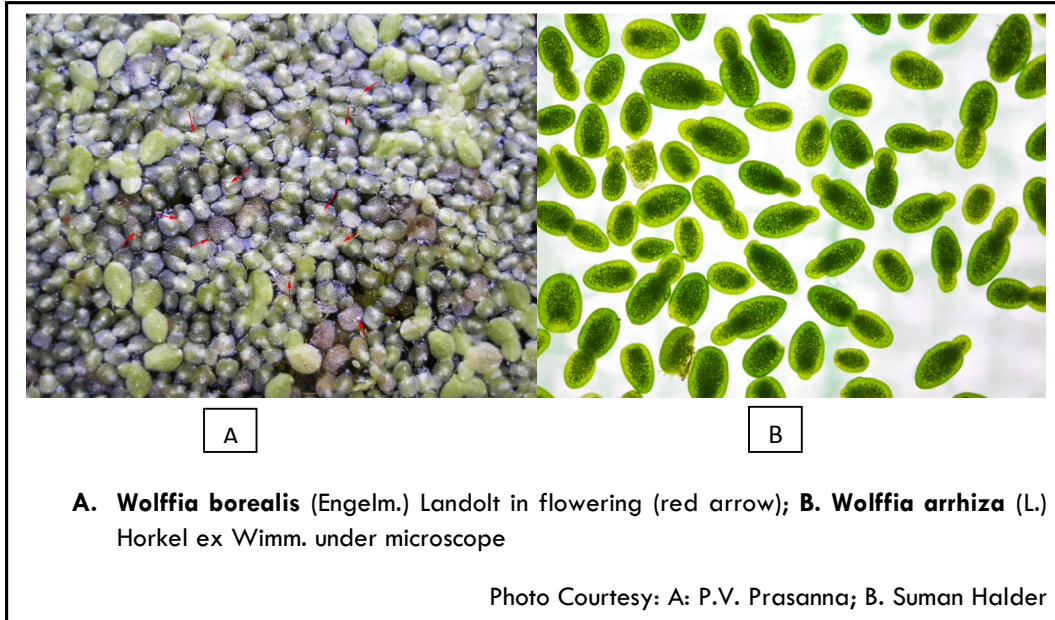


The World of Wolffias – The Minutest Angiosperms!

The species of **Wolffia** (Lemnaceae) are the smallest angiosperms occurring in stagnant and slow moving water bodies. They are commonly known by water meal, since they appear small grain-like mealy particles floating on water surface. The genus is represented by 11 species, mainly distributed in tropical and warm to temperate regions of the world (Mabberley, 2008). The tiny, rootless fronds are only of about 1 mm long and **W. globosa** (Roxb.) Hartog & Plas is the smallest (ca. 0.5×0.3 mm)



known so far. They look like tiny green footballs with a flat or rounded top under a microscope and easily slip through the eye of the needle. They usually propagate through vegetative means and mother fronds rapidly produce daughter fronds from one end. They get densely matted on sheltered waters in no time and can cover the entire water surface in a couple of days generating anoxic situations in ecosystems they occupy! Their flowering is less noticed but they do flower quite infrequently. The minute flower produced in floral cavity in the side of the frond is highly reduced and has no petals or sepals and consists of a single stamen and pistil. After pollination and fertilization, a one-seeded fruit develops. The plants challenge not merely for identities but for the interactions they consistently maintain with typical fauna in their associations that deserve true enquiry and research.

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