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(Daizy Paul)
ABSTRACT

World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that traditional medicines are used by 70-80% of the world’s population. Use of plants as a source of medicine has been inherited and is an important component of healthcare system in India. The interest in traditional medicines is growing exponentially in public, academic and government circles due to the increased incidences of adverse drug reactions and economic burden of modern system of medicine. India is the largest producer of medicinal herbs and is appropriately called the ‘Botanical Gardens of the World’. Several workers have investigated the ethnobotany of Northern, Southern and Central India.

Amritsar is an export hub of North-West India dealing in export of a large number of products, raw materials, crude drugs and medicinal plants. After searching the detailed review it was found that no specific information is available on the plants of district Amritsar. Keeping this in view present study of medicinal flora of Amritsar district was undertaken with the following objectives:

- To survey existing medicinal flora (wild and cultivated) of Amritsar district.
- To collect, describe and identify medicinal plants and their preservation in the form of herbarium sheets.
- To compile therapeutic properties of the above plants from literature, local people, herbal doctors, internet etc.
- To photograph plants in flowering/fruiting season so as to focus on complete plant and its parts of medicinal importance.
- To document the use of these plants in various Ayurvedic formulations being undertaken by different companies.

Survey of medicinal plants of Amritsar district was started in August, 2004 and completed in March, 2010. District Amritsar is divided into seven Tehsils i.e. Amrisar I, Amritsar II, Ajnala, Baba Bakala, Patti, Tarn Taran, Khadur Sahib. From all the seven tehsils mentioned above, 8-10 villages were surveyed at random. The field trips to different localities were undertaken during all the four seasons of the year - viz. summer, rainy, autumn and winter. A total of 181 species of medicinal importance have been
identified which are either used indigenously for the treatment of various diseases, or are reported in the literature to have medicinal importance. These plants include trees, shrubs & shrubby climbers, undershrubs and herbs & herbaceous climbers. For each species, information has been provided for valid scientific names (printed in bold italics), followed by local (Punjabi) names, common (English) names, name of the family, distribution in India, brief morphology of the plant, flowering/fruiting season, chemical constituents, medicinal uses, and other ethnobotanical uses (if any), author’s collection number, and locality of collection. During the field trips, plants were photographed in their flowering/fruiting season so as to focus on the complete plant and its parts of medicinal importance. Personal contacts were made with the local people, including traditional healers, old persons, traders of herbal drugs and other local inhabitants who are involved in indigenous uses of plants in traditional health care systems. After the collection of specimens complete field notes were prepared. The dried plants were poisoned and pasted on herbarium sheets following standard procedures and deposited in the Herbarium of Department of Botanical & Environmental Sciences, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (India). Various medicinal plants have been described separately under different life forms such as a) trees; b) shrubs and shrubby climbers; and c) undershrubs, herbs and herbaceous climbers.

From the study it was concluded that large number of medicinal plants growing in Amritsar district (cultivated and wild) have a potential for commercial exploitation. Although some species have found place in commercial formulations, yet there are still many more which have been used by locals generation after generation, against different ailments, but have not yet been studied for commercial exploitation. Documentation of all such plants in present study would serve as a reference for the students and teachers of Botany, interested in this aspect of study.