Caltha palustris

Family: Ranunculaceae

Local/common names: Marsh Marigold, Kingcup
Trade name: Data not available

Profile:

Caltha palustris, commonly known as kingcup or marsh marigold, belongs to Ranunculaceae family. *Caltha palustris* is a highly polymorphic species and exhibits continuous and independent variation in many features. The plant has medicinal uses. As is the case with many members of the Ranunculaceae, all parts of the plant can be irritant or poisonous. Skin rashes and dermatitis have been reported from excessive handling of the plant.

Habitat and ecology: The species has a wide range of occurrence from the northern temperate zone in Europe, North America and Asia at altitudes of 2,800-3,600 m. In the Indian Himalayas, it can be seen in Lahaul and Spiti, Kinnaur and Kullu districts of Himachal Pradesh. It is commonly found in marshy areas and in glacial moraines. The plant can grow in semi-shade (light woodland) or no shade conditions. It requires wet soil and can even grow in water.

Morphology: The plant is an erect, branched herb, approximately 15-50 cm tall. The leaves are long petioled, reniform, finely or coarsely toothed, sub-sessile to sessile, obtuse and surrounded by a membranous sheath. The flowers are yellow, 4-5 cm across and borne on long peduncles. The follicles are sessile, flattened, asymmetrically oblong, gradually or abruptly passing into a short or long straight or curved beak.

Distinguishing features: This is an herbaceous plant. It is a perennial, which can reach 60 cm in height. The stem is hollow. The leaves are alternate. Leaves can be as wide as 15 cm. Each leaf is finely toothed, rounded, with a cordate base. The basal leaves have long petioles. The flowers have 5-9 regular parts (petal like sepals). They are yellow. Blooms first appear in mid spring and continue into late spring. The stamens are numerous (50-120).

Life cycle: The plant can be seen flowering and fruiting in the months from June-September.

Uses: *Caltha palustris* has several medicinal uses. The powdered leaves are used to keep maggots out of cattle wounds. The roots are used as a cure for gonorrhea. Local communities used the green leaves to clean their hands in ancient times. The whole plant is an anodyne, antispasmodic, diaphoretic, diuretic, expectorant and rubefacient. It has been used to remove warts and is also used in the treatment of fits and anemia. The root is anti-rheumatic, diaphoretic, emetic and expectorant. A decoction is used in the treatment of colds. A poultice of the boiled and mashed roots is applied to sores. A tea made from the leaves is diuretic and laxative. The roots of the plant are used for consumption. The flowers and buds can be consumed raw, cooked and in pickled form and is also used as a caper substitute. The young leaves are used like spinach. Well-cooked older leaves can also be consumed. A yellow dye is obtained from the flowers, which can be used as a saffron substitute. It is used as a dye when mixed with alum, though it is not very permanent.

Market rate: Data not available