Musa serpentina

*Musa serpentina* Swangpol & Somana is named after the sinuous shape of its rachis\(^1\). Its Thai vernacular name, Kluai Nakkharat (กล้วยนาคราช), means the serpent king banana, kluai being the Thai word for banana.

The species, described in 2011, was found in western Thailand, in an area where *Musa acuminata* and *Musa laterita* are also present. Because *Musa serpentina* possesses characters of both of these species, it has been suggested that it is a hybrid rather than a species\(^2\).

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### Main morphological characteristics

The *inflorescence* is erect at emergence, but as the rachis lengthens it takes on the distinctive snake-like shape after which the species is named\(^1\). The plant is between 2–4 m tall and the circumference of the *pseudostem* is 20–40 cm. The margins of the *petiole* canal are curved inward. The male bract is pink-purple to purple-brown on the outside, and red-purple with or without purple streaks in the inside. There are 4–7 hands per bunch and 8–18 fruits per hand, in two rows. The authors use the TS ratio (the vertical depth of the petiole canal divided by the vertical depth of petiole tissue beneath\(^3\)) to distinguish *Musa serpentina* (TS ratio less than 1) from *Musa laterita* (TS ratio more than 1).

### Distribution and habitat

The species was found in the western part of Thailand (Mae Hong Son, Mae Ramat, Sangkhla Buri) along the border with Myanmar. It has been observed in open mixed deciduous forest along stream banks and roadsides, and at altitudes varying between 240 and 570 m.

### References

2. *Musa serpentina*, a new banana species? on the ProMusa discussion forum

External links

*Musa serpentina*, a new banana species from western Thailand in Species New to Science

See also on this website

Discussion on whether *Musa serpentina* is a species or a hybrid on the ProMusa discussion forum
Musapedia pages on wild banana species
Musa acuminata
Musa balbisiana
Musa haekkinenii
Musa itinerans
Musa schizocarpa
Musa serpentina

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