

Ethnobotany of *Helicteres isora* L. (Sterculiaceae) in Sri Lanka

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Introduction

Helicteres isora is a traditional multipurpose plant used by the local people and indigenous community in Sri Lanka. It is naturally distributed in all the three major climatic zones in Sri Lanka. However, it is rapidly disappearing in the wet zone due to land clearing and high extraction rates.

Objectives

- Documentation of the traditional knowledge on *H. isora* before they disappear completely.
- To make available the information to reintroduce selected applications as an alternative to current uses.

Methodology

An ethnobotanical survey was conducted using an interview schedule in 12 villages including one indigenous population, close proximity to the natural populations of *H. isora*. These populations were selected to represent three major climatic zones namely wet (Warakapola, Polgahawela, Kabagamuwa, Aranayake, Avunugalla) intermediate (Giriulla, Illukkumbura, Nilgala, Dambana, Kumaragala) and dry zone (Araula, Polonnaruwa) of Sri Lanka.

Results and discussion

All parts of the plant are utilized in different scales for different purposes. Leaves and twigs as a fodder, indigenous medicines and to treat animals. Bark fibre in indigenous medicine, to treat animals, to make ropes, to weave boxes and bags. Poles in the construction of wattle and daub houses of indigenous people and rural folk, as a fire wood, to support plants in vegetable cultivation, to prepare frames of boxes, winnowing fans, in the handicraft industry and as a substitute for cane to make cane chairs. Further, flowers and fruits are used in indigenous medicine.

Most of the traditional uses are now rapidly disappearing due to the lack of raw material especially in the wet zone, the introduction of synthetic materials and new technology for farming and lack of traditional knowledge in the younger generation. Most of the uses of *H. isora* are

restricted to a given locality except the use of bark fibre. The ability of sticks to replace cane in the production of cane chairs is one of the important applications which have a potential to be introduced to the other parts of the country.

Conclusion

Documentation and dissemination of this information can be effectively utilized in the production of eco-friendly items thus promoting the utilisation of the biodiversity.

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Presenter Biography

I am Kapila Yakandawala, a lecturer attached to the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Gardening, Wayamba University, Sri Lanka. My basic degree is on Botany from University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka and I have done my MSc from University of Reading UK in Horticulture.