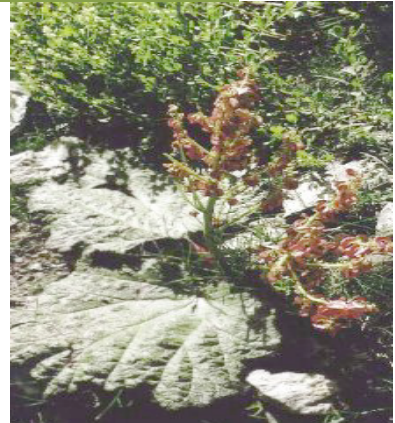


Rheum australe



Family: Polygonaceae

Common names:

Indian rhubarb
(English)

Local name: Artso
(Lahaul), Lichu (Spiti),
Aarcha, Dholu
(Kinnaur), Aarcha,
Dholu (Joshimath),
Revandchini (Hindi)

Ayurvedic name:
Amlaparni, Pitmul,
Revatika

Plant profile:

Rheum australe is an erect leafy perennial herb up to 2 m high with green and brown streaked stems and a woody rootstock. The roots are stout and the stem is hollow. The lower leaves are 20-50 cm in diameter, orbicular broadly ovate and are hairy underneath. The flowers are reddish-purple and borne in an inflorescence of dense clusters. The Indian rhubarb is found in the alpine, sub-alpine Himalayas in the altitudinal range of 3000-4200 m.

Medicinal uses:

- **Parts used:** Dried roots and rhizomes
- **Active principles:** *Rheum* contains anthraquinone glycosides ranging from 2-4% and they are categorized into four groups among which rhein and emodin are important. The astringent part mainly consists of gallic acid as glucogallin along with tannin catechin and epicatechin. The drug also contains rheinolic acid, pectin, starch, fat and calcium oxalate.
- **Disease cured and dosage:**
 - **Ethnomedicinal:** *Rheum* is used as a bitter stomachic in the treatment of diarrhoea and as a purgative. It is also used as an appetizer, febrifuge and for asthma, bronchitis, cuts, wounds, piles and skin diseases. The inhabitants of Lahaul valley use this plant for sprains and swelling. Vaidis in Joshimath use the powder of root as a healing agent and to treat headaches. Amchis use it in constipation related problems.
 - **Ethnoveterinary:** It is used as a healing agent.
- **Ayurveda:** Churna
- **Ayurvedic properties and actions:**
 - Guna (qualities): Laghu (light), ruksha (dry), tikshna (sharp)
 - Rasa (taste): Tikta (bitter), Katu (pungent)
 - Vipaka (post digestive taste): Katu (pungent)
 - Virya (potency): Ushna (hot)
- **Therapeutic description:**
 - Effect on humours: Alleviates pitta-kapha
 - Systemic effects: It is useful for wounds and dental cleaning (powder).
 - Respiratory system: Cures cough and dyspnoea.
 - Digestive system: Used to treat dyspepsia and liver disorders. It is also used as a purgative for fever, gout, piles and jaundice.
 - Urino-genital system: Treats amenorrhoea.
 - It is effective for geriatric and pediatric patients.
 - It is contraindicated in osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, epilepsy and calculous (because of oxalic acid).

- **Drug preparation:** The roots and rhizomes are cleaned and decorticated. The larger rhizomes are cut transversely or longitudinally and dried under shade. The pieces are ground into a fine powder before using.
 - The powder appears brown-red in colour.
 - It must be stored into airtight moisture free containers.
 - The shelf life of the powder is 1-2 years.
 - It can be taken as crushed drug, powder, soft pastes, solid preparations (tablets, pills) or a poultice.