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Cover story

Neeramulliya

Botanical name: *Hygrophila auriculata*

Family: ACANTHACEAE

Vernacular names: Sinhala: *Neeramulliya*, *Katu ikiriya*, *Ikiriya*;

Sanskrit: *Gokantha*, *Kokilaksha*; **English:** *Marsh barbel*; **Tamil:**

Vayalchulli, *Neermulli*; **Hindi:** *Bhankari*

Hygrophila auriculata is a spiny herbaceous shrub that grows in marshes and on the edges of water bodies; it has numerous medicinal uses, the leaves can be eaten as a vegetable, and the flowers produce nectar that attracts bees and butterflies¹.

This is a perennial aquatic herb native to Sri Lanka and tropical Asia. Erect stem, 1.25m high, armed with axillary spines to 2-4 cm long. Leaves in whorls of six, elliptic lanceolate, acute at apex, entire margins, hispid above. Flowers 6-8 in a whorl, bracts lanceolate, corolla purple². The plant is used in cancer and tubercular fistula. Root and seeds used as tonic, for asthma and dysentery. The leaf, root and seed of this plant are traditionally used for the treatment of inflammation, jaundice, hepatic obstruction, urinary infection, oedema, gout, diabetes, bacterial infection etc.³

Phytochemically, the whole plant contains phytosterols, tannins, carbohydrates, flavonoids, terpenoids, and sterols. Phalnikar *et al.*, Analyzed the oil from the seeds and reported the presence of uronic, palmitic, stearic, oleic, and linoleic acids. Apigenin-7-O-glucuronide and apigenin-7-oglucoside were isolated from the flowers and lupeol, betulin, and stigmasterol were isolated from the plant. Alkaloids, steroids, tannins, proteins, flavonoids, carbohydrates, fats, and oils were isolated from the roots. Moreover, the leaves show the presence of alkaloids, carbohydrates, proteins, steroids, glycosides, flavonoids, tannins, phenolic compounds, fats, and oils³.

References

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