

Artemisia absinthium L.



Family: Astera

Common names:
Wormwood

Local name: Phunkar-
burtse (Lahaul), Bhurtse
(Joshimath), Nulum
(Tawang)

Ayurvedic name:
Afsantine

Plant profile:

The plant is a perennial erect herb up to 1 m tall with a silky and hairy ribbed stem that can be easily distinguished by its peculiar smell. It is a much-branched silvery-haired leafy perennial with long rather one-sided spike-like lateral clusters of many tiny drooping yellowish flower heads collectively forming a narrow pyramidal inflorescence. The flower heads are globular with green pubescent outer involucre bracts. The leaves are approximately ovate in outline, unevenly 2-3 times cut into oblong to lanceolate segments and grey or white coloured on both sides. This plant is found on open slopes and cultivated areas and is quite common in Ladakh, Lahaul and Spiti at an altitude of 1500-3950 m. Flowering occurs in July and fruiting in September. The aerial parts of the plant are harvested in August just after flowering. The plant prefers saline sandy soils of semi-arid climate and can be propagated by stem and root cuttings and from seeds.

Medicinal uses:

- **Parts used:** Leaves and flowers
- **Active principles:** Palmitic, arachidic, linoleic, lauric, myristic, stearic, and oleic acids have been found in the plant based on lipid extraction studies. α - and β -pinenes, p-cymene, β -phellandrene, azulene, cinelone, thujone, nerole, neryl acetate and cadinene are found in the volatile oils of leaf, flower and stem.
- **Disease cured and dosage:**
 - **Ethnomedicinal:** The plant is known to be an anthelmintic, aphrodisiac, antiseptic, tonic and diuretic, for chronic fever and dandruff and in debility and rheumatism. Oil extracted from the plant exercises a powerful influence over the nervous system and has a tendency to produce headaches and other nervous disorders. The whole herb is an aromatic tonic and formerly was used for debility of the digestive organs. It was also regarded as an anthelmintic. It yields dark green or yellow oil, which has a strong odour of the plant and an acrid taste. It is advisable to take wormwood internally only under close supervision of qualified practitioner because of its negative effects on the nervous system.
 - **Ethnoveterinary:** Data not sufficient
- **Ayurveda:** Afsantin-churna, Afsantin kwath. Churna: 1-3 gm, kwath: 25-50 ml.
- **Ayurvedic properties and actions:**
 - Guna (qualities): Laghu (light), ruksha (dry), tikshna (sharp)
 - Rasa (taste): Tikta (bitter)
 - Vipaka (post digestive taste): Katu (pungent)
 - Virya (potency): Ushna (hot)
 - Prabhav (effects): Kramighna (wormicide)

- **Therapeutic description:**
 - Effect on humours: Alleviates Kapha-Vata
 - Systemic effects: It is used to treat arthritis, hepatomegaly, splenomegaly and otalgia.
 - Nervous system: Used to cure nerve debility, epilepsy, paralysis and hemiparesis.
 - Digestive system: It is used in the treatment of dyspepsia, abdominal disorders and worms infestation.
 - Blood vascular system: It is used to treat cardiac debility.
 - Urino-genital system: Treats dysurea and dysmenorrhoea.
 - Temperature: Cures chronic fever and malaria.

- **Drug preparation:** To convert the plant into a drug, the aerial part is ground into a fine powder.
 - It is a dull green powder with strong aroma.
 - The powder must be stored in moisture free containers and has a shelf life of one year.
 - It is taken internally by chewing or direct ingestion