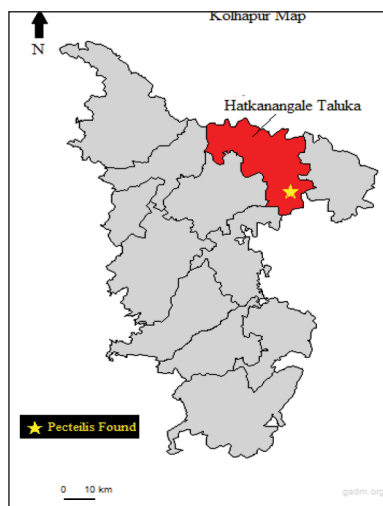


Pecteilis gigantea orchid from the arid hills of Hatkanagale, Maharashtra

The genus *Pecteilis* Raf. belongs to the family Orchidaceae within the clade Angiosperms. This genus comprises a total of 10 recognised species (Govaerts 2003; Pridgeon et al. 2001). This genus is indigenous to the Russian far east and tropical Asia. The genus pertains to terrestrial orchids. Orchids are predominantly located in nine principal habitats of Maharashtra. *Pecteilis gigantea* (Sm.) Raf. is a fragrant terrestrial orchid. Owing to its floral morphology, it is referred to as the Butterfly Orchid in English, while in Marathi it is designated as 'Wagchora', since the petals mimic the visage of a Tiger near the whiskers. It is sometimes referred to as the Queen of Khandala Orchid. It can be seen nearly in all types of habitats including desert habitat (Jalal & Jayanthi 2018). Natural shrubs and the open slopes of hills is renowned for its presence. However, the research conducted by Jalal & Jayanthi (2018) indicates that this species can occur in grassland ecosystems.

This species is documented and found in many districts of Maharashtra: Bhandara, Kolhapur, Nashik, Pune, Raigad, Satara, Sindhudurg, and Thane.



Map of Kolhapur



Habit of *Pecteilis gigantea*

Radhanagari in western Kolhapur is well known for its presence. Previously this species was recorded in conjunction with Radhangari at Ajara, Bhudargad, Chandgad, Panhala, and Shahuwadi taluka (Yadav & Sardesai 2002).

Kolhapur is climatically partitioned by an evergreen forest in the west and a dry region in the east. This division is distinctly delineated by the NH4 highway. The western side of this route comprises evergreen and semievergreen



Flower Closeup

habitat, whilst the eastern part is arid. The average annual rainfall in this region ranges 500–650 mm. The forest in this region predominantly consists of thorny trees, shrubs, and climbing plants such as *Vachellia nilotica*, *V. farnesiana*, *Searsia mysorensis*, *Gymnosporia senegalensis*, *Flueggea leucopyros* together with others like *Morinda coreia*, *Cordia dichotoma*, *Butea monosperma*, *Celastrus paniculatus*, *Holoptelia integrifolia*, *Bridelia retusa* and very commonly occurring herbs including *Exacum pedunculatum*, *Parasopubia delphinifolia*, *Grona triflora*, *Striga asiatica*, *Sesamum prostratum*, and *Neuracanthus sphaerostachyus*.

During the implementation of the citizen science programme of forest watch in the arid hills of eastern Kolhapur, we documented a

living specimen of *Pecteilis gigantea* amidst the shrubs of *Rotheca serrata* and various grass species. The taxon is located on the east-facing side of the hill. The precise location of the living plant is 16.7478° N, 74.3853° E, situated in the Atigre Hills behind the Sanjay Ghodawat University campus in Kolhapur. The live specimen had a mother plant accompanied by two offspring plants. Upon consulting botanists and referring to (Yadav & Sardesai 2002; Sharma et al. 1996), we found that this stands as first record in Hatkanagale Taluk, Kolhapur District.

It is an infrequently occurring endangered geophyte orchid. Its existence is jeopardised by habitat destruction and unsustainable utilisation (Jalal & Jayanthi 2018).

Taxonomic treatment

***Pecteilis gigantea* (Sm.) Raf. in Fl. Tellur. 2: 38. 1837; Sharma et al. Fl. Mah. Monocotyledons, 53. 1996; Sardesai & Yadav, Fl. Kolhapur, 455. 2002. *Habenaria gigantea* (Sm.) D. Don in Prodr. Fl. Nepal.: 24. 1825. *Orchis gigantea* Sm. in Exot. Bot. 2: 79. 1806.** Herbs 60–120 cm in height; tubers are two, either elliptical or ovoid in shape. Leaves measuring 5–18 cm by 2–7 cm, ovate-oblong to lanceolate, acute, frequently exhibiting a strong black apex, entire. Terminal inflorescence, including 2–6 flowers in racemes, measuring 16–20 cm in length. Flowers approximately 6.0 × 7.5 cm, white with a subtle green hue, bracteate, and briefly pedicellate. Capsules measuring 4.5 × 1.7 cm, ellipsoidal, prominently ribbed, and beaked.

Flowers & Fruits: September–December.

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