

# *Paris polyphylla*



**Family:** Liliaceae

**Local/common names:**  
Herb Paris, Dudhiabauj,  
Satwa (Hindi); Tow  
(Nepali), Svetavaca  
(Sanskrit)

**Trade name:** Dudhiabauj,  
Satwa

**Profile:**

The members of the genus *Paris* impart supreme beauty to the garden and have an beautiful inflorescence. The genus name *Paris* is derived from 'pars', referring to the symmetry of the plant. *Paris polyphylla* is a clump forming plant growing 45 cm tall and characterized by its distinctive flowers. It has long, yellow, radiating anthers and a blue-black center. Due to over harvesting, the wild populations of this herb have fragmented and declined greatly.

**Habitat and ecology:** The species is found naturally in broad-leaved forests and mixed woodlands up to a height of 3000 m in the Himalayas. It occurs commonly in bamboo forests, thickets, grassy or rocky slopes and streamsides. It enjoys a moist, well-drained soil and dappled shade. This species is globally distributed in the Himalayan range across Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Burma and southwest China between the altitudinal ranges of 2000-3000 m. Within India, it has been recorded in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

**Morphology:** The flowers are solitary, terminal, short-stalked, greenish and relatively inconspicuous, with 4-6 lanceolate long-pointed green leaf-like perianth segments that are 5-10 cm long and with an inner whorl of thread-like yellow or purple segments, as long or shorter than the outer. This species has 10 short stamens and lobed stigmas. The leaves are 4-9 in number and present in a whorl. The plant is elliptic, short-stalked, with the stalk up to 10 cm and the plant up to 40 cm high. The rhizome is stout and creeping. The fruits are globular and seeds are scarlet in colour. The plant shows wide variation in different parts of its range.

**Distinguishing features:** The plant can be distinguished by its solitary greenish flowers.

**Life cycle:** Flowering takes place between June-August.

**Uses:** The plant finds its use in Ayurveda. The roots are analgesic, anti-phlogistic, antipyretic, antispasmodic, anthelmintic, anti-tussive, depurative, febrifuge and narcotic. A decoction of the roots is used in the treatment of poisonous snakebites, boils and ulcers, diphtheria and epidemic Japanese B encephalitis. A paste of the roots is used as a poultice to treat cuts and wounds. The juice of the roots has been used as an anthelmintic. The whole plant is a febrifuge. The roots have shown antibacterial action against *Bacillus dysenteriae*, *B. typhi*, *B. paratyphi*, *Escherichia coli*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Haemolytic streptococci*, *Meningococci* etc.

**Market rate:** Data not available