



Herbal Garden (Muligai Vanam)



Black Nightshade (Manathakkali)

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Botanical Name	:	<i>Solanum nigrum</i> Linn.
Tamil Name	:	Manathakkali
Sanskrit Name	:	Kakamachi/ Dhvansamaci
English Name	:	Black Nightshade

Distribution and Habitat

Solanum nigrum L commonly known as Black Nightshade is a dicot weed in the Solanaceae family. The black nightshade is widely distributed in various habitats throughout the world, from tropical to temperate regions and from sea level to altitudes exceeding 3500 m. It is a common species in wet woods, near river, wasteland, old field, ditches, roadside and cultivated land. It is an annual herbaceous plant of 30-100 cm height, pubescent with simple hairs. Leaves are alternate, ovate, deep green with an indented margin, acuminate. Flowers are white with yellow colored centre. The berry is mostly 6 to 8 mm in diameter, green at early stage and turn to black when ripe.



Parts used

Whole plant

Uses

Leaves and tender shoots are widely used as greens. The fruits are edible. Dried berries are used for making curries.

Medicinal uses

S. nigrum is an important ingredient in traditional Indian medicine. It has reference of being used since Vedic age. Traditionally, the leaves and raw fruits are chewed and swallowed for treatment of mouth and stomach ulcers or for general abdominal upsets which lead to continued stomach ache (Singh et al. 2011). The leaves of the plant are good for recovering from gouty and rheumatic joint pains and different types of skin diseases. Leaves are also used in the treatment of tuberculosis. The decoction of flowers and berries are effective for bronchitis, pulmonary tuberculosis, cough and cold. Traditionally, the berry juice is used as a remedy of ophthalmopathy, hydrophobia, anti-diarrhoeal. The roots of the plant are useful in rhinopathy, osteopathy, and hepatitis (Jayanthy et al. 2011). The entire plant can be used as digestive, diuretic, laxative, diaphoretic, sedative, antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, expectorant, cardiotonic, swelling resistor, cough, and cold resistor, and as a cure for asthma. The whole plant is also useful in leprosy, hemorrhoids, nephropathy, cardiopathy, ophthalmopathy, dropsy, and common weakness (Chauhan et al. 2012). Freshly prepared extracts of the plant are apparently effective in the treatment of cirrhosis of the liver and also serve as an antidote to opium poisoning.

Conclusion

S. nigrum L. is an annual herbaceous medicinal weed along roadsides, wastelands and other degraded areas in various warmer parts of the world. The whole plant is widely used in traditional and folkloric systems of medicine including its application as an analgesic, antiseptic, and anthelmintic. It is an important medicinal herb that can be used as an anti-inflammatory, anti-neoplastic, anti-microbial, anti-oxidant, anti-cholinesterase, anti-hypertensive, anti-diarrheal, and anti-cancer agents.

