

Inula racemosa



Family: Asteraceae
(Compositae)

Local/common names:
Pushkarmool (Kashmir),
Mannu (Lahaul),
Manuchar, Minchenmarpo
(Ladakh)

Trade name:
Pushkarmool

Profile:

Inula racemosa is a herb mentioned in all Ayurvedic scriptures. It is beneficial in cases of cough and breathlessness and is also an effective painkiller. It has different names like kasmira (growing abundantly in Kashmir), kushtabehda (acts like Kusth, which is *Saussurea costus*) and sughandhika (fragrant). The great sage Charaka categorized it as hikka nigradhana due to its property to stop hiccoughs and svasahara as it alleviates breathlessness and asthma. The plant is prized for its roots and is now being cultivated for its medicinal value.

Habitat and ecology: The species is found in the sunny slopes of the high temperate and sub-alpine region of the Himalayas. The plant is found in the Indian northwestern Himalayas at altitudes ranging from 1600-4200 m from Kashmir to Kumaon (Uttarakhand). The species is also found in Afghanistan to Central Nepal. In Jammu and Kashmir the species is found in Poggal (Banihal), Bhadarwa, Nubra valley, Upti and Khalsi region. In Himachal Pradesh, it is reported in Parwati Valley of Kullu district and is now under cultivation in different parts of the Western Himalayas.

Morphology: The species is a perennial herb. The stout herb attains about 1.3-2 m height. The leaves are leathery and the upper surface of the leaves is rough. The lower leaves are toothed and densely hairy. The rootstock is branched and has a pungent smell. The flowers are yellow in colour with many arranged in a raceme. The fruits are achene, compressed, slender and glabrous.

Distinguishing features: The plant is a stout herb with a grooved, rough and very hairy stem and elliptical, large, star-like yellow flowers many in heads. The fresh brown roots have an aroma similar to that of camphor.

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

Uses: Pushkarmool roots possess strong anthelmintic, antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, antipyretic, expectorant and diuretic properties and are used in anaemia, dismenorrhea, appetite loss, skin disease and heart weakness. The seeds are bitter and used as an aphrodisiac. The rhizome is used in Tibetan medicine and has a sweet, bitter and acrid taste with a neutral potency. It is used in the treatment of contagious fevers and pain in the upper body, especially between the neck and the shoulders. In Ayurvedic formulations the roots are used in cough, dyspnea, asthma, pleurisy, tuberculosis, periodical chest pain, rheumatic pain and liver problems. The root powder possesses antifungal, hypolipidaemic and hypoglycaemic properties. The roots are used locally in indigenous medicine as an expectorant and in veterinary medicine as a tonic. Pushkarmool is beneficial for overall cardiovascular system, angina and dyspnea.

Market rate: The roots are sold at Rs.200/- per kg.