



Herbal Garden (Muligai Vanam)

Browntop Millet



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Botanical Name	:	<i>Urochloa ramosa</i> (L.) T.Q.Nguyen.
Tamil Name	:	Pala pul, Kattu Varagu
Sanskrit Name	:	Shyamaka-bheda, Anduka
English Name	:	Browntop millet

Distribution and Habitat

Urochloa ramosa is a warm-season, monocotyledonous annual grass belonging to Poaceae. It is a short-lived, tufted, loosely clumped herb with decumbent to erect culms. It is considered native to South-East Asia and tropical Africa and now naturalised in tropical Asia, Arabia, China, Australia and South-Eastern USA. In India, it is cultivated as minor millet mostly in dry, rain-fed tracts of Karnataka, parts of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Odisha.



It is also found as wild grass along roadsides, fallow fields, scrub jungles and hill slopes up to 1800 m elevation. It is extremely early maturing and drought-hardy, germinates in 4-5 days and completes life cycle in 60-75 days, hence grown as a catch crop, nurse crop and famine food. Culms slender, 30-70 cms. tall, often rooting at lower nodes, nodes pubescent. Leaves, broadly linear, lanceolate, 2-25 cms. long, 4-14 mm wide, soft and glabrous. Inflorescence is a panicle 3-10 cms. long bearing 3-15 racemes, each 1-8 cms. long, Spikelets solitary or paired, elliptic to broadly elliptic, 2.5-3.5 mms. long, glabrous to puberulent, pale green to brown at maturity, pointed to cuspidate. Grains small, elliptical, tan to light brown, about 1.5-2 mms. enclosed in smooth lemmas.

Parts used

Seeds as grains, whole plant as fodder

Phyto-chemical constituents

Carbohydrates, protein, crude fat, dietary fibre, minerals - iron, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium and zinc, Vitamin B complex, phenolics and flavonoids - ferulic acid, p-coumaric acid, caffeic acid, quercetin, luteolin, kaempferol derivatives, tannins and phytate.

Uses

Browntop millet grains are eaten as cooked rice, roti, dosa, porridge and fermented gruel. Straw and green plant is valued as palatable fodder for cattle, sheep and as feed for bird and poultry.

Medicinal uses

In folk and tribal practice, browntop millet is considered light, dry, cooling and easy to digest. In Ayurveda and Siddha it is categorised under Shyamaka group and used as *Pathya Ahara* during fasting, convalescence and for metabolic disorders. Due to high fibre, low glycemic load, gluten-free nature and poly-phenols, it is recommended traditionally for diabetes mellitus, obesity, hyper-lipidaemia and cardiac diet (Bhat et al. 2018; Ceasar et al. 2023). It gives prolonged satiety and helps regulate blood glucose and serum cholesterol. Its astringent property is used in folk medicine for diarrhoea, dysentery, bilious complaints and indigestion. Grain gruel prepared with buttermilk is given as cooling drink in fever and as mild diuretic for urinary burning. The gruel is also used for cough and jaundice in some tribal practices. Pharmacological studies have reported anti-diabetic, anti-hyper-lipidemic, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and prebiotic activities attributed to dietary fibre, resistant starch and phenolic antioxidants (Nandini et al. 2025).



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