

Selinum tenuifolium



Family: Apiaceae

Local/common names:
Bhutkeshi, Bhutkeshi,
Moor, Murva, Muramansi,
Mathosal, Nesrawlo

Trade name: Bhutkeshi

Profile:

The plant has now been recognized as threatened in the Himalayas because of unsustainable extraction.

Habitat and ecology: The species is found in alpine and sub-alpine regions with open, grassy slopes under dry, moist conditions in association with certain species like *Angelica glauca* and *Polygonum* spp. The plant is common in temperate and alpine moist pastures and occurs at an altitudinal range of 2000-4000 m. It is especially available in the western and central Himalayas covering Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand in India. It is found in temperate and alpine moist pastures in Chhota and Bara Bhangal area of Kangra, Holi range of Chamba, Parvati valley and Rohtang area in Kullu and Rampur and Rohru division of Shimla district.

Morphology: It is an erect, tall, glabrous, hairy and perennial herb with biennial tubers and a 1-1.5 m high hollow stem with a fibrous base. The leaves are 10-20 cm long with much divided linear leaflets. The ultimate leaflet segments are glabrous and toothed. The flowers are white, polygamous and borne in compound umbels. The fruits are elliptic-ovoid in shape, flattened with ridges and having broad lateral wings.

Distinguishing features: The herb is glabrous with hollow, thin and slender stem with much divided, toothed, pinnatisect, glabrous, splendid and fernlike foliage with white flowers in compound umbels while fruits are elliptic-ovoid, flattened and have broad, lateral wings.

Life cycle: The vegetative phase continues till June and the plant starts flowering in July. Seed setting starts taking place in the month of August-September. The seeds reach physiological maturity by the end of September-October.

Uses: The plant has several medicinal uses. The root is regarded as a nerve sedative. The volatile oil from the roots contains an acetylene compound, which is used as a medicine in mental disorder. The oil possesses antibacterial and analgesic properties. It is used in the treatment of leucoderma and psoriasis. The root powder mixed with honey is useful in cough and asthma. The roots of the plant also possess a sweet and musky odour and are employed as incense. The plant has culinary uses as well. A pinch of powdered, dried roots is used as a spice to add flavour to the local dishes. The leaves are crushed and used to make chutney. Another frequent use of the roots is in the preparation of local liquor called 'dheli'. The leaves of the plant are regarded as a nutritious fodder for sheep and goats. It is used in Ayurvedic formulations as well as in Homeopathy. The root powder when taken with honey is useful in cough and asthma. It is also used as a fodder for sheep.

Market rate: It is sold at the rate of Rs.25-30/- per kg of dry weight of roots. The dried roots are exported from India and China. The European market price is £ 2.93 whereas in USA it is \$ 5.91 per kg.