TRUE AXILLARY INFLORESCENCES IN RUDGEA SALISB. (PALICOURIEAE, RUBIACEAE), A NEWLY REPORTED CHARACTER FOUND IN TWO NEW BRAZILIAN SPECIES

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The Neotropical genus Rudgea comprises at least 120 species distributed from Mexico to Argentina, of which 66 occur in Brazil. The Atlantic Forest of eastern Brazil is a diversity center for the genus. Rudgea is distinguished from other genera of Rubiaceae especially by the presence of triangular or truncate stipules with glandular appendages or projections. The new endemic species were discovered in ombrophilous rainforest remnants at the Municipality of Castelo, within an area that has been highlighted as a priority for conservation in the south of Espírito Santo state. The most notable characteristic of these new species is the axillary position of the inflorescence, not terminal or subterminal as in all other known species of Rudgea. Rudgea sp. nov. 1 is morphologically distinct within the genus the combination of its large leaf blades (15–33.5 × 7.5–15 cm) and the axillary inflorescences. Rudgea sp. nov. 2 can be distinguished by the combination of sheathing stipules with dorsal glandular appendages, medium size leaf-blade (ca. 7-11 cm long), lanceolate to elliptic, 7-9 pairs of secondary veins, absence of domatia, axillary inflorescence and flowers with distinctly lobed calyx. The two species described were categorized as critically endangered (CR). Diagnoses, descriptions, illustrations and ecological information are provided for both of species. (CNPq, FAPES, FAPESP)

Keywords: Atlantic Forest, Espírito Santo, Rubioideae, Southeastern Brazil.