

**TAXONOMICAL IDENTIFICATION OF MAHA
ARATTA (*Alpinia galanga* (L.) Sw.)**

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ABSTRACT

Alpinia galanga (L.) Sw. of family Zingiberaceae is one of valuable rare medicinal plant in traditional medicinal system. It is commonly known as 'Maha Aratta' and has been recognized in different traditional system of medicines for the treatments of various diseases of human beings. According to the North and South Indian medicinal history, both *Alpinia galanga* (L.) Sw. and *Alpinia calcarata* Roscoe plants have known as 'Rashna' in Sanskrit language. They have used these two plants as Heen Aratta and Maha Aratta for different traditional uses. There are other closely similar plants that are misidentified as Maha Aratta in Sri Lanka. This study aimed to identify and compile comprehensive botanical information of *Alpinia galanga* (L.) Sw. and other similar plants. A survey was conducted to cover all agro ecological zones of Uva province which belongs to wet and intermediate zones to identify and collect the herbs which are known as Maha Aratta. Sixty four plant samples were collected and morphological study was carried out in each plant in order to distinguish *Alpinia galanga* (L.) Sw. and other similar plants such as *Alpinia calcarata* Roscoe, *Alpinia malaccensis* (Burm.f.) Roscoe, *Hedychium flavescens* [Carey ex] Roscoe, *Hedychium coronarium* Koenig, *Hedychium coccineum* [Buch.-Ham. Ex]. These plants are highly available in IU3c agro ecological zone and lesser availability in IL2 agro ecological zone in Uva province of Sri Lanka. Floral characteristics are the important common morphological character to identify these plant species. A botanical description was developed to *Alpinia galanga* (L.) Sw. plant. An identification guide to other similar plants of *Alpinia galanga* (L.) Sw. plant was developed. Plant herbariums for *Alpinia galanga* (L.) Sw. and other similar plants were deposited in Royal Botanical Garden of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka.

(Key words: *Alpinia galanga*, Maha Aratta, Similar plants, Morphology, Identification)