Gardens of Hope, Gardens of Health

The Indian civilisation has evolved and sustained itself over thousands of years by putting the health, happiness and wellbeing of the Earth, all her beings and all people, at the centre of its agriculture and health systems.

The sophisticated understanding of nutrition in Ayurveda has shaped the diversity and healthy basis of India’s traditional food cultures.

And what emerges as the one reigning principal driving all good health choices is: Biodiversity is health.

There is an intimate connection between the biodiversity in the soil, the biodiversity of our plants, and the biodiversity in our gut, between ecological sustainability and health. The soil, the gut and our brain are one interconnected biome.

The diversity of Indigenous foods has always been in use for boosting immunity in times of ill-health. A lot of medicinal plants are immunomodulators i.e. they enhance the immune system and eventually combat the disease or infection by modulating immune responses and strengthening of the host immune system.

And we can turn to the same, in today’s context where our health and the fragility of our systems and our bodies is screaming to us in our faces.

What you grow and what you eat is key to your health.

And you can grow good health in your own garden, your terrace or even your rooftop. These are the Gardens of Hope and Gardens of Health.

Below are a few plants that have been nourishing us and hold the potential to take care of us even more, if we honour and grow them near us.

In Ayurveda, herbs are classified by their effects on the three doshas: Vata, Pitta and Kapaha. This classification is determined, among many other things, by the taste of the herb, its action in the body and the effect it has after it is digested. Every body responds differently to herbs and plants taken in different doses. Thus, exercise caution and know your body along with using these plants in moderate quantities. Pregnant women should especially seek out professional advice before consuming these.
Kutki or Katuki

Scientific Name: Picrorhiza kurroa
Local names: kardi, karoi, karu, karwi, katki, kaur, kuru, kutaki, kutki, katuka-rogani, katukarogani, katukkurohini, katuku-roni, katukurohi
Sanskrit names: anjani, arishta, Ashoka, ashokarohini, asokarahini, asokarohini, cakrangi, chakrangi, chitrangi, dhanvantarigrantha, dvijangi, janani, kandaruhkulasadani, kanderuha, katamvara, katavi, katuka, katukarohini, katuki, katumbhara, katurohani, katurohini, katvi, kedarakatuka.

**Medicinal benefits:** liver function, immunity booster, asthma, respiratory functioning, better digestion, controlling high blood pressure and bad cholesterol

The herb is a rare combination of being both bitter and pungent. The rhizome has a long history of use in Indian Ayurvedic medicine for boosting antioxidants like glutathione and many liver enzymes. This helps with the detoxification of the body and boosts the immunity through a better liver and lymphatic system. It helps in the treatment of digestive problems as it has powerful effect on our gut microbiome. It has also been used for better respiratory functioning and to help with asthma as it maintains the integrity of the respiratory inner skin.

**How to use:** for asthma and bronchitis, have 1 to 3 grams of the powdered root of the herb once or two times a day along with honey or any other suitable drink.

Jatamansi

Scientific Name: Nardostachys jatamansi
English Name: Spikenerd Muskroot
Local Name: Balchar, Jatamansi, Sambul lateeb, Sumbul-ut-teeb

**Medicinal benefits:** strong antioxidant activity which boosts immunity, neuroprotective, anti-stress, anti-depressant, anti-cataleptic, anti-seizure (Anticonvulsant), anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antifungal (Jatamansi oil), mild Diuretic (by exerting stimulant action on kidneys), anti-histaminic.

The plant has a rich history of medicinal use and has been valued for centuries in Ayurvedic and Unani systems of medicine. The rhizomes of the plant are used in the Ayurvedic system of medicine as a bitter tonic, stimulant, antispasmodic, and to treat hysteria, convulsions, and epilepsy. The root has been medically used to treat insomnia and blood, circulatory, and mental disorders. The rhizome extract of this plant has been studied for its beneficial effect on the nervous system. It is also known to possess an antidepressant activity that helps in the management of psychological disorders like depression, anxiety disorders, mental fatigue, panic disorders, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.
How to use: For cough, take jatamansi and jaggery in 2:5 ratio and consume a teaspoon every day. For its calming effects in these times of anxiety, take a pinch of the root powder in a cup of warm water twice a day.

Rusha Grass or Gandhabel

Scientific Name: Cymbopogon Martini
Common name: Palmarosa Grass, Geranium grass, Ginger grass, Rusha grass
Hindi: Gandhabel, Gandhej-ghas, Makora, Mirchagandh, Motia
Kannada: Anche hullu, Anchi hullu
Malayalam: Sambarappullu
Marathi: Kusatan, Roshsagavath, Rusha
Sanskrit: Dhyamakah, Rohisa, Rohisah
Telugu: kachi gaddi, kanchi, kashy gaddi, nimma gaddi
Mizo: Thalthing

Medicinal benefits: boosts immunity, Reduces Fever, helps with cough, Improves Digestion among many other things.

The essential oil of palmarosa is capable of reducing fever by virtue of its antiviral, antibacterial, and antiseptic properties. Thus, whether the fever is due to either viral or bacterial infection, this oil helps cool it down and soothe your system. Palmarosa essential oil is also quite beneficial for digestion. It encourages the secretion of digestive juices into the stomach, thus promoting digestion. It also aids in the absorption of the nutrients from food, making your digestive process more efficient.

How to use: Oil extracted from palmarosa is used mixed with hot water and used for hot steam inhalation in condition of asthma and common cold.

Aparajita

Scientific Name: Clitoria ternatea
English- Butterfly Pea
Hindi-Koyala
Telugu- Dintena
Malayalam – sangu pushpam
Sanskrit- Asphota, Girikarni, Visnukrântâ, sankhapuspi, Sephanda, svetâ, Mahâ svetâ.

Medicinal benefits: helps with the problems in the respiratory system like common cold, cough and asthma, brings down fever, regulates the digestive system and circulatory system better.
Butterfly Pea is jam-packed full of health promoting antioxidants, flavonoids and peptides. Flavonoids, anthocyanins and phenolic compounds in activate antioxidant activity, which helps decrease oxidative stress caused by disease causing and ageing free radicals. It is used in common cold, cough, asthma as it acts as an expectorant and reduces the irritation of respiratory organs. It is thought to bring down fever (anti-pyretic) by expanding the blood vessels just beneath the skin, which increases blood flow where it can be more easily cooled.

**How to use:** Steep 10 flowers, fresh or dried, in a cup of hot water, let sit 15 minutes. When there is no color left in the petal, strain the liquid and discard the flowers. You will be left with an amazing indigo coloured broth.

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### Guruchi

Botanical Name: *Tinospora cordifolia*

Local Names: Guduchi (Sanskrit), Gulancha (Bengali), Shidil Kodi (Tamil), Amrita, Gulancha, Giloya (Hindi), Tippatigo (Telugu), Gado (Gujarati), Tinospora (English)

**Medicinal benefits:** Immunity Protection, Diuretic, Gout, Rheumatoid Arthritis, and Tonic for After Fever, Malaria and Other Fevers, Diabetes, Urinary Problems,

Guduchi is recognized to accord longevity, enhances memory, improves health, and bestows youth. This herb, activates the immune system of the body, boosting immunity and promoting vitality in a person. Guduchi has been preferred traditionally to treat ailments such as bronchitis and chronic cough. It pacifies the mucous membrane of your respiratory system thereby making it very effective against asthma. Giloy or Guduchi has the ability to detoxify your liver and help in proper functioning. It might also act as a remedy for fatty liver. One of the biggest benefits of Guduchi is that it can help stimulate the regeneration of liver tissue that has been damaged. Guduchi works towards building a stronger digestive system and immunes body against hyperacidity, colitis, worm infestations, and loss of appetite, abdominal pain, excessive thirst, and vomiting. This medicinal herb is a health rejuvenator which is also widely known for its effectivity in enhancing natural immunity to fight against a number of illnesses such as fever, jaundice, skin diseases, constipation and tuberculosis.

**How to use:** boil Giloy stem or poweder in water, let it cool down and drink it twice a day.
Ashwagandha

Botanical Name: Withania somnifera / Withania ashwagandha  
Local Names: Asgand (Hindi), Amukkirag (Tamil), Amangura (Kannada), Asvagandha (Bengali), Ashvagandha (Sanskrit), Asundha (Gujarati), Winter Cherry (English)

**Medicinal benefits:** Mastikshara dorbalya (mental weakness concerning nervous system), Hrid drbalyahar (heart weakness), Raktapittahar, Pushhikar (gives strength to muscles), Grahi (anti-diarrheal) Twachya (improves skin condition), backache or leg pain, diarrhea, dysentery, piles, skin disease, injuries.

It is the most important herb that is beneficial for treating different health conditions. Ayurveda praises ashwagandha for its longevity and vitality tonic. Ashwagandha is widely recognized for its benefits, and one such benefit is that it modulates and boosts the immune system. It increases the number of pathogen-fighting agents and reverses the ill effects of anticancer drugs on the immune system.

**How to use:** Traditionally, it is used as a powder mixed with honey and warm milk for calming vata and regulating your sleep and wake cycles. You can also have a cup of hot milk mixed with 1 teaspoon of powdered Ashwagandha before bedtime.

Ginger

Botanical Name: Zingiber officinale
Local Names:  Adi (Hindi), Ada (Bengali), Adu (Gujarati), Ale (Marathi), Enji (Tamil), Alla (Kannad), Ginger (English)

**Medicinal benefits:** Cough, Cold, Hoarse voice, Asthma, Digestion Enhancer, Vomiting and Nausea, Water Retention, Urticaria, Ear Pain, Chronic Arthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis

It is an ingredient packed with immune-boosting benefits. Ginger helps support the immune system and prevents nausea and soothes an upset tummy. Ayurveda compliments ginger’s ability to boost your immune system. Ginger is very much effective in keeping your body warm and helps break down the accumulation of toxins in your organs.

**How to use:** Add ginger to a stir-fried dish or boil it to make a cup of ginger tea with some added lemon for a pleasant and a healing hot drink.
**Tulsi**

Botanical name: Ocimum tenuiflorum  
Local name: Holy basil, (Hindi) Tulsi, (Malayalam) Trittavu, (Marathi) Tulshi, (Manipuri) Tulsi  

**Medicinal benefits:** Tulsi is recommended as a treatment for a range of conditions including anxiety, cough, asthma, diarrhea, fever, dysentery, arthritis, eye diseases, otalgia, indigestion, hiccups, vomiting, gastric, cardiac and genitourinary disorders, back pain, skin diseases, ringworm, insect, snake and scorpion bites and malaria.  

This plant is so highly revered in India that it is often kept in and around the home for its deeply purifying and beneficial properties. Tulsi removes excess kapha from the lungs and upper respiratory tract while promoting healthy circulation, and strong digestion. It is useful in maintaining a normal body temperature and it naturally bolsters the immune system.  

**How to use:** A great way to consume Tulsi is to prepare a tea. It is known to boost your immunity and fight germs and can heal many diseases.

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**Neem**

Botanical name: Azadirachta indica  
Local name: Neem, (Hindi) Neem, (Marathi) Nimbay, (Tamil) Veppai, Sengumaru, (Malayalam) Ariyaveppu (Telugu) Vepa, (Kannada) Turakabevu, (Gujarati) Dhanujhada, Limba, (Sanskrit) Pakvakrita, nimbaka  

**Medicinal benefits:** immunomodulatory, anti-inflammatory, antihyperglycaemic, antiulcer, antimalarial, antifungal, antibacterial, antiviral, antioxidant, antimutagenic and anticarcinogenic properties.  

Neem boosts the immune system helping the body’s ability to fight all kinds of infections. It also helps regulate blood sugar levels and is very good for people suffering from diabetes. Regular consumption of Neem can also avert high fever, malaria, viral flu, dengue and other infectious diseases. Neem’s anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties can help solve many tooth related problems. Neem is known to support healthy digestion. The anti-inflammatory properties of Neem can help prevent stomach and intestinal problems.
Haldi

Botanical Name: Curcuma Longa

Local Names: Haldi (Hindi), Turmeric (English), Halud (Bengali), Arishina (Kannada), Halad (Marathi), Manjal (Malayalam), Manjal (Tamil)

Medicinal Benefits: Antibiotics, antiseptic, anthelmintic, antioxidant, antidiabetic, anticancer, antiallergic, anodyne

Haldi is used for the treatment of intermittent fever, bronchitis, amenorrhea, diabetes spleen enlargement. It has anti-carcinogenic properties that is extremely beneficial for cancer prevention. How to use: For the treatment of asthma, 1 teaspoon of raw haldi should be consumed with hot milk. For bronchitis, mix 1 teaspoon each of cinnamon, turmeric, dry ginger, black pepper, cardamom, and clove. Add 3 tablespoon of raw sugar / Mishri, and grind together to make a fine powder. Take ½–1 teaspoon of this powder mixed with honey twice per day.

Gunja

Botanical Name: Abrus precatorius

Local Names: Ratti (Hindi), Galuganji (Kannada), Kunni (Malayalam), Gunja (Sanskrit), Rati (Assamese), Guriginia (Telegu)

Medicinal Benefits: Anti-inflammatory, CNS-depressant, Demulcent, Expectorant, Alopecia, sciatica, leprosy and paralysis

Gunja helps strengthen immunity and provides bodily strength as a general body strengthenener. It is a strong anti-toxin that’s benefits even extends to heal deep wounds. It also treats coughs, asthma and dizziness.

How to use: Take root powder of Gunja in 3–4 grams and prepare decoction in one glass water. Drink this decoction twice a day.
Isharmul

Botanical Name: Aristolocia Indica

Local Names: Isharmul (Hindi), Indian Birthwort (English), Jarvande (Assamese), Ishormul (Bengali), Ishwari Beru (Kannada), Sapasan (Marathi), Garudakkoti (Malayalam)

Medicinal benefits: Intermittent fever, Malaria, Parasitic infestations, Skin diseases, Stimulates desire, Oedema, Intestinal disorders, Fungal infections, Bacterial infections.

Indian birthwort is an excellent blood purifier that helps with for coughs, fever and nausea. It has also proven to be effective in case of swellings and skin diseases

How to use: for fever mix the root powder with 1tbsp of warm water. Should be consumed once a day. For inflammation, the seeds of the herb should be crushed with water and applied on the affected region

Sada-bahar

Botanical Name: Catharanthus roseus

Local Names: Sada-bahar (Hindi), Periwinkle (English), (Assamese), Nayantara(Bengali), Masanda Hoo (Kannada), Sadaphool (Marathi), Ushamalari (Malayalam), Nitya-Kalyani (Sanskrit), Sudukattu Malikai (Tamil)

Medicinal benefits: analgesic, antibacterial, antidiabetic, antiseptic, CNS depressant, blood purifying, diuretic, emetic, hypoglycemic, hypotensive, laxative, tranquilizer and teratogenic.

It increases blood circulation and its leaves if consumed contains juices that cleans blood and liver. Its bases are found to have bactericidal properties which helps with the throat and lungs infections.

How to use: Make a powder by mixing root powder (100grams) of Sadabahar and Mishri (400 gram). Eat one teaspoon of this powder, empty stomach. This will help with the weakness and for diabetes take the pink coloured flowers of the sadabahar plant and boil them in a cupful of water. Strain the water and drink it every morning on an empty stomach.
Daruhaldi

Botanical Name: Barberis Aristata

Local Names: Daruhaldi (Hindi), Indian Berberry (English), Daruharidra (Bengali), Maradarishana (Kannada), Daruhalad (Marathi), Maramannal (Malayala), Gangeti (Tamil).

**Medicinal benefits:** hypoglycaemic, antibacterial, antifungal, antipyretic, anti-inflammatory, hepatoprotective and antioxidant activities.

Daruhaldi is used for the treatment of fever, ulcers, infection in intestines, inflammation, cuts and wounds. This medicinal herb, can also helps with eye related issues like opthalmia.

**How to use:** for the treatment of fever Daruhaldi is used in the form of Rasaut. For preparing Rasaut, roots and lower stem of Daruhaldi is cooked in water. The amount of water taken is sixteen times of daruhaldi roots. It is cooked till water is reduced to one fourth.

Kalmegh

Botanical Name - Kalmegh andrographis paniculata

Local Names - Kariyat, Creat, (Assamese) moha-tita, sirota, (Dogri) kala chiryata, kiriyata, (Gujrati) kariyatu, (Hindi) hara chirayata, kalpanath, kirayit, mahatita, (Kannada) nelabevu, (Konkani) vhadlem kiraytem, (Malayalam) kiriyatta, nilavepp, (Manipuri) vubati, kalpa, ole kirayat, paale kirayat, (Mizo) hnakhapui (Nepali) ankuri phul, kalapnath, (Oriya) bhadratikta, bhui nimba, haima, shankhini, shweta buhna, sthulapushpi, (Punjabi) charaita, (Sanskrit) bhunimba, mahatikta, yavatikta, (Tamil) nilavempu, (Telugu) nelavemu

**Medicinal benefits:** Useful in curing fever, worms, desintery, general weakness and excessive gas formation in stomach. Also in children suffering from liver and indigestion, snake bites, has antibiotic properties.

Kalmegh boosts immunity and treats and relieves its symptoms such as sleeplessness, fever, nasal drainage, body ache, sore throat and fever. Kalmegh in powder form is effective in combating liver-related disorders. Kalmegh has hepato-protective and hepato-stimulative properties that safeguard the liver and enables its speedy recovery. It treats jaundice, reduces enlarged liver and also can treat viral hepatitis. Kalmegh in powdered form is effective in managing respiratory conditions like pneumonia, tuberculosis and bronchitis.

**How to use:** For fever, take an entire plant of Kalmegh, clean and dry the plant in shade. Boil 3-4 gms of the plant in water till the quantity of water reduces to one fourth. Drink this concoction twice a day. Kalmegh in powdered form should be consumed in half to 1 teaspoonful of quantity twice daily with water after meals.
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