

Swertia petiolata

No Image

Family: Gentianaceae

Local/common names:
Tikta, Chuck theek kar poh,
Heising

Trade name: Chirayata
(used as substitute for
Swertia chirayita)

Profile:

Tikta has been a highly revered medicinal plant in the medicinal lineage of the Western Himalayas. It is often used as a substitute for *Swertia chirayita*, another species, which is highly valued for its medicinal properties. At present, it is collected from wild populations. It can be cultivated in temperate region through seeds.

Habitat and ecology: The plant is commonly found in open alpine meadows, open dry slopes and rocky terrain at altitudes ranging from 3300-4500 m. It is found across the Himalayas from Afghanistan to western Nepal and southeastern Tibet.

Morphology: It is an erect, simple, glabrous herb growing up to a height of 90 cm. The basal leaves are lanceolate, long-stalked and spatulate (clasping the stem at the base). The uppermost leaves are narrow, lanceolate, acute and stalkless. The flowers are borne in lax spike like terminal clusters, and varying in colour from bluish-white, purple to yellowish with blue patches. The corolla lobes are narrow-elliptic, usually less than 1.3 cm long with 1-2 basal lanceolate and acute fringed nectaries. The capsule is oblong-ellipsoidal. The seeds are numerous and reddish-brown in colour.

Distinguishing features: This plant is distinguished by yellowish-green flowers with blue veins.

Life cycle: The reproductive cycle of the plant is completed in the months of June-October. The plant is generally in flowering stage between July-August.

Uses: The entire plant is used in Tibetan medicine. The useful part is the shoot, which is used as a stomachic, febrifuge, vermifuge, digestive, appetizer, laxative and anthelmintic. It is good for the liver and digestive system. A paste of the crushed leaves is used as a poultice for maggot-infested ulcers. The powdered bark is useful in cholera. It is a bitter tonic and is administered for chronic fevers, anaemia and general debility. It helps cure gastric problems and liver disorders. It has an anti-inflammatory function as well. The plant yields a yellow dye, which is used for colouring fabric.

Market rate: The plant has a market rate of Rs.280-350/- per kg. The rate depends on the demand of the market.