

# New tree species found in Xishuangbanna

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Immature fruit of *Beilschmiedia mengwangensis*. Credit: Peng Xiaobin

The Lauraceae is an important basal angiosperm group, widely distributed in the tropical and subtropical regions of the world. *Beilschmiedia* is one of the largest genera in the Lauraceae and has a typical pantropical distribution.

During [field work](#) from Menghai county to Lancang county in Yunnan province, researchers from Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden (XTBG) collected an unknown fruiting Lauraceae taxon.

After careful morphological studies and [phylogenetic analyses](#), the researchers confirmed that the material belonged to the genus *Beilschmiedia* and represented a species new to science. They named it *Beilschmiedia mengwangensis* to refer to its type locality, Mengwang of Xishuangbanna. [The new species was reported](#) in *Systematic Botany*.



Mature individual of *Beilschmiedia mengwangensis* in natural habit. Credit: Peng Xiaobin

*Beilschmiedia mengwangensis* is a tree up to about 20 meters. It is morphologically similar and phylogenetically closely related to *Beilschmiedia brachythyrsa*. However, it can be distinguished from *Beilschmiedia brachythyrsa* by having larger fruits, longer and thicker fruiting pedicels, larger leaf blades, and more lateral veins.

Wild individuals of the new species have only been found in forest along the streamside of the [river valley](#) in Huitang Village, Mengwang, Menghai County, at an altitude between 600 and 700 m.

Filed work showed that the environment around the type locality had been seriously affected by the expansion of agricultural land and relocation of residents displaced by the reconstruction of downtown hydropower station. Living *Beilschmiedia* collections at XTBG include another two immature individuals of the new species.

"An accurate assessment of the conservation status for this [new species](#) a crucial area of focus for future research," said Li Jie of XTBG.

**More information:** Xiao-bin Peng et al, *Beilschmiedia mengwangensis* (Lauraceae), a New Species from Southwest China, *Systematic Botany* (2024). [DOI: 10.1600/036364424X17157980510239](https://doi.org/10.1600/036364424X17157980510239)

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