

Black Cumin: Health Benefits and Uses

Vijay Kumar

Dr. YS Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Nauni, Solan (HP)

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Introduction:-

Black cumin (*Nigella sativa*) is an annual herb with an erect stem that belongs to *Ranunculaceae* family of flowering plants. Black cumin is native to western Asia and southern Europe, but now days it is being grown throughout the India. The seeds of black cumin and its oil have been used for decades to cure various ailments throughout the world. Black cumin is an important drug in Indian traditional medicine system like Unani and Ayurveda. Also its seeds have been used as a condiment too.

Botanical Description:-

A glabrous annual herb grows to height of about 1-2 feet. Leaves are alternate, feathery, finely divided, greyish green in color. Flowers are star shaped and bluish-white in color. Petals are absent. The fruit is globose capsule with small trigonous black seeds.



Method of Propagation:-

Black cumin is propagated either by sowing seeds or by replanting previous year root stocks (bulbs). Seed sowing is done during October-November by broadcasting and line sowing methods. Bulb sowing is possible when moisture content of soil is adequate for deep ploughing i.e. neither too dry nor too wet.

Chemical constitution:-

Black cumin seeds contain

1. Fixed oil - 32 to 40% (palmitic acid, stearic acid, arachidonic, linoleic and oleic acid)
2. Volatile oil -0.45 to 0.45% (thymoquinone, nigellone, thymol, thymohydroquinine)
3. Minerals - 1.79-3.74% (potassium, sodium, calcium, iron, phosphorus)
4. Proteins - 16-19.9% (leucine, lysine, tyrosine, proline, glutamic acid)

5. Carbohydrates - 33.9%
6. Fibers - 5.50%
7. Water - 6.0%

Health benefits:-

Black cumin (*N. sativa*) is widely used medicinal plant throughout the world and considered as a miracle herb because of its wide spectrum therapeutic properties, some of its properties are listed below:-

- Black cumin and its compounds are widely known for their potent anti-cancer effect.
- Reduces blood sugar level.
- Have Hepatoprotective properties
- Black cumin seeds are effective against cough, bronchitis, chest congestion, back pain, rheumatism, chronic headache, migraine, paralysis, obesity, flatulence, dysentery and diarrhea.
- Black cumin seeds oils is used to treat allergic diseases.
- Have a normalizing effect on hypertension.
- Provides protection against Parkinson's disease.
- Black cumin seeds have been shown to especially effective at lowering cholesterol.
- Black cumin seeds have significant positive effect on bone healing and formation because it boosts the process of osteogenesis, increase bone density and calcium concentration.
- Helps to control anxiety and depression.
- Black cumin seeds have shown therapeutic promise against wide range of kidney diseases.

Beside all of these therapeutic effects black cumin seeds also contains high amount of anti-oxidants, which helps in neutralizing harmful free radicals that may lead to development of various diseases.

Uses:-

Black cumin seeds and oil extracted from the seeds are used in various industries as listed below:-

Industry	Properties Used
Food and flavoring	Seeds used as a condiment in many Indian cuisines. Used as flavoring agent in liquor industry.
Cosmetics	Black cumin seed oil makes skin elastic so used in skin care products and hair care products.
Insecticide	Essential oil extracted from the seeds possesses insecticidal properties.
Animal feed	Black cumin seed cakes used as feed for cattles.

Conclusion:-

Because of its wide range of uses and health benefits, black cumin is extensively used throughout the world. It is generally considered as a miracle herb because it is used to cure various diseases. Black cumin has got a place among top ranked evidence based herbal medicines. Studies revealed that most of its therapeutic properties are due to the presence of thymoquinone major phytochemical component of its essential oil. In Islamism, black cumin considered as one of most important medicinal plant, because of its great healing powers. Because of all these health benefits of black cumin, prophet Mohammed quoted as saying **“This black seed is healing for all diseases except death”** means it can cure all the diseases except death.