



Facts related to Indian Medicinal Plants

Indian medicinal plants are being used to cure diseases, since several millennia. These plants are grown throughout the Indian subcontinent. They are significant parts of Ayurveda. Ayurveda is one of the most popular codified medical traditions in India. This treatment method traces its origins to the Vedic ages. Numerous Indian medicinal plants are mentioned in the Vedic texts. Besides Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani medicinal practices use several medicinal plants to prepare medicines. Whilst most of the medicinal plants are native to India, some have their origin in foreign countries. The probable trade taking place during the existence of ancient civilizations and the arrival of the Europeans, paved the way for medicinal plants in India.



Some important Indian medicinal plants are:

Ashoka Tree: Ashoka tree is one of the sacred trees of the Hindus as well as the Buddhists. The astringent bark is reported to have a stimulating effect on the endometrial and ovarian tissue, and is useful for treating menstrual pain and menorrhagia due to uterine fibroids, leucorrhoea, and internal bleeding, hemorrhoids and hemorrhagic dysentery. In Ayurveda ashoka tree is used for treating dyspepsia, other diseases of the blood, biliousness, tumours, abdominal enlargement, colic, piles, ulcers and bone fractures.

Ssubundari Tree: Sundari Local name of the dominant plant species, *Heritiera fomes*, of the family Sterculiaceae, in the Sundarbans, the mangrove forests of the southern districts. The species is distributed up to about 70 per cent of the forest. Sundari Tree is a large tree with wing shaped nuts, which is most easily recognised by the silvery scales on the underside of its

leaves. Scientifically known as *Heritiera littoralis*, it is commonly called the Sundari tree in both Hindi and Bengali language.

Orchid Tree: Orchid tree or Raktakanchan is a small, usually evergreen, ornamental tree. The tree looks strikingly beautiful when in bloom which continues for several months. The medicinal properties of Raktachandan or Orchid tree have made it precious among the medicinal plants and it is used hugely by the people of India for treating various diseases. Indian Postal Department had also issued a postal stamp to commemorate this tree.

Badam Tree: The almond is a deciduous tree growing to 4–12.2 metres (13–40 feet) in height, with a trunk of up to 30 centimetres (12 inches) in diameter. The young twigs are green at first, becoming purplish where exposed to sunlight, then gray in their second year. The leaves are 8–13 cm (3–5 in) long, with a serrated margin and a 2.5 cm (1 in) petiole.

Jasmine Tree: Jasmines are native to tropical and subtropical regions of Eurasia, Africa, Australasia and Oceania, although only one of the 200 species is native to Europe. Their center of diversity is in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Several jasmine species have become naturalized in Mediterranean Europe. For example, the so-called Spanish jasmine (*Jasminum grandiflorum*) was originally from West Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Northeast Africa, and East Africa, and is now naturalized in the Iberian peninsula

Matchstick Tree : *A. macrophylla* (Matchstick Tree) is a fast-growing, medium-size (30-40 m tall) tree with a wide distribution in south Asia, where it is also planted. Its wood is pale yellow-white, soft, light, easy to work and has a wavy, attractive figure; it is durable and moderately resistant to attack by boring insects. The wood is used as a general-purpose construction material for window frames, doors, panelling, ceiling boards, packing cases and chests, for transmission poles, and for matchstick and plywood manufacture. The alkaloids in *A. macrophylla* are used for treating dysentery and also have pesticidal properties. Alkaloidal content is highest in the stem bark and lowest in the leaves.

Musket Tree: Mesquite, (genus *Prosopis*), genus of spiny deep-rooted shrubs or small trees in the pea family (Fabaceae). They form extensive thickets in areas from South America into the southwestern United States. They are considered pests and have been eradicated in some places. The wood of the mesquite, formerly used in railroad ties, is of limited economic value, though it is useful for unusual furniture and for aromatic firewood.

Thorny staff tree: Thorny shrubs are considered as an important driver in the natural development of temperate forest structures, particularly in European lowland forests. We assessed the current role of thorny shrubs in the regeneration of deciduous tree species under heavy browsing pressure in a central European temperate forested landscape. The study's military training area offered a unique opportunity to investigate the processes in which deciduous tree seedlings grew under thorny shrubs and in the close vicinity of thorny shrubs in a landscape with a high density of large herbivores (red deer and sika deer).

Oriental Cashew Tree: The cashew tree (*Anacardium occidentale*) is a tropical evergreen tree native to South America in the genus *Anacardium* that produces the cashew seed and the

cashew apple accessory fruit. The tree can grow as tall as 14 metres (46 feet), but the dwarf cultivars, growing up to 6 m (20 ft), prove more profitable, with earlier maturity and greater yields. The cashew seed is commonly considered a snack nut (cashew nut) eaten on its own, used in recipes, or processed into cashew cheese or cashew butter. Like the tree, the nut is often simply called a cashew. Cashew allergies are triggered by the proteins found in tree nuts, and cooking often does not remove or change these proteins.

Nasinda Tree: *Vitex negundo*, commonly known as the Chinese chaste tree, five-leaved chaste tree, or horseshoe vitex, or nisinda is a large aromatic shrub with quadrangular, densely whitish, tomentose branchlets. It is widely used in folk medicine, particularly in South and Southeast Asia. *Vitex negundo* is an erect shrub or small tree growing from 2 to 8 m (6.6 to 26.2 ft) in height. The bark is reddish brown. Its leaves are digitate, with five lanceolate leaflets, sometimes three. Each leaflet is around 4 to 10 cm (1.6 to 3.9 in) in length, with the central leaflet being the largest and possessing a stalk. The leaf edges are toothed or serrated and the bottom surface is covered in hair. The numerous flowers are borne in panicles 10 to 20 cm (3.9 to 7.9 in) in length. Each is around 6 to 7 cm (2.4 to 2.8 in) long and are white to blue in color. The petals are of different lengths, with the middle lower lobe being the longest. Both the corolla and calyx are covered in dense hairs.

Sacred Trees of South India: Sacred trees of south India are those trees, which are revered and worshipped in southern part of the country. They hold immense religious significance in the land of gods and goddesses called India. The worship of trees in India can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilization. The hymns of the Vedas contain references to sacred trees and plants, on account of them being associated with certain deities and also because of their potent medicinal properties. This tradition continues till the present day in most parts of India, including villages and urban centers in south India. Trees like pipal and plants like tulsi are worshipped on a daily basis by the citizens of India.

Sitaphal / Custard Apple Tree: Custard apple is synonymous with the chilly weather in India, being extensively used in desserts, such as kheers, milkshakes and ice creams, for its intense sugary flavour. Moreover, this delightful winter fruit offers some fabulous wellness incentives such as renewing skin texture, boosting vitality and managing diabetes. Locally known as “Sitaphal” in Hindi and Telugu, “Sharifa” in Punjabi and “Seethapazham” in Malayalam, the custard apple is also called sugar apple, cherimoya or sweetsop. The scientific names for the different varieties of this tasty fruit are *Annona squamosa*, *Annona cherimola* and *Annona reticulata*.