

Myrica esculenta Buch. Ham.

No Image

Family: Myricaceae

Common name: Box-myrtle

Local names: Kaiphal, Kahi, Kaphal, Chhota Kafal (Joshimath), Kaiphal (Hindi)

Ayurvedic name: Katphal, Mahavalkal

Plant profile:

Myrica esculenta is a small moderate sized evergreen tree growing up to 3-15 m high. The bark is grey or brownish grey and the leaves are lanceolate. The flowers are minute and the fruits are ellipsoid, reddish in colour and are sweet to acidic in taste. The bark, which is an official drug, is 10-12 mm thick, externally scabrous, rusty brown and dirty white with the inner bark being a deep dull red colour with an astringent taste. The tree is found in the subtropical Himalayas to Assam and in Khasi, Jaintia, Naga and Lushai hills at altitudes of 900-2100 m. It is also found in the districts of Chamba, Mandi, Solan and Shimla in Himachal Pradesh. Flowering occurs in August-December and fruiting in April-May. People collect fruit from wild during September. This tree can be propagated through seeds, suckers and layering.

Medicinal uses:

- **Parts used:** Bark and fruits
- **Active principles:** The bark is rich in tannins and contains glycosides.
- **Disease cured and dosage:**
 - **Ethnomedicinal:** The plant is considered pectoral, sedative, stomachic, carminative and antiseptic. A decoction of the bark is useful in asthma, diarrhoea, fever, lung infections, chronic bronchitis, dysentery and diuresis. The bark is chewed to relieve toothaches.
 - **Ethnoveterinary:** Data not sufficient
- **Ayurveda:** Katfaladi-kwath, katfaladi churna. Prescribed dose: churna 3-5 g, kwath 25-50 ml.
- **Ayurvedic properties and actions:**
 - Guna (qualities): Laghu (light), tikshna (sharp)
 - Rasa (taste): Katu (pungent), tikta (bitter), kashaya (astringent)
 - Vipaka (post digestive taste): Katu (pungent)
 - Virya (potency): Ushna (hot)

As per Charaka Samhita it is considered as shukrashodhak (spermatopurifier), sandhaniya (wound healing agent) and vednasthapan (analgesic).

- **Therapeutic description:**
 - Effect on humours: Alleviates vata and kapha.
 - Systemic effects: It is used in the treatment of syncope, catarrh, headache because of shirovirechan (nasya), wounds (spraying of bark powder), paralysis, facial palsy (oil massage and it acts as a uterine contractor).
 - Nervous system: Used to treat Bell's palsy, paralysis and pulsatile headache.
 - Respiratory system: Cures productive cough and dyspnoea.

- Digestive system: It is used to treat dyspepsia, abdominal colic, digestive upsets, piles and diarrhoea.
 - Blood vascular system: Cures cardiac debility, haemoptysis and anasarca.
 - Urino-genital system: It is used in the treatment of diabetes insipidus, impotency and spermatorrhea.
- **Drug preparation:** To convert the plant into a drug, the fruit is crushed to form drink.
 - The drug must be stored in damp free containers and has a shelf life of a week.
 - It can be externally used as a powder, oil or paste. For internal it can be ingested or inhaled.