

# IMPORTANT WILD MEDICINAL SPECIES OF HILLY REGIONS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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Himachal Pradesh, in the Indian Himalaya, has a rich diversity of medicinal plants, which are widely used. This paper brings together existing information with the results from recent field surveys. A total of 643 species of medicinal plants are identified; many different plant parts are used for the treatment of various ailments. The number of medicinal plant species decreased with increasing altitude. The plants are classified according to nativeness, endemism, and rarity, and prioritized for cultivation. Existing strategies for in-situ and ex-situ conservation, cultivation and propagation are reviewed and a range of actions for cooperative implementation by all stakeholders are suggested.

## INTRODUCTION

The Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) is a mega hotspot of biological diversity (Myers 2000). It comprises about 18% of India, is more than 2,800 km long and 220 to 300 km wide, with altitudes from 200–8000m. The flora includes about 8,000 species of angiosperm (40% endemic), 44 species of gymnosperm (16% endemic), 600 species of pteridophyte (25% endemic), 1737 species of bryophyte (33% endemic), 1,159 species of lichen (11% endemic) and 6,900 species of fungi (27% endemic). These include some 1748 species of medicinal plant with various traditional and modern therapeutic uses, 675 species of wild edible plants, 118 species of medicinal plants yielding essential oils, 279 species of fodder, 155 sacred plants and 121 rare-endangered. A large number of studies on medicinal plants have been carried out in the IHR. However, in particular in Himachal Pradesh, such studies are fragmentary and mainly focused on inventory. Some workers have mentioned medicinal uses.



## BENEFITS & IMPORTANCE OF MEDICINAL PLANTS

Ayurvedic herbs are time tested for their health and other benefits. The nutritive values that they pack are highly recommended for their healing powers. Known to induce no side effects, they have a unique aroma and flavor and when consumed regularly, they act as a perfect mechanism to bring about a balanced harmony between mind and body. They rejuvenate the whole system instead of focusing on one specific organ or body part.

## BENEFITS OF MEDICINAL PLANTS:

They have a holistic approach and aid in proper absorption and digestion

- They are not disease specific but act as a preventive medicine that positively effects the overall health and well-being by boosting the immune system
- They are at par with allopathic medicines and are at times known to be effective in treating diseases like cancer and autoimmune diseases
- They are self-contained and nutritive in nature, therefore, are non-toxic and harmless
- It deals with the overall well-being and aims to bring harmony between mind, body and soul
- Several metabolic and chronic conditions can be treated without any side effects using Ayurvedic medicines and treatments

Himachal Pradesh, located in the lap of the Himalayas, has varied climatic conditions due to variations in altitude and topography, which make this state a home for wide variety of plants. The Shimla hills have a rich repository of medicinal and other useful plants. The important biodiversity of medicinal plants of Shimla hills was surveyed between 2011 and 2013 at various places in Shimla and neighborhood. Some of the important plants recorded were Malabarnut, Indian Horse Chestnut, Bracted Bugleweed, Aloe, Asparagus, Orchid Tree, Barberry, Bergenia, Indian Laburnum, Cedar tree, Indian Bay Leaf, Crepe Ginger, Datura, Indian Gooseberry, Spiked Ginger Lily, Yellow Jasmine, Walnut, Box Myrtle, Holy Basil, Oregano, Kakkar, Wild Himalayan Cherry, Wild Pomegranate, Rhododendron, Indian Madder, Himalayan Yew, Thyme, Himalayan Violet, Chaste Tree and Winged Prickly Ash etc.

## CONCLUSION:

These plants also find their use as wood, fodder, fiber, in dyeing and tanning, vegetables, fruits, spices and flavoring agents, insecticides, flea repellent, terpenes etc. Only a few plants are used in pharmaceutical industry. Elderly people of the nearby village still know many of the uses of these plants but young generation is ignorant. According to World Health Organization (WHO), 80% of the world population still relies on plants-based medicines. Due to many side effects of modern allopathic medicines, plants-based medicines may be popularized and traditional knowledge of plants and folk medicine may be conserved. New generation may be sensitized and motivated to use natural products. Further research may be promoted and carried out on medicinal plants for the welfare of humanity.

