

New plant species named after Sharad Pawar

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In news : The new flowering species, belonging to the genus *Argyreia*, has been named 'Argyreia sharadchandraji'.

Key updates

- The new species has been found Alamprabhu Dev-raai (sacred grove) in south Maharashtra's Kolhapur district which is close to the Western Ghats ecological zone
- The plant has been named after Pawar to acknowledge his work as the Union agriculture minister.
- This flowering plant blooms between July and September and its fruiting period goes on till December.
- Research work called *Argyreia sharadchandrajii* (Convolvulaceae) has been published by the Indian Association for Angiosperm Taxonomy
- Around 40 sub-species of the *Argyreia* genus are present in India.
- These species are found in only Asiatic countries. Of 40, 17 are endemic to India,
- Now researchers have discovered an 18th one in the Alamprabhu Sacred Grove in Ramling hills
- It grows in open habitats and trails on grassland but remains rooted near other shrubs

What are Sacred groves?

- Sacred Groves are the tracts of virgin forests that are left untouched by the local inhabitants and are protected by the local community due to their culture and religious beliefs.
- Sacred groves are relic vegetation of once dominant flora.
- They are repositories of our rich biodiversity; they are

also the last bastion where the rich culture and the customs of the indigenous people are still preserved.

- Indian sacred groves are often associated with temples, monasteries, shrines or with burial grounds.
- Sacred groves are scattered all over the country, and are referred to by different names in different parts of India.
- Sacred groves occur in a variety of places – from scrub forests in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan maintained by the Bishnois, to rain forests in the Western Ghats of Kerala.
- Himachal Pradesh in the north and Kerala in the south are specifically known for their large numbers of sacred groves.