subsequently brought to Bogor for cultivation as a living collection. The type specimen was later prepared from this cultivated material.

Table 3. Morphological comparison between *Homalomena uncinata* and *H. hasei*.

Characters	<i>H. uncinata</i>	<i>H. hasei</i>
Leaf shape	linear	narrowly oblanceolate-elliptic
Adaxial leaf surface	sparsely hairy	densely hairy
Hair shape	uncinata	straight to slightly curved
Primary lateral veins	1–2 pairs	5 pairs
Number of inflorescences in a synflorescence	up to 2	up to 7
Spathe colour	reddish-brown	green
Terminal mucro on spathe	absent	present
Stipe	absent	present
Pistil arrangement	3 whorls	4 whorls
Pistil colour	reddish-white	greenish-white
Stigma colour	red	greenish-white
Staminodes	absent	present only in the basal row
Number of stamens per staminate flower	2–3 stamens	2 stamens
Thecae colour	reddish-white	cream

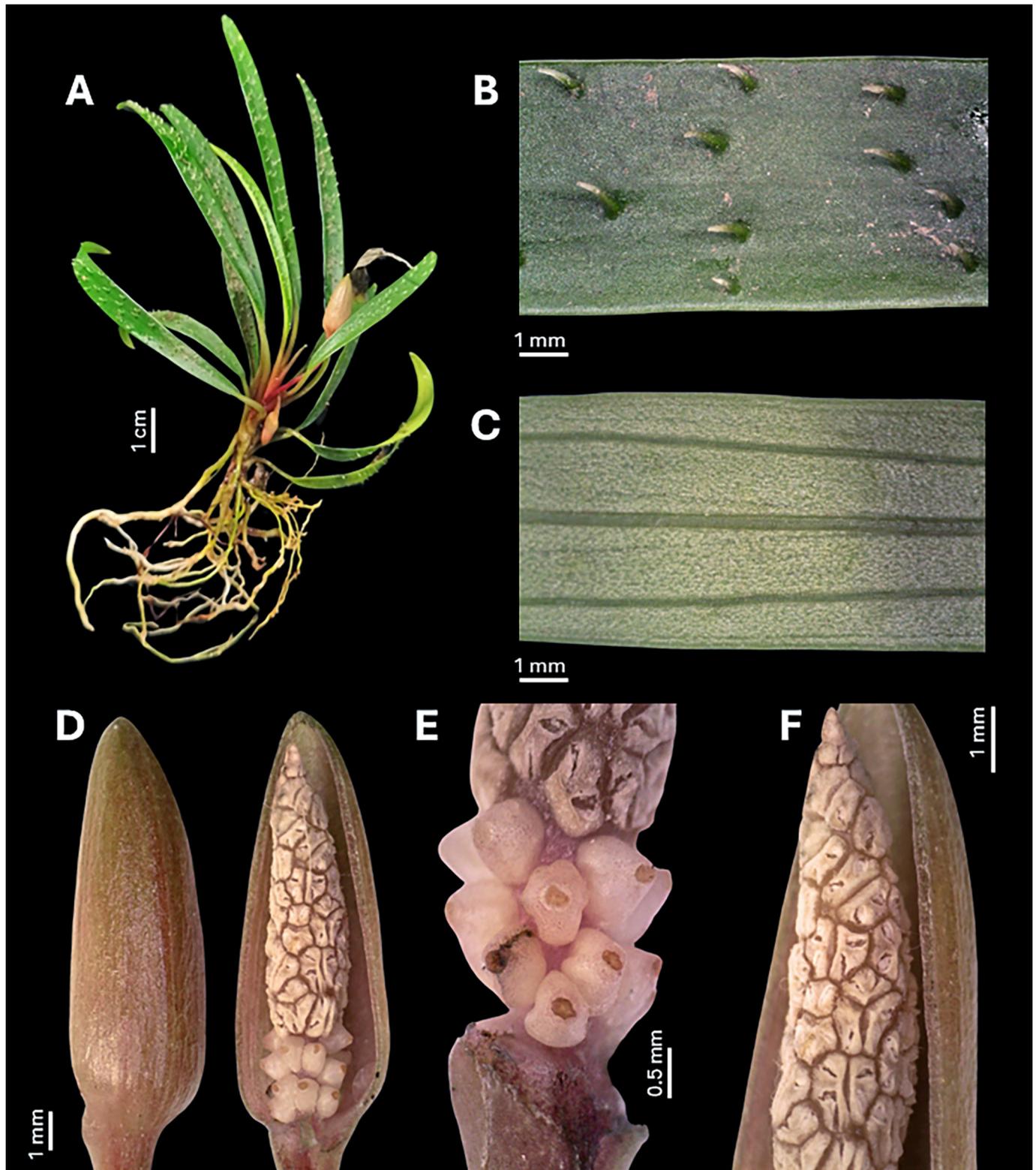


Figure 3. *Homalomena uncinata* A.S.D.Irsyam & M.R.Hariri, sp. nov. A. Habit; B. Adaxial leaf surface (40 \times); C. Abaxial leaf surface (40 \times); D. Spathe and spadix (30.4 \times); E. Close-up view of pistils (83 \times); F. Close-up view of staminate flowers (54.2 \times). All photographs were taken using fresh material.

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