Pemphis acidula (Kuredhi)

"PEMPHIS" is named after the plant *Pempis acidula.* It is a marine and terrestrial plant which grows along the beaches of islands. On this 50th edition PEMPHIS here are some information about this plant.

Classification
Kingdom: Plantae
Phylum: Tracheophyta
Class: Magnoliopsida
Order: Myrtale
Family: Lythraceae
Genus: Pemphis
Species: *acidula*

Description

Pemphis acidula is robust species which is widely spread in Maldives. This is a fast growing and densely branched small tree which grows on the intertidal zone where salt water reaches its root during high tide. *P. acidula* grows on calcareous rocky and sandy beaches. This species acts as a wind barrier to the island. It is a very sturdy and resilient plant, however, it will not grow anywhere other than the appropriate habitat type.

P. acidula has tap root system with main root tapping deep into the ground and lateral roots are highly branched and lies shallow tightly packed.

Stem is woody, twisted, highly branched and sometimes lies almost on the ground. It grows up to 4 – 6 meters tall.

Leaves are simple, bluntly acute at the tip, opposite in arrangement, hairy on both sides and 0.5 to 2 cm long.

Inflorescence is axillary. Calyx is tubular, 12-lobed, hairy and green in colour. Petals are separate, 6 in number and white or pinkish white in colour.

Fruit of *P. acidula* are about 1cm long with round apex. The fruits are green when young and brown when matured. Each fruit contains 20-30 seeds.
The fruits float on water and sometimes dispersed by water currents.

Uses and Importance

P. acidula is one of the most favored timbers in Maldives. It is used for boat building, particularly to hold the beams together. It is also used to carve tool handles, chess coins and other handicrafts.

As this plant is mainly found on the green belt surrounding the islands, it acts as a wind barrier to the island and aids in stabilization of the sand on the beach. The roots of this tree reinforce the soil increasing the strength of the soil. This helps to prevent coastal erosion.