

# *Achillea millefolium*



**Family:** Compositae  
(Asteraceae)

**Local/common names:**

Common Yarrow,  
Birnjaisif, Millfoil,  
Sanguinary, Chuang and  
Chabu (Ladakhi)

**Trade name:** Panale,  
Kutch, Rojmari, Sahastra  
patri, Gandan, Swetadurva

**Profile:**

The yarrow genus of *Achillea* is named after the Greek hero Achilles, who according to legend used yarrow to heal the wounds of his soldiers during the Trojan War. Another folklore states that Achilles' mother dipped young Achilles into a yarrow bath in order to make him invincible. Because she held him by the heels, he was made vulnerable through is "Achilles' heels". The plant is often referred to as "poor man's pepper" as it can be ground, crushed and used as seasoning.

**Habitat and ecology:** The plant is found at an elevation of 1800-3600 m in temperate meadows, hedgerows, waysides, barren places and cultivated areas. It is a weed found from lowlands to alpine zones. This is also an effective soil binder. The species is mainly confined to the Western and Central Indian Himalayas from Jammu and Kashmir to Uttarakhand. It is also found in the temperate regions of Europe. The species is found growing naturally in Khabal-Soundari area (2700 m), Thatch (3800 m), Chherna Devi Bardhar (2300-2700 m), Swarhkothi slopes (2500 m), Pattan Valley (Lahaul), Sangla Valley (Kinnaur), Rohthang and Churdhur slopes, Koksar region in Himachal Pradesh and Changthang region in Ladakh.

**Morphology:** It is a leafy perennial plant, with oblong dissected leaves. It grows up to a height of 50 cm with a slender creeping rootstock throwing numerous roots and stolons with blunt succulent scales at each node. The leaves are cut 2-3 times into linear-lanceolate pointed segments. The lower leaves are stalked while the upper ones are stalkless. The stem is grooved and the flower heads are about 6 mm across, with usually 5 rounded or blackish papery margins.

**Distinguishing features:** It is a small tufted herb with a slender creeping rootstock. The flowers are small, white and numerous, borne in compound corymbose inflorescences. The leaves have a pungent aroma, especially when grown in a hot and sunny position.

**Life cycle:** Flowering takes place in July whereas fruiting takes place in August-September.

**Uses:** The plant has diuretic, stimulant and haemostatic properties. A decoction of the whole plant is employed for bleeding piles and is good for kidney diseases. It also prevents baldness. As a bitter tonic, it is given during convalescence from fevers and in atonics dyspepsia to promote appetite. Local inhabitants chew the leaves to relieve toothache as it produces a pungent, but tingling and cooling sensation bringing immediate relief. The plant is an insect repellent and it repels beetles, ants, mosquitoes and flies. It is an important ingredient of compost as it speeds up bacterial activity hence reducing the time required to make compost. The leaves produce an essential oil that has medicinal value. A cosmetic cleaner for oily skin is made from the leaves. The flowers yield yellow and green dyes. The plant is also used as ground cover as it spreads quickly by its roots.

**Market rate:** It is sold in the market at Rs.3/- per unit of seedlings.