

# *Aconitum violaceum*



**Family:** Ranunculaceae

**Local/common names:**

Mithi Patish, Dudhi Mohra, Dudhi Atees, Poma-karpo, Yangtso, Dusi Lama, Zinba (Ladakh), Phonker (Spiti), Dudhia Atis (Joshimath), Bongkar-rigs-gryis-pa (Tibetan), Prativisha (Hindi)

**Trade name:** Vastanabh

**Profile:**

The plant is valued for its roots, which have several ethno-medicinal uses. The plant is extensively used in Tibetan medicine and Ayurveda. Due to unsustainable harvest from the wild for trade and other purposes, the status of the species has become endangered in the western and central Himalayas. Hence, there is an urgent need for a well-defined conservation plan for the species to conserve it in its natural habitat.

**Habitat and ecology:** The herb normally grows between 3200-4800 m on meadows and among densely growing plants in the Western Himalayas. It is found along water streams and in moist places. It is usually found in the alpine and sub-alpine regions of western Himalayas. The plant is available in the moist areas of Nubra Valley (Ladakh) in Jammu and Kashmir and Rohtang-Khoksar area of Himachal Pradesh. It can also be found in the high altitude pasturelands of the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP) in Spiti in Himachal Pradesh at an elevation of 3500-5000 m.

**Morphology:** The plant is a perennial herb with conical roots. The new and old roots both grow attached to each other. The leaves have a rounded blade, which is palmately cut to the base and has lobes cut into narrow segments. The stem is solitary and erect growing up to 10-30 cm long. The flowers are arranged in a raceme or may sometimes grow axillary, pale blue in colour. The fruit is a bunch of 5 follicles, which are densely hairy.

**Distinguishing features:** The plant can be distinguished by its dense spike of dark to pale blue flowers with white variegations. The hood of the flower is broader as compared to its length.

**Life cycle:** The plant roots remain dormant from November-March. New shoots come off with the melting of snow during April-May. The vegetative phase continues till July and the plants start flowering in August. Seed setting takes place in September and the seeds reach physiological maturity by the end of September-October.

**Uses:** It has several ethno-medicinal uses and is useful in treating intestinal disorders, infectious fever, male impotency and malaria. It is used as an antidote against snake and scorpion bites. The dried roots are boiled and used as a cure for cough in small doses. The roots are dissolved in mother's milk and given to infants suffering from severe diarrhoea, stomatitis and allied gastric complaints. It is useful in cases of digestive disorders such as dyspepsia, abdominal colic, upset digestion, dysentery and diarrhoea. It is helpful for the blood vascular system in cases of boils, blood disorders and inflammation. It is also used to cure respiratory systems such as in catarrh and cough. It even has ethno-veterinary uses. It is used in controlled doses to cure intestinal disorders and is also taken as a cure for common cough. The plant is an antidote against scorpion and snakebite and an efficient febrifuge, especially for infectious diseases. The leaves are used to flavour local liquors.

**Market rate:** The dried rhizomes of this plant is sold at the rate of Rs.160/- per kg in Delhi whereas in Kolkata, it is sold at Rs.550/- per kg. In Uttar Pradesh, it is being sold at Rs.500/- per kg (as in 2007).