Edible Plants: That plants and their products are the ultimate source of food for mankind is a well established ecological reality. The growth of plants and other trees is however, dependent on rain and this is a phenomenon over which man has no control. It is, therefore, a great blessing of Allah for the mankind that He sends down rain from the sky for the germination of seeds and spores of all kinds of plants. He it is Who has given us water so that we may grow vegetables and grains of all kinds and eat them.

"And it is He who sendeth down rain from the sky, and by its means We bring forth buds of all plants, and from them we bring forth again green foliage, and then close packed ears of corn and palm trees, with sheaths putting forth hanging branches of dates, and gardens of grapes and olives and pomegranates, like and unlike. Look ye at the fruit thereof as it (gradually) grows and ripens! (Latif, 1969)"

The holy verse cited above not only explains the importance of rain in agriculture but also tells us of the way in which edible fruits, vegetables and cereals are produced. Plants obtain their basic nutrients like Nitrogen and Hydrogen.

1. Al-Anam: 100
directly from the soil where these ingredients reach through the dead and decaying organisms and fallen leaves of the plants. Plants live in an atmosphere containing considerable amount of Nitrogen but this Nitrogen cannot be assimilated directly from the air. It has to be converted into nitrate compounds through bacterial action before it may be used by the plants. The nitrifying bacteria therefore, play a vital role in such fixation of atmospheric Nitrogen. These enter the roots through root hairs, form modules and multiply. They convert large quantities of ammonium compounds into nitrate compounds and play an important part in the recycling of nitrogen. Sulphur, which is also an essential constituent of plants, accumulates in the soil as organic compounds but cannot be used by the plants until they become converted to soluble sulphates by the action of microorganisms which reduce sulphur and release hydrogen sulphide. And when water is needed, Allah sends winds which raise the clouds which irrigate and revive the dead land. Should we, therefore, not acknowledge the fact that water which Allah sends from the sky enters cracks in the soil and comes out in the form of springs. It contains essential nutrients for the growth of plants of different kinds.

(1) إِنَّمَا نَزَرَ عَلَيْنَا الْرَّزَعُونَ لَوَٰنَاءَ لَجُعِلَتْنَا حُطَابًا فَظَلَّتْنَا نَكْرَسَنَّ

1. Al-Waqiah : 64-65
"Is it ye who cause it to grow or is it ye who do it? If we pleased, we could turn it (harvest) into chaff, would ye then lament." (Latif, 1969)

Indeed Allah is the Creator and Builder of all things, living and non-living, ornate and inornate. He is the Lord of all domains of existence.

(1)

"He hath spread the earth as a bed for you, and hath marked out paths for you therein, and sends down rain from heaven and brings forth by it diverse kinds of herbs." (Latif, 1969)

Of the various fruits which the Almighty Allah has mentioned in the Holy Quran, dates have found great favour. This may be because of their providing a stable diet for human beings. Being easy to assimilate, dates serve as a tonic for the heart and the eyes. Certain varieties when dried may contain more than half their weight of sugar and nearly 2.0% each of protein, fat and mineral matter and are of considerable economic importance (Nixon, 1961). Other varieties containing a rather low content of sugar are used as bread dates and provide daily nourishment to people living in desert regions of the old world (Boyton, 1961). And it is because of such excellent qualities of dates that our Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) has graciously advised us to eat

1. Taha : 53
seven nice dates every morning for a healthy and prosperous living.

While the fruits are eaten as such, starch is obtained from the stem of the date-palm tree. The leaves are used as thatching material by native population in the tropics. As pointed out by Khan and Razvi (1983) nothing can better summarize the excellent qualities and importance of date-palm than the saying of our Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) that Muslims are like the evergreen tree of date-palm whose shoots are always laden with fruits.

The grape is another highly refreshing fruit which can be eaten fresh or consumed in dried form as raisins. And then there is the olive tree whose fruits contain a very high percentage of fat. Its oil is not only a good cooking medium but has important medicinal properties as well. It is a good hair tonic, stops premature greying and relieves muscular pains.

"And also (cause to grow) the tree on Mount Sinai which yeildeth oil which is relishing in taste to those who make use of it for food." (Latif, 1969)

1. Bukhari : al Jami al Sahih : Bab Fi al-Ajvah
2. Al-Muminun : 20
The culinary value of vinegar has been known since long. The residue obtained in an Egyptian vase dating to 3000 B.C. indicates that it had held vinegar and there is reference to it in the Bible (Engelland, 1961). Hazrat Aisyah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) told her that vinegar is a very nourishing food for human beings.

Vinegar is obtained in the form of a dilute from a number of materials like grapes, barley and apples. Its manufacture is a two stage process. In the first stage sugar is converted to alcohol by yeast and then in the second stage alcohol is converted into acetic acid by the action of bacteria.

\[\text{Sugar} \xrightarrow{\text{Yeasts}} \text{Alcohol} \xrightarrow{\text{Bacteria}} \text{Acetic acid} + \text{water}\]

Thus, unlike alcohol which is fatal to all forms of life, vinegar is highly rejuvenating and its use is permissible. It is not only a wholesome diet, but a medicine and a substitute for eggs in the baking industry.

Pomegranates are the fruits of a small bushy tree which has been cultivated in Persia and neighbouring countries since long. It is a fruit of great value, both as a food and as medicine. It quenches thirst and is an excellent remedy for

1. Tirmizi: al-Jami, Bab Fi al-Khill
heat stroke. The juice of pomegranate and the pulp of its seeds promote digestion and help in curing patients suffering from dysentery. The bark of its roots contains the alkaloid which is highly toxic to tape-worms living in human intestine. Decoction of pomegranate bark is also prescribed to patients suffering from enlarged spleen and sore throat (Dastur, 1964). Perhaps the healing properties of pomegranates can best be explained by citing the words of the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) "eat the pomegranate for it purges the system of envy and hatred." (Popenoe, 1961).

Fig is the popular name given to plants belonging to the genus Ficus. It is one of the earliest fruit tree that has been cultivated by man. The ancient Greeks ate figs and the Romans kept them on their dining tables. Even today, figs are grown commercially in many countries including Italy, Turkey and Algeria. Flowers are born on a pyconium and the fruits are spherical in shape (Condit, 1961).

The poor man's food as they are called, figs are known for their medicinal and nutritive value. The fruits are not only rich in vitamins A and B but also contain a high sugar content and can cure constipation. In certain species, the sugar content is as high as 64.0%. Indeed the dietary and energy giving values of figs has been described by the Almighty Allah Himself: "By the fig and the olive".

1. Al-Tin : 1
Indeed the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was acclaiming the properties of olive tree when he told Hazrat Umar Bin Khatab (may Allah be pleased with him) to consume olive oil as it was nutritive and health giving.

Forbidden food of plant origin: Praise be to Allah Who has forbidden the use of intoxicants which keep us away from saying our prayers and uttering the truth. However, since the people of the middle-east were heavy drinkers and it would have been very telling on them to leave wine all of a sudden; the order prohibiting the use of intoxicants was given in stages. At first, we were told of the more harm than the benefit of these intoxicants, then their sinful effects in keeping us away from saying our prayers were revealed to us. Finally we were told that it is an abomination.

1. Tirmizi : al-Jami Bab Fi Akl al-Zayt
2. Al-Baqarah : 219
"O Ye who believe! Come not to prayer in a drunken state until you know what you utter." (Latif, 1969)

Thus alcoholic beverages, which have been cherished since about 500 B.C. for their stimulating and medicinal properties (Amerine, 1964) for the healing of wounds and as tranquilizers and vasodilators were prohibited for the Muslims because these make a person morally and mentally sick. Again, crude wines contain amyl alcohol which are extremely deleterious and may cause even brain injury. No doubt therefore, that the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) prohibited every drink that intoxicates.

Utility Of Plants to mankind:

1. Al-Nisa : 43
2. Al-Muidah : 90
3. Al-Abas: 24-32
"Further let man look at his own food (and draw a lesson)
(Doth he not know that) it is We who pour down
rains (in due measure),
Then cleave the earth by a process of cleaving,
Then we cause the grain to grow therein,
And grapes and vegetables,
And the olive and the palm,
And luxuriant gardens dense with trees,
full of fruits and herbage -
A provision for you (on one hand) and for your
cattle (on the other)." (Latif, 1969)

The above verses of Surah Abas give us a complete knowledge
of the plants, their growth, reproduction and utility to mankind.
Plants not only give us food and shade but also provide us with
a constant source of joy. Who does not want to walk through
a rose garden and feel the freshness, eat dates and get the much
needed energy, collect wood from the jungle and lit fire.
Undoubtedly the ever merciful Allah has done us an immense favour
by growing the green plants on the earth for they alone are
capable of manufacturing their food in the presence of sunlight.
And in doing so they utilize much of the carbon dioxide which the
release through the process of respiration. Plants also
release oxygen which is essential for all animate beings
earth. Indeed in this is also a sign for those who are wise.

Though extraordinary dangerous fire has always been
cherished by man. We burn fuel derived from the wood of trees
to make fire. It keeps us warm and we make our food more delicious
by cooking it with fire. The flame wards off wild beasts and
provides protection if we have to camp in a jungle or
dangerous place. Of course Allah has the power to bring forth
any form of creation.

(1) انفَرَثِي مِن النَّارِ
التي تُنْبِرُونَ

"What think ye of the fire which ye kindle (by causing friction between two pieces of wood) ? (Latif, 1969)

(2) الذي جعل لكم من النَّجَرِ الإيَضْرَ
نَا رَأَيْتِم مِنْهُ توْفِقْتُونَ

"Is it ye who rear the tree or is it ye who rear it ? And: "He who hath provided fire for you even in the green tree out of which you kindle it." (Latif, 1969)

Plants are useful to us in other ways also. They provide stable and nutritive food to the common man. Let us take the case of pumpkins and cucumbers belonging to the family cucurbitaece which are rapidly growing fruits and are abundantly cultivated in the tropics. A single pumpkin fruit may weigh from 10 to 20 pounds or even more. It is yellowish to orange coloured globular to oblong shaped fruit which is commonly grown for human consumption and also as livestock feed. Pumpkins can be stored for several months in a dry place and eaten in a variety of ways. Hazrat Hasan Ibne Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) heard it from the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) that pumpkin-curry is very rejuvenating and makes a man intelligent. The Ummah should therefore eat a lot of pumpkins (Muttaqi, 1973).

1. Al-Waqiah : 71
2. Yasin : 80
3. Tirmizi : al-Jami Bab Fi Akl al-Dubbah
In another Hadith, Hazrat Anas bin Mallick (may Allah be pleased with him) has reported that he observed the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) to search pieces of pumpkin in a dish of curry and from that day he made it a habit to eat the pumpkin.

Cucumber is another fruit which is eaten as salad. Though not very nutritive, it provides a wholesome diet when eaten with fresh dates. Hazrat Abdullah bin Jafar (may Allah be pleased with him) has told us that our Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) very much liked to eat cucumber and fresh dates.

It has been reported from Hazrat Aiyeshia (may Allah be pleased with her) that her mother asked her to eat cucumber and fresh dates to improve her health and to build up a healthy and strong body.

The often wild growing umbrella-shaped fungi are called mushrooms. While many species are poisonous or unpalatable, those belonging to the species Agaricus Campestris are a delicacy to

1. Tirmizi: al-Jami Bab Ma Jaa Fi Akl al-Dubbah
2. Tirmizi: al-Jami Bab Ma Jaa Akl al-Qisha
3. Ibn-a-Majah: al-Sunan Bab al-Qisha wa Rutab
Agriculturists grow it for commercial purposes in beds containing manure and straw. Horse manure is especially favourable for the growth of mushrooms. They are usually grown in caves and dark cellars and in especially constructed mushroom-houses. Edible varieties of mushroom are quite rich in nitrogen and have pleasing flavour. And so it is on account of the nutritious value that mushrooms have been called 'Mon' which has been given to man by his Creator, the benovolant Allah:

In addition to its food value, mushroom extract is often prescribed by the ophthalmologists as a medicine for curing eye diseases. Hazrat Saud bin Zaid (may Allah be pleased with him) has reported that the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) has told the Ummah that mushroom is a gift-food from God and its extract is a cure for eye diseases. Hazrat Abu Hurrera (may Allah be pleased with him) prepared an extract of mushroom and preserved it in a vial and when some of it was dropped in the eyes of a girl suffering from an eye disease, she got cured of the ailment.

1. Bukhari : al-Jami al Sahih, Bab al-Mann Shifa lil ain
2. Ibn-e-Majah: al Sunan Bab Fi al-Kumah
3. Tirmizi: al-Jami Bab Ma Jaa Fi al-Kumah
Another useful plant is the mignonette tree. This is highly esteemed for its fragrance and medicinal value. The plant looks like a dense mass of soft green foliage studded with flowers. Our Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) used to apply bruised leaves of 'henna' to cuts and wounds and today the physicians recommend ointments made of such leaves for the treatment of wounds and ulcers. An extract prepared from flowers, leaves and tender shoots is a favoured treatment for leprosy whereas decoction of fresh leaves is given to patients suffering from jaundice.

Besides their fragrant perfume and medicinal value, bruised leaves of henna have also useful colouring properties. And so we learn it from Hazrat Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) instructed his Ummah to use mignonette as a hair-dye, for, in addition to colouring the hair, it also relieves headache. (Nawon Kote, 1935).

(1) عن أنس، رضي الله عنده، وذكر قال:
اختبئ بإليناج، فانه طبيب، البريج وسكينة

It is also reported from Hazrat Abu Bakar bin Shaiba (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) prescribed the application of henna-ointment over cuts and bruises and for drawing out thorns and spines.
Nothing can better summarize the value of senna than the remarks of the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) that if anything could save us from death, it would have been 'Senna'.

The popularly known senna-e-Arab is obtained from the leaves of a plant belonging to the leguminous family, *Cassia acutifolia*. This plant grows wild in Yemen, South Arabia, Pakistan and India. In India, it is also cultivated in the south. Modern researches have shown that the leaves contain at least two glycosides, sennoside A and sennoside B and these are responsible for the laxative properties of senna. It is also possible that the leaves may contain some other glycosides. Since these properties of senna were known to the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) centuries before the discovery of glycosides, he (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him) asked Hazrat Asma bint Umaiz (may Allah be pleased with her) to use the leaves of senna for cleaning the bowels.

1. Ibn-e-Majah: al-Sunan Bab al-Hinna
2. Ibn-e-Majah: al-Sunan Bab al-Senna
3. Ibn-e-Majah: al-Sunan Bab Dawah al-Masha
Besides the cathartic properties of _enna, soft drink made from the leaves of this herbaceous plant is useful in jaundice. Ointments containing crushed seeds of _enna and sulphur are much recommended for the treatment of skin diseases.