

Aconitum ferox Wall.



Family: Ranunculaceae

Common names: Aconite, Monk's hood, Vatsnabh, Mithavish, Safed Vish, Dudhia Vish

Local name: Bhonga-nagpo (Lahaul), Jahreelijad (Joshimath), Bachhnag, Mitha visha, Teliya visha (Hindi)

Ayurvedic name: Vatsnabh, Visha

Plant profile:

Aconitum ferox is a perennial herb. The leaves are scattered, ovate-reniform, and the flowers are blue in colour with purple veins, arranged in terminal racemes. The plant has paired tuberous roots with conical and elongated daughter tubers. The fruit is a capsule, composed of five follicles and bears numerous seeds. It is distributed in temperate alpine Himalayas, occurring at altitudes between 2400-4600 m near mountainous forests and among abundant grasses of foothills. Flowering and fruiting occurs in July-September. The time of harvesting is September-October. At present, the entire *Aconitum* supply to the market is obtained from wild sources. Its collection, marketing and export have also been banned because it is an endangered species.

Medicinal uses:

- **Part used:** Tuberous root
- **Active principles:** Chiefly pseudo aconitine and aconitine. Pseudoaconitine is highly toxic and biologically 1.5 times as active as aconitine.
- **Disease cured and dosage:**
 - **Ethnomedicinal:** It is highly toxic and thus administered in very low doses. It subsides swelling and pain in the joints due to arthritis and gout. It dries pus and is used against intestinal worms and in cardiac disorders (associated with lungs). It is beneficial against leprosy.
 - **Ethnoveterinary:** Data not sufficient
- **Ayurvedic/Unani preparation:** Mritunjay rasa, Hinguleshwar rasa, Anandbhairav rasa, Prescribed dose is 1/8-1/4 ratti (15.62 mg to 31.25 mg.)
- **Ayurvedic properties and actions:**
 - Guna (Qualities): Ruksha (dry), tikshna (sharp), laghu (light), vikashi (intracellular space)
 - Rasa (taste): Madhur (sweet)
 - Vipaka (post digestive taste): Madhur (sweet)
 - Virya (potency): Ushna (hot)
- **Therapeutic description:**
 - Effect on humours: Alleviates vata, pitta, kapha
 - Systemic effects: Treats sciatica, arthritis and headache.
 - Nervous system: It is used to cure paralysis.
 - Respiratory system: Used to treat bronchitis, dyspnoea, cough and pleuritis.
 - Digestive system: Cures dyspepsia, abdominal colic, digestive upsets, liver and spleen disorders.
 - Urino-genital system: It also helps into treat nocturnal enuresis (bed wetting), polyuria, glycosuria, spermatorrhoea and amenorrhoea.

- Skin: It is used to treat leprosy (3 month course as per R.R.S.)
- Temperature: Used to treat inflammatory fever
- **Drug preparation:** To convert the plant into a drug, the tuberous roots are dried under sun or partial shade, powdered and used in the form of powder or tablets.
 - The powder is sweet to taste and causes tingling sensation and parasthesia of the tongue. The powder is blackish-brown in colour.
 - The powder should be stored in an airtight moisture free container.
 - The shelf life of the powder is 6 months and one year for the tablets.
 - Externally it is massaged with mustard oil in neuralgia, paralysis and rheumatism. For internal use, the root is smoked if one is suffering from toothache and body pains