

NOTE

**" MAI RAGAM " မြေခံ (ZALACCA WALLICHIANA)
AS AN AID IN BOTANICAL HANDSECTIONING.**

Handsectioning by razor requires a medium as support for delicate or small objects such as leaves and small seeds, pith or cork being used normally. Imported cork being scarce and pith not always being available, the soft pith-like stem of *mai ragam* = *Zalacca Wallichiana*—has been found not only a substitute but in many cases even better than cork. Thousands of sections have been cut with excellent result, by means of *mai ragam*, in the Pharmacognostic Section of the Department of Medicinal Science.

It may be of interest to botanists, teachers or biologists and foresters, who as a routine or occasionally have to do handsectioning, to learn something about the way of using *mai ragam*. If *mai ragam* has been fresh cut, it is soft, of pith-like consistency, and very suitable for soft material such as thin leaves, barks etc. For cutting hard or fairly hard objects such as small seeds *mai ragam* which has been dried is more suitable, being more tough. Best results are obtained if such tough *mai ragam* is first soaked in hot water. Two pieces of equal size and about 2-3 cm. long are cut with more or less parallel sides, the specimen mounted between and then clamped between the jaws of a vice in such a way that the *mai ragam* is cut transversely. In cutting, the blade of the well-sharpened razor is pressed on the elastic surface of the *mai ragam* and the blade drawn nearly parallel, at a very small angle to the surface. The greater resistance of the vascular bundles in *mai ragam* prevents the blade from deviating from the required angle and sections used to be more uniformly cut and less torn than in cork mounting. To separate the specimen-section from the *mai ragam* the material is floated in water in a dish, the airfilled *mai ragam* floating on the surface, whereas the specimen usually sinks down.

It has to be mentioned that *mai ragam* contains starch which rather resembles that of Zingiberaceae. In case objects containing starch are to be sectioned, it is to be recommended, to hydrolise the starch by boiling the *mai ragam* for about half an hour.

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