

*Artemisia brevifolia* Wall.



**Family:** Asteraceae

**Common names:**  
Santonin Plant

**Local name:** Burse  
Khampa (Ladakh), Burse  
Khampa (Spiti),  
Nyurcha, Seski (Lahul)

**Ayurvedic name:**  
Chauhar

## Plant profile:

This is a much branched erect or ascending, hoary or tomentose, strongly aromatic shrubby perennial with very dissected pale grey to almost white leaves. The leaves are pinnatisect segments and the ribbed stems are branched from the base. The plant bears narrow branched spikes of axillary clusters of tiny yellow to red flower heads 2-3 mm across. The heads are ovoid, with 3-8 florets and narrow, oblong, woolly haired involucre bracts. It is found in the temperate Himalayas at an altitudinal of 2100-4800 m on dry stony slopes and open areas. It is one of the predominant species of cold desert Himalaya especially in Ladakh and Lahaul. Flowering and fruiting of the plant takes place in the months of July to September.

## Medicinal uses:

- **Parts used:** Flowering shoots and leaves
- **Active principles:** Un-open flower buds yield santonin. Santonin content from Kashmir *Artemisia* varies from 1-2 %. It contains essential oil, of which cineol is the main constituent. The presence of artemisinin has also been reported.
- **Disease cured and dosage:**
  - **Ethnomedicinal:** A decoction of leaves and flowers is given orally to remove abdominal parasites, especially in children. It is used as a digestive and carminative and hence mixed with meat dishes. It is known to be an anthelmintic, aphrodisiac, antiseptic, laxative, febrifuge, blood purifier, stomachic, tonic and antidote to scorpion stings and for gastric problems.
  - **Ethnoveterinary:** It has tonic properties. Horses are particularly fed with this when they are weak due to cold.
- **Therapeutic description:**
  - External application: It is applied on cuts and wounds.
  - Blood-vascular diseases: Cures blood related disorders.
  - Digestive system: Treats worm infestation particularly roundworm, digestive upsets, flatulence and constipation.
  - Urino-genital system: It acts as an aphrodisiac.
- **Drug preparation:** To convert the plant into a drug, the aerial parts are collected into bundles and dried under shade. The flowering shoots along with leaves are ground into a fine powder. A decoction of the leaves and flowers are prepared by boiling them in water.
  - The drug has a pleasant spicy smell.
  - It must be packed in air-tight containers and stored in a cool dry place
  - The drug has a shelf life of six months to a year.
  - It can be externally applied as a paste or used internally by ingestion or inhalation.

