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Meconopsis gakyidiana: Bhutan's National Flower and a Symbol of Happiness



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Figure 1. Flowers of Meconopsis gakyidiana showing variation in corolla colour with flower age: newly opened flowers display a deep purple corolla, while older fully opened flowers appear paler, with one flower exhibiting a pinkish tinge. Photo by Phuentsho.

The national flower, formerly regarded as a subspecies of *Meconopsis grandis*, has been taxonomically revised and recognized as a distinct species, *Meconopsis gakyidiana* in 2016 (Figure 1) [1]. It is a polycarpic herb with height ranging from 45 – 120

cm with rhizomes, fibrous roots, and bristly stems. Leaves are oblong to ovate, flowers nodding, 6-15 cm wide, petals blue to purple. It grows in shrubberies and forest edges at 3,700-4,300 m in Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh, and Xizang (Tibet) [1].

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As the plant represents Bhutan's national flower, the species epithet *gakyidiana* was derived from the Dzongkha term *gakyid* (happiness), to symbolize Bhutan's guiding developmental philosophy of Gross National Happiness [1]. In Dzongkha, the species is known as *Tsernyoen Meto*, while the Brokpa community of Merak refers to it as *Kuengyen Mendo*, which literally translates to "the ornament flower of all the people."

Although a few other species of the genus *Meconopsis*, such as *Meconopsis horridula*, *Meconopsis paniculata*, *Meconopsis bhutanica* (previously identified as *Meconopsis discigera*), *Meconopsis simplicifolia*, and *Meconopsis wallichii* (now identified as *Meconopsis napaulensis* [2]) have been reported to be used in the formulation of traditional medicines in Bhutan [2,3], *Meconopsis gakyidiana* is currently not known to be used in traditional medicine in the country.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable

Consent for publication

Not applicable

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Funding

There was no funding for this article.

Availability of data materials

All public sources of data have been cited in this article.

Author contribution

Conceptualization, Validation, Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing – P

Received: 17 June, 2025, Accepted: 29 September, 2025

Published online: 23 Octoberber, 2025

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