

The Healing Power of Plants

Nature's time-tested remedies
for almost every ailment

Umesh Pande



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THE HEALING POWER OF PLANTS

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Dedicated to my Father,
Late Pandit Bhagwati Prasad Pande

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PREFACE

Plants are vital to human life. They contribute in many ways to our welfare as they offer substantial benefits without asking anything in return. Therefore, it becomes obligatory on our part to water, nurture, and protect them as best as we can.

I have tried to bring out the importance of some significant plants in relation to their medicinal values, and the role they are assigned in astrology, tantra and vastu. I am hopeful that their preventive, healing and curative aspects will prove beneficial to readers of this book. It contains brief descriptions of several common trees, plants, shrubs, herbs, and their individual medicinal properties that can provide the healing touch to human beings.

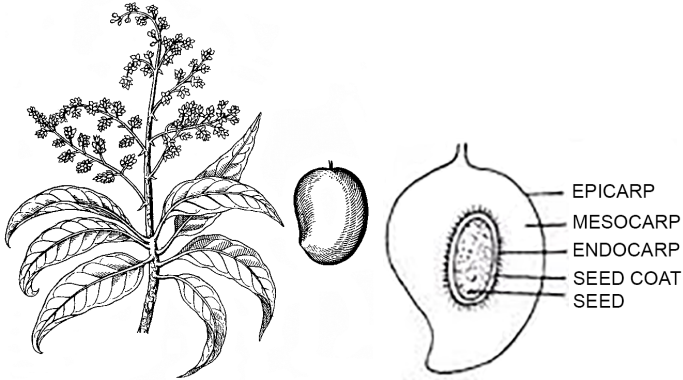
However, while most of the treatment methods prescribed in this book can be easily followed by readers, I have indicated that some of them should only be carried out under the advice and supervision of vaidyas, ayurvedic practitioners, or your family doctor. It has been my sincere endeavour to provide you with authentic information about these plants, on the basis of several ancient scriptures, texts and books. I have also drawn upon the knowledge I have gained through my interactions with experts in horticulture, ayurveda and naturopathy.

I am thankful to all well-wishers who inspired me to spread the knowledge about, and benefits of, the healing power of plants. My deep thanks also goes to my publisher Yogi Impressions, Dr. C.M. Solanki, and the late Shri Shailesh Dave, without whose wholehearted support, this book would not have been in your hands.

– Umesh Pande

AAM

(Mango)



Different names of Aam

It is called *Aamra*, *Sahakar* or *Rasaal* in Sanskrit, *Aam* in Hindi and Bengali, *Amba* in Marathi, *Aabee* in Gujarati, *Amb* in Punjabi, *Mangamaram* or *Mamram* in Tamil, *Ambaj* in Assamese, *Mango* in English, and *Mangifera indica* in Latin.

It belongs to the *Anacardiaceae* family of the plant kingdom.

Brief description

The mango tree is large and evergreen with a dense, rounded crown of dark green foliage. Its leaves are leathery and lustrous on stalks that are swollen at the base. The flowers of this tree are yellowish-green, with 4-5 petals that have 3 orange-coloured ridges on the inner face. They are bunched at the ends of the branches. Each flower has 4-5 stamens of which only one is perfect and longer than the others. Its fruit varies in size and colour, each containing a fibrous stone embedded in pulp.

The tree flowers between February and April, and its fruit from June to August.

Medicinal uses and benefits

Diarrhoea: Dried leaves from the mango tree are powdered and about 6g of this powder is taken with water.

Diabetes: Taking a decoction of the new leaves of mango during the morning and evening provides relief to people who have blood sugar problems.

Eczema: Apply the transparent, sticky juice which you can squeeze out from the tip of the mango and apply it to the affected area.

Menstruation: Take the *Bor* or floral bunch from the tree and after drying prepare a powder of it. 6g of this powder when mixed and taken with an equal quantity of castor sugar (powdered sugar) brings effective relief during that period.

Menorrhoea: Take 3g of the powder of the cotyledons, (embryonic leaves in seed-bearing plants), of the mango fruit for a week with water.

Bleeding piles: Buds of flowers of the mango tree if eaten with a little sugar regularly will stop bleeding piles.

Syphilis: Take 50ml juice of the bark of mango and add 40ml of lime water to it. Drink half of this mixture every morning and evening to get relief.

Earache: Warm some mango leaves and squeeze out their juice. Pour 2-3 drops of it in your ears to get effective relief.

Intestinal worms: Drink a decoction of the epicarp of mangoes to flush out the worms.

Premature greying: Take a sufficient quantity of unripened mangoes with an equivalent quantity of black *bhangra* or *bhringraj* (false daisy) juice and mix it with sesame oil. Store this in an iron container and bury it in the ground for 3 months. Then take it out and apply the oil regularly on the scalp and hair. It will keep your hair black and healthy.

Oral health: The ash of dried mango leaves after being burnt is mixed with a little common salt. Brushing one's teeth with this powder helps keep them healthy and shining.

Hiccups: A few dried mango leaves smoked through a *chillum* (clay pipe) will stop the hiccups.

Burns: Take the cotyledons of the mango and moisten them with water, then apply the paste over the burn area.

Eye infection: Prepare a clear extract of the cotyledons and apply 2 drops into the affected eye.

Importance in Astrology

- One who bathes daily by putting a leaf of mango, a leaf of peepal, 11 *Durva* – grass, a leaf of tulsi, and a leaf of Bel in the bath water, remains immune to negative effects of the planets.
- One born under *Shatbhisha* or *Poorva Bhadrapada nakshatra* should plant and protect a mango tree for good health, wealth, peace and prosperity.

Importance in Tantra

- If a person rubs the inflorescence of mango between his palms for an hour at sunrise on *Basant Panchami* (auspicious day that marks the onset of spring in January-February), he acquires the power of healing. Then, if he keeps his palm on any painful part of his, or another's body, the pain will soon be relieved.
- One who keeps a *banda** of mango taken out in *Uttara Phalguni* nakshatra in the house will receive cooperation from his life partner.
- The banda if taken out in *Ravi Pushya Yog* and kept by a person can help one overcome his enemies.
- In the *Vrikshayurveda*, it is said that if one plants 5 mango trees by the sides of a road, 14 generations of his will receive blessings of the Almighty.

Importance in Vastu

If a mango tree is growing within the premises of a house, then it should be offered a few black til (sesame seeds) with water daily. Or else, the *nirgundi* (chinese chaste tree) should be planted within its limits.

* Banda is a vine which grows naturally on another tree. It sucks out nutrients from its host tree and usually doesn't touch the ground.

AMALTAS

(Indian Laburnum)



Different names of Amaltas

It is called *Aaragwadh* in Sanskrit, *Amaltas* or *Siyar Danda* in Hindi, *Bahava* in Marathi, *Garmalo* in Gujarati, *Sonalu* in Bengali, *Khyar Chambar* in Persian, *Khyar Shamber* in Arabic, *Indian Laburnum* in English, and *Cassia fistula* in Latin.

It belongs to the *Caesulpinaceae* family of the plant kingdom.

Brief description

It is a small or medium-sized tree but occasionally reaches a height of 60 feet and a girth of 3 feet. The bark is smooth and grey or greenish-grey on young trees. It is very conspicuous in the hot summer when its flowers appear. These are large and bright yellow and occur in long, pendulous bunches. At the time of flowering, the tree is almost devoid of leaves, the first flowers appearing as the last of the old leaves are falling. The flowering continues until the fresh foliage has developed. The fresh leaves are rich and copper-coloured. During cold weather, the tree is usually conspicuous by its pods which are dark brown, 1-2 feet long, and 2-3 cms in diameter.

Medicinal uses and benefits

Eczema: Prepare a cream by rubbing equal parts of flowers, bark, leaves, roots and seeds of amaltas. Apply this over the affected area of the skin until the condition clears.

Urinary obstructions: Apply a sufficient quantity of the endosperm (tissue produced inside the seeds of most flowering plants), below the umbilicus of the person having difficulty in passing urine. This will allow the urine to pass smoothly without any blockage or pain.

Constipation: Soak about 25g of the pulp from amaltas pods, 15g of dried rose petals, and 5g of *saunf* (fennel) in a cup of water for about 8 hours during the day. Before going to bed at night, filter the soaked ingredients and drink the filtrate. Taken regularly for a few nights, it will clear the problem of constipation.

Stomach ache: Grind a small quantity of the endosperm of the seeds of amaltas and apply the paste over the *pedu* (umbilicus). This is also useful in case of bloated stomach in children.

Inflammation/swelling: Apply a paste of the amaltas bark.

Ulcers/wounds: Prepare a paste by grinding the bark with water and apply it on the affected area. It is believed to decrease discharge of pus and acts as a local antiseptic.

Amaltas is also used in the treatment of cancer, convulsions, painful urination, diarrhoea, epilepsy, etc.

Importance in Astrology

- To overcome malefic effects of the Sun in one's horoscope, ancient astrological texts prescribe that one should take a small quantity of *elaichi* (cardamom), *sathi chawal* (red rice), *khas* (vetiver), *shahad* (honey), amaltas leaves, *kamal* (lotus) petals, *kumkum* (vermilion), *mensil* (realgar/red arsenic/ruby sulfer) and deodar, and let it all soak in water used for bathing. Bathe regularly with this water for a few Sundays and you will see positive effects.
- Those born under the *Swati* nakshatra should plant and protect the amaltas tree for betterment in life.

Importance in Tantra

- Taking out the root of amaltas during *Rohini* nakshatra, and preserving it in the house, helps keep family members free from common infections and diseases.
- One should keep the roots of amaltas, nirgundi, bel and black *dhatura* (thorn apple), taken out in *shubh muhurat* (auspicious day and time) together in a safe, to increase one's wealth.
- One who plants and protects at least 2 amaltas saplings by the sides of the road will get blessings equivalent to performing a number of *yagnas*.

Importance in Vastu

The presence of amaltas within a residential or a commercial unit is very favourable, and more so, when it is facing west.

AMLA

(Indian Gooseberry)



Different names of Amla

It is called *Amalakior Dhartiphal* in Sanskrit, *Amla* in Hindi and Gujarati, *Avala* in Marathi, *Usarkas* in Telugu, *Nelli* in Tamil, *Amalaki* in Bengali, *Indian gooseberry* in English, *Amalaj* in Arabic, *Amalah* in Persian, and *Phyllanthus emblica* in Latin.

It belongs to the *Phyllanthaceae* family of the plant kingdom.

Brief description

The amla is a small or moderate-size deciduous tree with a smooth grey bark, often mottled owing to scales of the bark falling and exposing a fresh surface of a different colour from the older bark. Its leaves are quite small, about 1.25 cms long, on slender twigs that give an appearance of a compound leaf with numerous leaflets. Its small flowers are unisexual (male and female), greenish, and growing in clusters, often on the naked portion of the twigs below the leaves. Its fruit is about 2 cms in diameter, fleshy and shaped like a yellowish-green orange. It has a 6-ribbed stone which ultimately splits into 3 portions, each usually containing 2 seeds.

A peculiarity of this tree is that it sheds its twigs with the leaves attached. This is rather unusual in broad-leaved trees, although it is often observed in coniferous trees. It flowers during March-May and its fruits start to ripen from November to February.

Medicinal uses and benefits

Dysentery and indigestion: A spoonful of amla *murrabba* (preserve) taken daily is very useful for people suffering from chronic dysentery and indigestion.

Urinary tract infections: Women who suffer from a white discharge (leucorrhoea) should take 10g of dried amla powder with an equal quantity of sugar and honey, for 2 weeks. In general urinary tract infections, 10ml of amla juice with 2g of turmeric powder and 5g of honey, taken daily for 2-3 weeks, will bring effective relief. The sherbet of amla acts as a diuretic and increases the urine output thereby helping prevent infections of the urinary tract.

Anaemia: A pickle made of amla, to which honey has been added as a sweetener, is a well-known remedy for anaemia. It improves the haemoglobin level, especially in women who lose a lot of blood during menstruation.

Glowing complexion: Soak dried amla fruits in cold water for a few hours. Then squeeze out the juice and wash the face with that water to add a glow to your complexion.

Bleeding gums: Apply the powder of amla to stop chronic bleeding of gums.

Nosebleeds: People who suffer bleeding from the nose should take 4g of amla powder daily.

Sperm count: Half teaspoonful of amla powder taken with lukewarm water will increase the sperm count in men having a low sperm count.

Haircare/Headache: Daily application of amla oil keeps hair black and checks baldness. The same oil massaged on the scalp relieves headache.

As a component of *triphala*: Amla is a plant of great medicinal

importance in Ayurveda. It is used to abolish *Kaph*, *Pitta* or *Vatta* disorders. It is a main component of triphala, a well-known laxative in ancient ayurvedic preparation.

As a source of Vitamin C: This vitamin is essential for improving the resistance of the body, strengthening blood vessels, bones, gums and teeth.

Convalescence: Taking sweetened amla pickle early morning, every day, on an empty stomach acts as an excellent tonic for people recovering or convalescing from any illness.

Importance in Astrology

- There is a very simple bath advised in astrology to overcome bad effects of the planet Mercury. For this purpose, a small amount of amla, shahad, gorochan, *suvarna* (gold), *haldi* (turmeric), *baheda* (bedda nuts), *gomaya* (cow dung) and rice are added to the bath water. One should regularly bathe with this water for a few Wednesdays.
- To avoid the ill effects of planet Venus, a similar bath should be taken every Friday. In this case, one should add cardamom, harad, baheda, amla, *kesar* (saffron) and mensil to the bath water.

Importance in Tantra

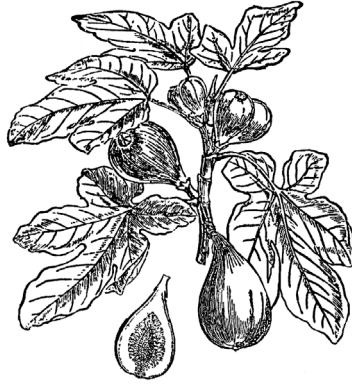
- One who plants an amla tree gets blessings, equivalent to a *Rajsuya yagna*, from the gods.
- Women who worship the amla tree, especially on the 9th day of the Indian calendar i.e. *Naumi*, indirectly improve their destiny.
- One who is born under the *Bharani* nakshatra should worship the amla tree daily with some kumkum and rice for good health, peace and progress.

Importance in Vastu

Presence of an amla tree within house limits is very favourable. It also nullifies the bad effects of other negative plants growing within the house limits.

ANJEER

(Gular Fig)



Different names of Anjeer

It is called *Udumber*, *Jantu-phal*, *Hem-Dugdh* or *Yagnang* in Sanskrit, *Anjeer* or *Gular* in Hindi, *Umar* in Marathi, *Umarado* in Gujarati, *Atti* in Malyalam and Tamil, *Yagna-Dumur* in Bengali, *Anjeer-e-Ahmek* in Persian, *Jammez* in Arabic, *Gular Fig* in English, and *Ficus racemosa* in Latin.

It belongs to the *Moraceae* family of the plant kingdom.

Brief description

It is a large deciduous tree and usually has short, crooked or irregularly-shaped trunk and large branches. Its smooth, grey bark has a yellowish or greenish tinge. The leaves are 10-15 cms long, smooth, and paler on their under surface. Its flowers are very tiny and bunched together with thin scales on the inner surface of hollow, pear-shaped receptacles. The flowers are of 3 types: male, female, and gall flowers. In all these, the petals and sepals are represented by free or united scales resembling a calyx. The male flowers are situated near the mouth of the receptacle and

have 2 stamens with united filaments. The female flowers contain a single, ovoid ovary on top of which is a slender, eccentrically-placed prolongation (stylus). The gall flowers resemble the female flowers, but they are stalked and have a shorter stylus.

The figs are clustered on short, leafless branches or larger branches issuing from the main trunk. When ripe, these figs are 2.5-4 cms in diameter and purplish-red in colour. Overripe figs are sometimes found to harbour small insects.

Medicinal uses and benefits

Blood pressure: Anjeer is a good source of potassium. Its regular intake is said to help in maintaining blood pressure because it tends to negate the harmful effects of sodium.

Menstrual problems: Eat the figs with *mishri* (crystal sugar) to get effective relief. They are also useful in treating bleeding piles. Powdering the roots of this tree and taking 3g of this powder daily will prevent bleeding while passing stools.

Creatine (blood sugar): Powder the dry fruits of anjeer and take a teaspoonful of it with water regularly for a few days.

Bone health: Being a good source of calcium, a regular intake of fresh or dried anjeer promotes healthy bones.

Strong teeth: Boil the fruits in water and use the decoction to gargle with every morning.

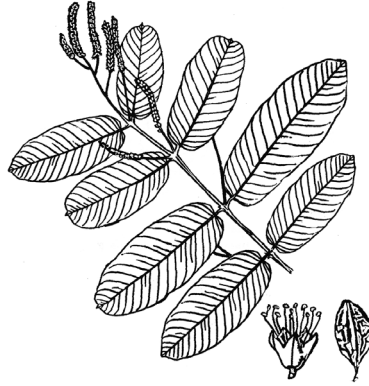
Reproductive health: Since it is loaded with minerals like zinc, manganese, magnesium and iron, anjeer contributes to improving reproductive health.

Importance in Vastu

It is favourable to have an anjeer tree growing in the southern direction of one's house. If found growing in any other direction, one should plant an ashok tree to overcome its ill effects.

ARJUN

(Arjuna Tree)



Different names of Arjun

It is called *Arjun*, *Parth* or *Kankubh* in Sanskrit, *Arjun* or *Moh* or *Kauh* in Hindi, *Arjun Sadra* in Marathi, *Sadado* in Gujarati, *Jumra* in Punjabi, *Marutai* in Tamil, *Telmachhi* in Telugu, *Arjhan* in Bengali, Arjuna Tree in English, and *Terminalia arjuna* in Latin.

It belongs to the *Combretaceae* family of the plant kingdom.

Brief description

The arjun tree is found throughout India, except in the dry regions of western India. It grows 40-50 feet high and has long 7.62-15.24 cms leaves arranged in opposite or alternate positions on the stalk. Its fruits are 5-faced, 2-3 cms long, oblong, hairy and brown or dark brown. The arjun is a big tree and its bark is thick, smooth, and brown or whitish-pink. Once removed, the bark regrows on the tree trunk.

Medicinal uses and benefits

Heart disease: The bark is very useful for many types of heart ailments. Two special preparations, *Ksheerpak* and *Arjunghrit* are generally used.

Ksheerpak is prepared by pulverising the bark. 2-4g of the powder is mixed with an equal quantity of milk and water and then boiled. Having the *Ksheerpak* twice a day regulates the heartbeat and is also beneficial in other ailments of the heart.

To prepare *Arjunghrit*, take 4 kg of the bark and break it into fine pieces. Boil these in 16 litres of water until only 4 litres remain. Then add 50g of *Arjun Kalka* and 250g of cow ghee and continue to boil until it thickens. This *Arjunghrit* is very useful in all heart ailments. It also resolves problems due to *Raktapitta* (impurities in blood). It is useful in cough and tuberculosis when given with the juice of *Vasa* (*Adhatoda vasica*).

A regular intake of 3 to 6g of the powder of arjun bark with a cup of milk is very effective.

Coronary thrombosis: The powder of the bark of arjun when taken daily in 1-2g quantity along with equal quantity of amla-powder, controls myocardial infections, depression of the blood pressure in the arteries, and improves flow of blood in the coronary arteries and checks coronary thrombosis.

Blood vessels: It can regulate contractions in blood vessels to help the blood diffuse properly within the arterioles and venules.

Leucorrhoea: Drinking 5 to 10ml of the decoction regularly helps in the treatment of leucorrhoea.

Bone fractures: To join fractures, prepare a paste by churning equal quantities of garlic cloves and the bark of arjun. Applying this over the fracture can heal the bone quickly. The paste should be applied for 10 days.

Asthma: Take a sufficient quantity of the juice of *Vasa* (*Adulsa*) leaves and keep the bark in it for some days until it gets soaked with the juice of *Vasa* leaves. Then prepare a powder of this soaked bark. Start having 3g of this powder with honey daily.

Spots on skin: Spots frequently appear on the skin when it heals after some kind of injury. Such spots can be reduced, or even made to clear completely, by applying a paste prepared by rubbing the bark on a rough stone with water.

Oral health: Prepare a decoction of fresh arjun bark and gargle with it to cure gum problems and oral infections.

Importance in Astrology

One who is born under the *Swati* nakshatra should plant and protect at least 2 arjun saplings at a suitable place to nullify the bad effects of different planets, and for overall improvement in all aspects of one's life.

Importance in Tantra

- One who keeps the root of the arjun, removed during the *Anuradha* nakshatra, will achieve success in legal matters and emerge victorious over one's adversaries. It will also ensure progress in one's career.
- One who is born under the *Swati* nakshatra should physically touch the tree to be successful.

Importance in Vastu

It is not considered favourable to have an arjun tree growing within the perimeter of the house, especially if it is growing in its north-easterly direction.