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Jackal Jujube – A Super Wild Fruit

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Wild edible plants are those that are harvested for human sustenance from nearby ecosystems without being cultivated. These wild plants are essential to the food, nutrition, and subsistence needs of impoverished populations around the world. *Ziziphus oenopolia*, often referred to as the Jackal Jujube is one such tribal fruit found throughout India. It is small-fruited jujube, or wild jujube, and a flowering species widely found across tropical and subtropical regions of Asia and Australasia. In India, it is predominantly located in the deciduous forests in the southern regions of the country. Though it is not extinct in India, it has become rarer in certain urbanized or heavily farmed areas, leading to necessity for conservation to ensure its availability for future generations.

Key words: *Ziziphus oenopolia*; Jackal Jujube; wild jujube; deciduous forests; extinct; conservation

Introduction

Various tribal wild fruits help to improve rural livelihoods. Unfortunately, there is little or no information on their identification, nutritional characteristics, use and management, or user preferences. The variety of wild edible fruit species has decreased as a result of deforestation brought on by modern development. In addition to improving the local inhabitants' nutritional status and standard of living, promoting and domesticating these wild fruit species would prevent them from disappearing from the wild and safeguard the environment's health.

Jackle jujube

It belongs to order rosales and family Rhamnaceae. It is a rusty thorny bush featuring curved thorns. It is a prickly shrub that spreads and occasionally climbs to a height of 1.5 meters. Leaves are elliptical, with 3-4 veins and covered in fine hairs. Simple, alternating, ovate lanceolate, acute, and oblique leaves are present. Flowers are axillary, sessile, and feature a 10-lobed yellowish disc at the center. Petals have a greenish hue. The fruit is a drupe and turns black when it ripens. When ripe, the globose drupe fruit has a single seed and is black and glossy. The leaf is 2-3 cm wide and 4-6.5 cm long.



Mineral Composition

Mineral composition per gram of fruits on dry weight basis was calcium: 0.103mg/g, potassium: 0.023mg/g, magnesium: 0.192mg/g, iron: 0.823mg/g, zinc: 0.067 and phosphorus: 0.025mg/g (Devi *et al.*, 2019).

Medicinal properties

Phenolics, alkaloids, terpenoids, flavonoids, tannins, and sugars are among the active phytochemicals that the plant generates (Souman & Ray, 2016). Ziziphines are cyclopeptide alkaloids produced by the plant. Ayurveda uses the stem, bark, leaves, fruit, and roots to treat a number of ailments, including asthma, stomachaches, ulcers, and obesity. Antioxidant qualities are present in the stem bark. Anti-diabetic remedies include bark and roots (Mourya *et al.*, 2017).

Cultivation

It prefers well-draining loamy soil, but adapts well to poor, rocky, or sandy soils. It thrives in tropical and subtropical regions with hot, dry, or seasonally dry climates. It can be propagated by seeds or cuttings. Requires full, bright sunlight for optimal growth. It is highly drought-tolerant but benefits from water during early establishment. Pruning is recommended during the dormant season to remove dead or overgrown branches and to encourage new growth for increased fruiting. Does not require high nutrients and should be fertilized sparingly, if at all. Due to its straggling nature, it can be grown as a natural barrier or hedge. Fruits are generally harvested when they are dark-brown or black and shiny. It generally fruits from October to December.

Processing

Fruits are used for making ready-to-serve (RTS) beverages, jams, and pickles. Fruits are washed, cooked, and processed with sugar and lemon for beverages.

Conclusion

These fruits also have potential for sustainable agriculture because, despite their high degree of flexibility and tolerance, they may flourish in unfavorable climatic conditions. But they only have local significance and are typically not acknowledged on a national level. Therefore, in order to promote efficient use of marketing systems for fresh fruits during periods of surplus and processed produce, research and development efforts for the cultivation of this kind of underutilized fruit crops must be given due consideration. This can encourage the cultivation of these crops, which can boost the country's economy.

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