

## ASSAM

**State flower:** Fox-tail orchid

**Botanical Name:** *Rhynchostylis retusa* (L.) Blume

**Vernacular Name:** Kopou Phul (Assamese); Draupadi Mala (Hindi); Panas Koli (Konkani); Samijirei (Manipuri); Gajra, Seetechi Veni (Marathi).

**Family:** Orchidaceae

**Etymology:** The specific epithet, *retusa* is referred to its retuse-tipped lip in flowers.



**Rhynchostylis retusa** (L.) Blume

**Botanical Description:** Epiphytic herbs; stems terete, 10 – 15 cm long, sheathed at base. Leaves sessile, oblong, curved spines at apex, 15 – 30 × 3 – 4 cm, drooping rather dense, coriaceous. Inflorescence racemose, lateral, drooping as long as leaves, many-flowered. Flowers in dense, 2 – 2.3 cm across, light pink with deep blotches; bracts obovate, acute at apex, dentate at margins, 3 – 4 mm long, membranous, persistent. Sepal ovate, ca 1 × 0.7 cm. Petals oblong, obtuse, ca 1 × 0.4 cm; lip erect, oblong, slightly widening upward, ca 1.2 cm long, pink, white at apex, constricted, emarginated, 5-nerved; spur ca 7 mm long, rounded at apex, laterally compressed, without a cavity; column 3 – 4 mm long, white; pollinia globose; ovary 1 – 1.5 cm long, pinkish white.

**Flowering & Fruiting:** April – May.

**Range of distribution:** India, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

**Economic Importance:** It has horticultural

value, known as 'Rhy' in horticultural trade.

**Traditional Knowledge:** The inflorescence is used by Assamese girls to adorn their hair during the spring festival 'Rongali Bihu'. Among the youths of Assam, this orchid is regarded as symbol of love, fertility and merriment. It is also used in marriage ceremony of the Assamese. Considering its importance the native of Assam grow this species in their home premises.

**Medicinal Uses:** Plant used in treatment of cuts and wounds.

**Note:** It is an endangered species, and also listed under Appendix II of CITES.

**K. Pagag, S.K. Singh & D.K. Roy**

Botanical Survey of India, Eastern Regional Centre, Shillong.