

EDIBLE PLANTS OF THE TROPICAL DRY EVERGREEN FOREST

Abrus precatorius (Tamil: Gundumani): The leaves are chewed fresh; eating about 5 – 10 fresh leaves acts as a laxative. People suffering from mild diabetes can take a few leaves daily in the morning hours. Excessive intake of leaves may lead to purgation.

The leaves are dried, made into coarse powder and prepared as an infusion by boiling in water. As the leaves possess an active ingredient called glycyrrhizin, the infusion cures cough, cold and stomach upset.

Equal quantity in dry weight of the root and fennel seeds are prepared as a fine powder and kept in airtight container. One teaspoon of this powder mixed in 200 ml of warm water helps to cure a one-sided headache.

Abutilon indicum (Tamil: Thuthi): Leaves made into a chutney or *thuvayal* and when consumed this helps to relieve indigestion. Fresh leaves fried in ghee and consumed with cooked rice assist in curing piles.

Fresh leaves are prepared to *poriyal* (a fry with sesame oil) without spices and chillies and consumed with cooked rice for the period of one to two months to help in the control of white discharge (Leucorrhoea).

Leaves can be made into a decoction by boiling them in water. It is then gargled to help control toothache and swelling of gums. Leaves and stem contains Vitamin C (31.1 mg/100g).

Flower petals are collected, dried in shade and prepared to fine powder. A small quantity of the powder mixed with ghee and consumed helps to cure a cough and vomiting of blood.

Achyranthes aspera (Tamil: Naayuruvi): Fresh leaves together with other spinach greens are cooked and consumed to help strengthen the body. The seeds are sometimes cooked and eaten to also strengthen the body, but suppress hunger.

Seeds with husks removed contain 22.5% protein, 4.7% fat, 56.1% carbohydrates and 1.8% fibres. In addition, calcium, phosphorus and iron are also present.

Roots are cleaned, dried and prepared to a fine powder. About one gram of powder should be consumed in warm water to act as a nerve tonic.

Alangium salvifolium (Tamil: Azhinjil): This plant fruits in the Summer. The fruit possess a sweet and sour taste. Regular intake of the fruit helps to control phlegm in the chest. It also helps to relieve constipation, promotes eyesight and controls excess menstrual bleeding.

Aloe vera (Tamil: Sotru Katrazhai): Mature leaves are cut lengthwise, the exposed pulp is collected and washed in warm water 5 – 7 times to remove its bitter and offensive smell. These cleaned leaves are consumed either fresh, prepared to porridge (*Karakkuzhambu* in Tamil), or made into a sweet jam together with sweetening agents and lemon. This will help to cure white discharge (Leucorrhoea) and scanty urination. The pulp has 18 types of amino acids, glucose and protein (0.013%).

Aloe pulp is included as an important ingredient in the herbal formulations prepared for eye diseases, liver and spleen disorders.

Cleaned leaf pulp, palm jaggery and a pinch of asafetida are pounded together and stored in an airtight container. About ½ gram of this preparation consumed twice daily with warm water helps to ease excess menstrual pain.

Two teaspoons of pulp fried in ½ teaspoon of ghee and to which ½ teaspoon of sugar is added can be consumed to help cure a wet cough.

Porridge using the pulp is still prepared and consumed in the countryside especially during the summer months to control excess body heat.

Did you know? Traditional communities of Gujarat state prepare pickles using the leaves and flowering branches of *Aloe vera*.

Alternanthera sessilis (Tamil: Ponnanganni): The leaves are eaten fresh, fried or cooked as spinach. A soup prepared using the leaves, garlic and pepper is consumed regularly in the evening hours. Medicinal qualities of the leaves are many; especially for eyesight, fever and indigestion. It is highly recommended for breast-feeding mothers as it promotes breast milk secretion.

The leaves contain protein 5%, fat 0.7%, fibre 2.8%, and carbohydrates 11.6%. In addition calcium, phosphorus, iron, riboflavin, niacin and vitamin C are also present.

Did you know? Those who have milking cows can grow this plant in large areas and feed it to the cows. This will help to increase the milk production. The milk will also possess special medicinal qualities.

Amaranthus spinosus (Tamil: Mullukkerai): Leaves and tender stems are prepared to *koottu* or as spinach and consumed by the traditional people. Testing of the leaves and tender stems revealed the presence of 0.5% fat, 3.0% proteins, 8.1% carbohydrates and 1.3% fibres. In addition, calcium, phosphorus, iron, nicotinic acid and ascorbic acid are present. This spinach is excellent for people suffering from calcium deficiency.

Amaranthus tricolor (Tamil: Arai keerai): Tender and mature leaves are cooked and eaten as spinach or prepared to *sambar* (dhal preparation). Stems made into chutney or *koottu*, or added to *sambar* and boiled can then be consumed. The leaves contain 5.2% of proteins, fat 0.3%, fibre 6.1%, carbohydrates 3.8% and minerals 2.8%. In addition, calcium, phosphorus, iron and vitamin C are present.

Amorphophallus sylvaticus (Tamil: Kaattuchenai): The pungent taste of corms (tuberous roots) can be removed by cutting them into small pieces and boiling in water with tamarind leaves. After purification, the pieces are prepared to fry, make porridge or pickles together with appropriate ingredients. It is one of the favourite foods of the traditional communities of Tamil Nadu.

Anacardium occidentale (Tamil: Mundhiri): Mature pseudo-fruits taste sweet and are rich in ascorbic acid. The fruit is eaten fresh or prepared as a juice for consumption. The nuts (called “cashews”) are rich in proteins and are eaten either fresh, dried, or after frying in ghee. In addition, the fruits and nuts are used for the preparation of jams, juices, syrups, beverages and sweets.

Annona squamosa (Tamil: Seetha): Commonly called “sugar apple”, the taste of the fruit is preferred by most people, and especially consumed as a breakfast food. The fruit contain 1.6% protein, 0.4% fat, 3.1% fibre, 23.5% carbohydrates and minerals present at the ratio of 0.9 grams per 100 grams. In addition, phosphorus, calcium, iron, thiamine, riboflavin and vitamin C are present. As the fruit pulp possesses 20% sugar, it is mainly used for the preparation of sherbet, jellies and a variety of juices.

Aponogeton natans (Tamil: Kottikkizhangu): The tubers look similar to the shape of potatoes, and are boiled or fried before being consumed. They are rich in carbohydrates. It is one of the famous tribal vegetables in India. The tubers are also consumed in South China and Sri Lanka.

Aristida setacea (Tamil: Thudaippam): The seeds are collected, cleaned, cooked and eaten by the indigenous communities as a famine food. It should be consumed in limited quantity with necessary caution as it may cause stomach disturbances to sensitive people.

Asparagus racemosus (Tamil: Thanneer Vittaam Kizhangu): Mature, fresh tubers are collected, the outer skin is removed, the tubers cut into small pieces then pounded. The juice is extracted and boiled with an equal quantity of cow’s milk then consumed. It is effective for general weakness and weakness after delivery, and for sporadic cough. It also promotes breast milk secretion. Alternatively, the tuberous roots are cut into small pieces, dried and prepared to a fine powder and stored in airtight containers. When required this powder is mixed with cow’s milk, boiled and consumed to help obtain the above benefits.

Asystasia gangetica (Tamil: Narunjuvai keerai): Leaves are prepared to spinach and consumed by the traditional communities and tribal people. Thiamine, riboflavin, carotene, protein, calcium, phosphorus and iron are rich in this spinach.

Atalantia monophylla (Tamil: Kaattu Yelumitchai): mature fresh fruit is made into pickles. Regular consumption of the pickles helps to strengthen the body and muscles.

Azadirachta indica (Tamil: Vembu): Known in English as 'Neem'. The fruit is edible and is a favourite for birds and animals during the summer season. Regular intake of the ripe fruit during the hot summer controls body heat. Intake of 2 tender leaves in the morning on an empty stomach helps to relieve intestinal worms.

A small piece of neem bark is crushed, boiled in 2 tumblers of water, until reduced to half the volume. Honey is added and the liquid is consumed in the morning, afternoon and evening for the period of 15 days to help to strengthen the immunity system.

Mature flowers are collected in the summer, dried and stored. A small quantity of flowers are added to *Rasam* (a medicated pepper decoction) and consumed with cooked rice to help relieve *pitta* diseases like liver dysfunction.

Regular intake of the chutney (*Thuvayal*) prepared from the dried flowers and appropriate spices in the rainy season prevent cold infections. This preparation is generally recommended for children.

Did you know? A food preparation from the flowers of neem is still practiced in Tamil Nadu during the Tamil New Year day.

Azima tetracantha (Tamil: Mutchangan): The ripe fruit is edible. Leaves are prepared to decoction and consumed as an effective remedy for dysentery and joint pain.

Did you know? If the milking cows are regularly fed with the leaves of *Azima tetracantha*, the milk extracted and all the bi-products like ghee, butter, etc will be more nourishing.

Boerhavia diffusa (Tamil: Mookkirattai): This is an important spinach plant which is included mainly in compound spinach preparations (*koottu* or *masiyal* in Tamil) or cooked alone and eaten. Regular intake of this spinach once a week reduces body heat, scanty urination and helps to cure swelling of legs. It also improves eyesight.

Regular intake of fried leaves twice a week cures anaemia.

Note: An active ingredient called Punarnavin is present in this plant, which helps to promote urination. The leaves of this plant may be included in the diet of patients suffering from jaundice or other liver problems as it helps for the free flow of urine.

Basella alba (Tamil: Pasalai – Kodippasalai): Leaves and stems are cooked and eaten. The leaves contain protein 2.8%, fat 0.4%, carbohydrates 4.2%, calcium (200 mg per 100 gram of leaves), phosphorus (35 mg/100 g) and iron (10 mg/100 g). In addition, vitamin A and C, thiamine, riboflavin and niacin are present.

Bauhinia tomentosa (Tamil: Iruvatchi): A chutney (*thuvayal*) is prepared from the leaves together with pepper, tamarind and salt. It is then fried and taken with tiffin or with cooked rice. It helps to cure indigestion and diarrhoea. If this chutney is given to children regularly it promotes their appetite and improves the 'taste testing' quality of the tongue.

Buchanania axillaris (Tamil: Pulima): Locally this plant is also called *Sarapparuppu maram* and the traditional people eat the fruit. The seeds (nuts) are sold in shops under the name of *Sarapparruppu*. They have a good market and income generation value. The seeds themselves contain 19% proteins, 59.1% fat, 3.8% fibres, 12.1% carbohydrates and minerals at the value of 3 grams per 100 grams and the calorific value of the seeds are 656 K kal/100 g. It is included as an important nut in traditional drinks like *Badamgir*.

Borassus flabellifer (Tamil: Panai): Palm fruit have a natural traditional taste and are highly nutritive. It is suggested to fire the fruit in a flame and consume when hot. Intake of the gel portion of the tender fruit (locally called *Nungu*) helps to prevent thirst and drying of tongue due to excess sun exposure. Palm toddy is a traditional drink and has a refreshing quality.

The tender root of the germinating seed (locally called *Panangizhangu*) is steamed and when consumed is a good source of essential nutrients. It is still consumed in many villages as an evening food.

Cadaba fruitcosa (Tamil: Vizhudhi): Leaves are made into soup together with garlic, pepper and cumin. Regular intake of this preparation helps to relieve gas troubles. Fresh leaves are prepared into a paste and once consumed will help in improving the strength of a person. Fresh leaves fed to the cattle by will promote their strength and walking speed.

Calamus rotang (Tamil: Pirappan Kizhangu): Fruit can be consumed fresh or prepared into pickles and eaten with food. The fruit is rich in nutrients; it controls thirst and dryness of the tongue. Tender stems are also consumed either fresh or after cooking as a side dish.

Canthium parviflorum (Tamil: Kaarai or Siru Kaarai): Both the leaves and fruit are eaten. It relieves intestinal worms in children if given at regular intervals. The leaves are also used for the preservation of cooked foods.

Capparis brevispina (Tamil: Aadhandai): Raw fruit is cut into thin transverse sections, then salted, dried in the sun, made into pickles and fried in sesame oil or ghee. It is then consumed as a side dish for porridge and other traditional morning foods (*Koozhu* or *kanji*). It is tasty and improves the appetite.

Capparis zeylanica (Tamil: Suduthoratti): Some traditional communities use the fruit of this plant in the same way that *Capparis brevispina* is used. The raw fruit is also edible and can be prepared into pieces and included in spicy *kuzhambu*.

Did you know? One of the favorite side dishes of the Maharashtra tribes is the pickle prepared from the fruit of *C. zeylanica*.

Caralluma umbellata (Tamil: Kalmulayan): Traditional people eat the tender stems. Sometimes the stems are prepared with salt and oil as pickles or chutneys.

Cardiospermum halicacabum (Tamil: Mudakkatran): It is one of the important spinaches in traditional cookery. It is mainly included in the flour paste used in the preparation of *dosa*:

about one handful of fresh leaves are mixed with 3 cups of rice and prepared as flour. The *dosa* is made without fermentation. This *dosa* is delicious, alleviates intestinal gas, and is also helpful for reducing joint pain and body pain.

Method of preparation of a soup (or *rasam*) from the leaves: one handful of clean fresh leaves is soaked in ½ litre of tamarind water, one teaspoon of salt is added and the mixture boiled. After the taste of tamarind clears, pepper, cumin, a pinch of asafetida and chilly pickles are ground together and added to the soup. In addition, 3 garlic cloves are added and adequately cooked. Finally, mustard is added and the soup is removed from the heat and is consumed whilst hot.

Carissa spinarum (Tamil: Sirukala): Both unripe and ripe fruits are eaten. Unripe fruits are sometimes prepared as pickles. When consumed it is helpful for tiredness and indigestion. The ripe fruits, which are tastier than the unripe fruit, are eaten raw or made into jams and jellies. Regular intake of the tender fruits helps to cure mouth ulcers.

Carmona retusa (Tamil: Kurangu Vetrilai – Kuruvichippazham): The fruit is edible. The seeds promote strength and improve stamina and they are included as an ingredient in some traditional formulations consumed for sexual vigour. Leaves dried in shade are prepared as a herbal tea (infusion) and consumed will be helpful for coughs and stomach disorders.

Cassia fistula (Tamil: Sarakkondrai): Pulp from the mature fruit is collected, preserved and kept in bottles until consumed. It has a combined taste of sour, sweet and *thuvapu* (like the taste of arecanut – *pakku*). The pulp should be consumed in the evening after food (in a quantity of about half the size of a gooseberry) to help relieve constipation and intestinal worms. In addition, it is helpful for indigestion and gas trouble and strengthening of the intestines.

Centella asiatica (Tamil: Vallarai): The leaves improve memory and strengthen the brain. It is an important plant, as described by Ramalinga Vallalar “Vallarai vella Vallarayai Ninai”. Green leaves are eaten fresh in the morning on an empty stomach. Children are advised to consume one to two fresh leaves in the morning. Leaves, after removing the petiole, are made into pickles or included in dhal preparations (*sambar*) and is commonly used within the traditional communities. Regular intake of the leaves in a limited quantity will strengthen the nerves.

Caution: This plant should not be given to people suffering from epilepsy, particularly children. The plant should always be consumed in a limited quantity as excess intake may lead to problems such as headache and giddiness even in healthy adults.

Cissus quadrangularis (Tamil: Pirandai): The tender stem and leaves possess a spicy taste and hot nature. They can be made into pickles or chutneys and consumed with tiffin and other foods. The mature stems are cut into small pieces and soaked in buttermilk. The desired quantity of salt is added and the mixture is dried in sunlight by which *vathal* is prepared and stored properly. When required the *vathal* is fried in oil and when consumed it is helpful for indigestion and tastelessness.

Method of preparation of *Thuvayal* from *C. quadrangularis* stem: The stem is collected fresh, the outer skin is removed, and the stems are cut into small pieces. They are then fried in ghee, a pinch of tamarind, salt and chilly are added and the mixture is ground to fine paste. Final frying should be done with black gram and mustard, and kept in an airtight container. This preparation is mixed with cooked rice and sesame oil and consumed. It can also be served as a side dish for *idlies* and *dosa*. This preparation helps to cure indigestion, gas troubles and promotes the strength of the bones and nerves. It can be regularly given to children to strengthen the bones.

Cissus repens (Tamil: Sempirandai): Traditional communities eat the ripe fruit. Leaves are prepared as a soup and consumed. The roots are cut into small pieces, finely ground, prepared to spicy *kuzhambu* (like ginger *kuzhambu*) and consumed with cooked rice. It helps relieve gastritis and thigh pain.

Cleome gynandra (Tamil: Nallavelai): Fresh leaves are collected, fried in ghee or sesame oil and consumed with food. Leaves are also prepared to spicy *kuzhambu* and consumed with cooked rice to help cure headaches. It is also included in food preparations, especially for people suffering from fever and colds.

Clerodendrum phlomides (Tamil: Thazhuthali – Thazhuthazhai): The leaves are finely ground and prepared as a spicy *kuzhambu* and eaten with cooked rice. It is helpful for the relief of joint pain and rheumatism. Regular intake of this preparation promotes digestion and removes toxins from the body.

Clitoria ternatea (Tamil: Sangu Pushpam): An infusion or herbal tea is prepared by boiling the fresh petals with water and consumed. It relieves itching of the body. Syrups and sherbets are prepared from the petals and consumed to promote vigour and to prevent tiredness.

Juice extracted from the petals is mixed with an equal quantity of honey. Once consumed it is helpful for strengthening the liver and cures tinea, versicolour and other skin troubles.

Excess sweating can be controlled by consuming about 1 teaspoon of the leaf juice and ginger juice in equal quantity. It should be taken in the morning and evening for a week.

Cocculus hirsutus (Tamil: Kattukkodi): Fresh leaves can be consumed in their raw state. They prevent tiredness of the body. Leaf juice is extracted, added to the required quantity of water, and when consumed promotes strength of the body and encourages a gain in body weight. Leaf juice together with buttermilk is given to women suffering from white discharge, and urinary infections due to excess heat.

Coccinia grandis (Tamil: Kovai): Ripe fruits are delicious and may be eaten raw. The fruits are also prepared to *koottu* or fry and eaten with cooked rice. Raw fruit is also prepared as *vathal* (salted dry fruit) and fried in ghee and consumed. It relieves intestinal worms and strengthens the body. Some tribal communities also eat the tender leaves.

Cordia dichotoma (Tamil: Naruvili – Mookkusali Pazham): It is a delicious fruit particularly liked by children. The fruit is slimy and juicy and helps in the curing of mouth ulcers, the

strengthening of teeth and gums. It is also used as an ingredient in preparations to relieve urinary tract infection.

Cucumis melo var. *melo* (Tamil: Sukkangai): Unripe fruit is cut into transverse sections, salted, soaked in buttermilk and dried in sunlight by which *vathal* is prepared and stored in airtight container. When required this *vathal* is fried in ghee or sesame oil and consumed. It promotes appetite and is the preferred side dish for curd rice.

Cymbopogon citratus (Tamil: Elumitchai Pul): Tea is prepared using the leaves: two leaves are cut into small pieces, boiled in 2 glasses of water until reduced to 1 glass and then filtered. To this decoction milk, jaggery or sugar, and ginger pieces are added. The tea is then boiled further, filtered and consumed whilst hot.

Cynodon dactylon (Tamil: Arugampul): The juice from the leaves is a famous drink, it is also consumed by urban people. The whole plant possesses a sweet taste and cooling properties. The fresh plant is collected, crushed and the juice is extracted. A small quantity of honey is added before consumption. Regular intake of this preparation helps to relieve impurities in the blood and reduces body heat. In addition, it reduces excess blood sugar level and is beneficial for people suffering from diabetes.

As a medicine, one handful of fresh leaves are ground to a fine paste and mixed with curd and consumed to treat women suffering from white discharge and also for piles.

Decalepis hamiltonii (Tamil: Maagalikkizhangu): Pickles prepared from the roots are famous in South India. It helps to purify the blood and improves digestion. Sherbet and other cooling drinks prepared from the dried roots are consumed to relieve thirst and scanty urination during the hot summer.

Diospyros melanoxylon (Tamil: Thumbili): The edible fruits are delicious and highly nutritious.

Delonix elata (Tamil: Vaadha narayanan): The leaves possess heat nature and have a bitter taste. They are used in the preparation of spicy *kuzhambu* and *thuvayal*. Regular intake of these preparations helps to control joint pain, arthritis, and other nervous and bone related complaints associated with swellings. The leaves can be included in food preparations and consumed once a week to support general immunity.

Diospyros ebenum (Tamil: Karungaali): The fruit is edible and consumed during the summer by traditional people.

Diospyros ferrea (Tamil: Irumbili): The ripe fruit is pulpy and edible.

Eclipta prostrata (Tamil: Karisaalai – Vellai Karisalanganni): The leaves are fried in ghee and consumed. Regular intake of this spinach helps to improve vision, strengthen the body and also strengthens the liver. Our ancestral people believed that this plant prevented aging. Sage Ramalinga Vallalar describes this is one of the important plants used in rejuvenation therapy.

Eating of 5 fresh leaves in the morning cures constipation. Gargling using the juice of the leaves strengthens teeth and gums and clears coating of the tongue. It is also good for throat and lung infection.

Erythrina indica (Tamil: Kalyana Murukkan): The leaves are cut into small pieces, mixed with *dosa* flour and prepared as *dosa*. When eaten it is helpful as a cure for colds and cold related infections. Chopped leaves fried with coconut oil and eaten with cooked rice help encourage the secretion of breast milk. The leaves are included in infusions and other childrens' medicines used for controlling wheezing trouble.

Traditionally, cut leaves are mixed with dhal, cooked and given to pregnant women. It is helpful in relieving scanty urination.

10 drops of leaf juice mixed with small quantity of honey or ghee and given to children relieves intestinal worms. For adults, the above preparation should be prepared with 4 teaspoons of juice.

Euphorbia heterophylla (Tamil: Paal Perukki - Andavaayukkeerai): The leaves are cooked or fried with ghee and consumed to help relieve gas problems and improve digestion. It is recommended for breast-feeding mothers as it improves milk secretion.

Ficus benghalensis (Tamil: Aalam, Aala Maram): The fruit is liked very much by birds and animals. Traditional communities consume the fruit in the summer season. It also acts as a medicine for infertility.

Euphorbia hirta (Tamil: Amman Pacharisi – Sithirappaladai): The tender fruit as well as the flowers are edible. It helps to reduce body heat and cures mouth ulcers. The whole plant with an equal quantity of leaves from the plant *Solanum trilobatum* are prepared to *thuvayal* and consumed for strengthening the body. Breast-feeding mothers can consume fresh whole plants to increase milk secretion.

Ficus racemosa (Tamil: Athi): Ripe fruit is eaten fresh or preserved in honey. Unripe fruit is cooked and eaten with food. The fruit is a rich source of nutrition and is preferred as morning food. It is included in many traditional recipes.

Flacourtia indica (Tamil: Sothaikkala): The common English name for this plant is "Governor's Plum". The edible fruit is included in the preparation of jams and fruit juices.

Glycosmis mauritiana (Tamil: Konji): The fruits are edible and rich in nutrients.

Gauzuma ulmifolia (Tamil: Thenkai): Ripe fruit as well as dried fruit are edible.

Hemidesmus indicus (Tamil: Nannari): The roots possess a combination of sweet and mild bitter taste and have a cooling property. They are included in various kinds of drinks and beverages due to its cooling nature. Regular intake of these preparations reduces body heat, scanty urination, and jaundice. It is also useful in reducing body heat due to sexually transmitted diseases.

One teaspoon of root powder is mixed with 1 glass of water and boiled. An infusion prepared and consumed in the morning and evening helps to improve the quality of breast milk in feeding mothers.

Note: this plant is locally called Siru nannari and is available in raw drug shops.

Hibiscus surattensis (Tamil: Pulichai Keerai – Kaattu Pulichai): This spinach is sour in taste and increases appetite. It is cooked, mixed with cooked rice, sesame oil and ghee and is delicious when eaten. Traditional people include this spinach to add a sour flavour to meat and fish.

Hybanthus enneaspermus (Tamil: Orithaz Thamarai): The whole plant is eaten fresh or prepared as a paste, mixed with milk and taken. The leaves have a slimy nature when chewed. Regular eating of the leaves reduces body heat and white discharge in women. It also enhances skin complexion.

The whole plant is collected fresh and a paste is prepared. An amount about the size of a lemon is taken with un-boiled cow's milk to help cure nervous weakness.

Hygrophila auriculata (Tamil: Neermulli): Seeds are soaked overnight in water and consumed in the morning. It helps in relief of nervous weakness.

Ipomoea sepiaria (Tamil: Thalikkerai): Leaves are fried or prepared as *thuvayal* with ghee and consumed. It is eaten fresh in India and Australia.

Lepisanthes tetraphylla (Tamil: Gugamathi): Traditional communities eat the fruit.

Madhuca longifolia (Tamil: Iluppai): The fruit is edible. The flowers are rich in honey and are included as a sweetening agent in food recipes and for the fermentation of beverages. Parrots, animals and children like to eat the fruit.

Manilkara hexandra (Tamil: Kanupala – Kaattuppala): The ripe fruit tastes similar to sapota. It is eaten either fresh or dried. It is popular with the forest people of tropical Asia and India.

Marsilea quadrifolia (Tamil: Aarai – Neerarai): It is a highly nutritious spinach which is good for reducing body heat, thirst and cures white discharge. Regular intake of this spinach reduces breast milk secretion. It also helps relieve scanty urination, pain during urination and is beneficial for those with diabetes.

Memecylon umbellatum (Tamil: Kaasan): The leaves are chewed to help promote immunity.

Mimusops elengi (Tamil: Magizham): The fruit is sweetish and may be eaten raw. The fruit can also be prepared as pickles. It is processed and eaten by the traditional communities.

Mukia maderaspatana (Tamil: Musumusukkai): Leaves possess a pungent taste and heat nature. When consumed excess phlegm is removed from the body. It is one of the important medicinal herbs detailed by Sage Ramalinga Vallalar.

Three handfuls of leaves are mixed with ¼ kg of rice and prepared as *dosa* flour. When consumed it helps to cure colds and coughs. It is also effective for reducing fevers and fevers associated with colds and loss of taste. Eating of tender, fresh leaves helps to promote digestion and improves appetite.

Preparation of *thuvayal*: Three handfuls of leaves fried in ghee or sesame oil are prepared as *thuvayal* and fried with the appropriate ingredients. It is consumed regularly for asthma, wounds in the nose and helps to purify the blood.

Murraya koenigii (Tamil: Karuveppilai): The leaves are an important flavouring in South Indian cooking. Leaves have slight pungent taste and heat quality. Regular intake of the leaves helps to increase appetite, strengthen the body and eliminate gastric trouble.

The required quantity of dried leaves are fried in ghee and prepared to a fine powder. A spoon of the powder is mixed with cooked rice, a pinch of salt and ghee. When consumed it helps assist with vision improvement.

The leaves are also prepared as *thuvayal* or chutney and eaten as side dish.

Ocimum basilicum (Tamil: Thiruneetru Pachilai): Both the leaves and seeds have medicinal qualities. The leaves are included as flavouring agent and are used in the preparation of salads.

The seeds are included in *badamgir*. They are soaked in water overnight and consumed in the morning to help reduce body heat and nervous debility. In addition, they help treat dysentery, white discharge, cough, piles and constipation. It also increases the secretion of urine.

Five fresh leaves are consumed in the morning for white discharge. Coughs, mouth ulcers and vomiting sensation is also cured.

For women suffering from delivery pain: Four teaspoons of leaf juice is taken to reduce pain, it also eases the delivery. To reduce tiredness after delivery, one teaspoon of seeds included in a glass of water is consumed after an hour.

Ormocarpum sennoides (Tamil: Elumbotti): The leaves are eaten fresh or prepared into a medicated candy (*lehiyam*) and then consumed. It helps to cure chest pain. The leaves are included in formulations used for setting bone fractures and for nervous pain.

Ocimum tenuiflorum (Tamil: Thulasi): The leaves are chewed, which is good for the immunity, one-sided headache, promoting RBC count and to strengthen the brain. It is also a useful remedy for cold, cough, and fever.

A few leaves are boiled; the juice is extracted and given to infants suffering from colds.

Did you know? The leaves increase the medicinal quality of water. We can obtain this power by adding a few leaves in drinking water.

Opuntia stricta var. *dillenii* (Tamil: Sappathikkalli): The orange-red coloured fruits are edible. The surface thorns must be carefully removed and the inner portion can be consumed. It helps people suffering from piles.

Oxalis corniculata (Tamil: Puliyarai): The leaves taste sour. They can be eaten either fresh or cooked and eaten with other spinaches. It is also pickled in some areas.

Pavetta indica (Tamil: Paavattai): Traditional people pickle the fruit. The outer skin from the stem is collected and boiled in water together with garlic, pepper, cumin and prepared to *rasam*. When consumed it is good for muscular spasms, gas trouble, hip pain, etc.

Phoenix loureirii (Tamil: Siru Eatchan): It is one of the favourite foods of children and adults.

Phoenix pussilla (Tamil: Tharai Eatchan): The fruit is sweet and edible. It is consumed by children and adults. It is eaten in India, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka.

Phyllanthus amarus (Tamil: Keezhanelli): The whole plant is used in indigenous medicine. The leaves possess an active principle 'Phyllanthin' which helps alleviate jaundice. The whole plant also contains potassium. Regular intake of a small quantity of leaves in the morning on an empty stomach helps to get rid of the toxins due to insect and spider bites. In addition, it assists in treating anaemia, killing of harmful germs in the blood, improves appetite and reduces fever.

Phyllanthus emblica (Tamil: Nelli): The fruit (called Amla fruits) is highly medicinal and is edible fresh or prepared as pickles and other food. It has the combined taste of sweet and sour, and has cooling properties. It is one of the highly esteemed fruits in Indian system of medicine and is included in many formulations. The fruit is rich in vitamin C and immuno-modulators. Regular intake of the fruit helps with vision improvement, digestion, increases the flow of urine and reduces body heat.

Note: The dried Amla fruit (locally called Nelli Mulli) is available in raw drug shops. It has the same qualities as the fresh fruit.

Did you know? Amla is one of the easily available and affordable fruits, which has tremendous medicinal value. It cures scurvy and liver disorders. It is also included in rejuvenation medicine.

Pithecellobium dulce (Tamil: Kodukkapuli): The outer thick skin covering the seeds has a combination of *thuvarpu* and sweet taste. It is liked very much by children.

Premna corymbosa (Tamil: Koozhamanikkeerai): The leaves are consumed fresh. They help to cure diarrhoea. The leaves are fried in ghee and given to breast-feeding mothers for increasing breast milk secretion.

Sarcostemma intermedium (Tamil: Kodikkalli): The stem is sour in taste and is edible. The juice of the leaves decreases thirst. It is an important herb for the forest dwellers.

Scoparia dulcis (Tamil: Sarkarai Vembu): The common name of this plant in English is “sweet broom”. Whole plant is sweet and edible. It is dried in shade, prepared to decoction or infusion and consumed as a tea. It promotes strength and increases immunity.

Securinega leucopyrus (Tamil: Vellaipoola): The fruit and seeds are edible. It increases appetite. It is also used to feed grazing animals.

Senna auriculata (Tamil: Aavarai): The flower is one of the important drugs in promoting longevity of life. It is called the “life giving”. The petals are dried in shade, prepared into coarse powder and included in infusions and herbal teas. It helps treat diabetes, bad smell of the skin and dryness of the tongue. A curry prepared from fresh petals helps to reduce body heat. Roots, leaves, bark, flowers and fruits collected in equal quantities in weight, are dried and prepared to fine powder, made as a decoction and consumed to help strengthen the body.

Solanum nigrum (Tamil: Manathakkali): The leaves of both ripe and unripe fruit have a sweet taste and cooling properties. They are rich in vitamin B and help to cure mouth and intestinal ulcers. They are included in foods either fresh or cooked into dhal or curries.

Thuvayal is prepared by frying fresh leaves in the required quantity of ghee and then it is eaten with cooked rice. Fresh leaves are chewed to cure mouth ulcers.

Vathal is prepared from the mature fruit; it is an important food for pregnant women. It helps reduce the sensation of vomiting.

Note: Dried fruits (locally called (<i>Manathakkali vathal</i>) available in the raw drug shops and provision shops.
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Solanum torvum (Tamil: Sundai): The fruit is bitter in taste and has heating properties. It is cooked with porridge or as curries. When eaten with rice it helps reduce thick phlegm, relief from intestinal worms and promotes appetite.

Preparation of *Vathal*: Unripe fruit is cut and soaked in buttermilk and exposed in sunlight. When the entire water portion has evaporated it starts drying. After it is completely dry, a little of salt is added and it is preserved in a container. It is fried in ghee or sesame oil and when eaten with the dinner meal it helps fight throat infection. It can be prepared into fine powder and consumed with warm water to relieve intestinal worms and indigestion.

Solanum trilobatum (Tamil: Thuthuvelai): The leaves are collected fresh and can be included in curries or prepared into *thuvayal*, chutney or porridge. Ripe fruit is soaked in pure honey for 21 to 48 days and when consumed helps treat asthma and long-standing colds.

One handful of fresh leaves and equal quantity of chopped onions is fried in gingelly oil. It is made into *thuvayal* and when consumed helps cure lung disorders. It also promotes digestion.

Spondias pinnata (Tamil: Narimangai): The fruit is edible and tastes like mango. The raw fruits are prepared to pickles. Leaves and flowering tops are included in vegetables and curries.

Sterculia foetida (Tamil: Kudirai Pidukkan): The seeds are boiled or fried and then eaten. It is important to note that they should be consumed in limited quantity as excessive intake make cause some adverse effects.

Syzygium cumini (Tamil: Naaval): The fruit is edible. They are offered during the Ganesh Pooja festival. They are also included in the preparation of jams and sherbets.

Juice from the fruit together with required quantity of sugar is consumed twice daily for scanty and painful urination.

Streblus asper (Tamil: Kuttippala): The fruit is tasty and edible. Juice from the stem and the leaves condenses milk. This practice is prevalent among the children who care for grazing cattle.

Tamarindus indica (Tamil: Puliyan): Both unripe and ripe fruit are edible. The pulp is made into a watery drink: the required quantity of sugar is added to the pulp and when consumed is delicious. Unripe fruit are used to make pickles. The seeds are fried, soaked overnight in water so the outer skin is removed and the nuts are eaten which are rich in taste and promote health. Rural children are fond of eating the flowers and leaves.

Terminalia bellirica (Tamil: Thandrikkai): Traditional people eat the kernel of the fruit. It is also chewed with betel nut as substitute of areca nut.

Terminalia chebula (Tamil: Kadukkai): The tender fruit is collected and soaked in salt water for sometime, it is then made into pickles. When consumed it helps relieve constipation, indigestion and also improves memory.

The ripe fruit is dried; the outer skin is collected, prepared to fine powder and stored in airtight container. One teaspoon of this powder is consumed with warm water in the evening after dinner. It promotes liver function and cures headache.

Ziziphus mauritiana (Tamil: Ilandhai): The fruit is delicious and is eaten either fresh or prepared as a drink. It possesses vitamin C, sugar, minerals, calcium, phosphorus, iron, and carotene. In addition, it has proteins 0.8%, fat 0.3%, and carbohydrates 17.0%. It is one of the indigenous forest fruits and relieves tiredness and promotes body weight.

Did you know? The fruit is medically proven to be effective in relieving chest pain and vomiting sensation.

Walsura trifoliata (Tamil: Vaalsura): The fruits is edible.

Ziziphus oenopia (Tamil: Surai Mullu): The fruit is very much liked by children, birds and animals. Traditional people eat the fruit for the relief of stomach pain.