

## *Allium carolinianum*



**Family:** Alliaceae/  
Amaryllidaceae

**Local/common names:**

Payaz, Jungle Piyaz, Lawat,  
Ladam, Markua, Jammu Pharn  
(Uttaranchal)

**Trade name:** Jimboo Pharan

**Profile:**

*Allium* is the onion genus, with about 1250 species, making it one of the largest plant genera in the world. They are perennial bulbous plants that produce chemical compounds that give them a characteristic onion or garlic taste and odour, and many are used as food plants. Consumption of *Allium* in large quantities can be poisonous. Although no specific mention of medicinal uses has been seen for this species, members of this genus are in general a very healthy addition to the diet. *Allium carolinianum* contains sulphur compounds, which gives it its onion flavour. Most members of this genus are intolerant of competition from other growing plants.

**Habitat and ecology:** Generally, it is found growing in patches where soil type is good with fair amount of humus and organic matter. It prefers fertile soils and can be spotted in abundance on mountain slopes, especially in the moist areas with good soil. It grows well in locations receiving plenty of sunlight. The species is naturally found in the high altitudes Himalayas from Afghanistan to Central Nepal in the altitude range of 3300-4800 m. It is quite common all over Himachal Pradesh.

**Morphology:** It is a perennial bulbous herb with a very dense globular umbel of pink or rose coloured flowers, borne on stout stems usually 10-30 cm long. It has long, flat and narrow leaves that are blunt and 4-12 mm broad. These plants grow to a height of up to 45 cm. The bulbs are relatively large, oblong-cylindrical and are covered with conspicuous leathery scales and appear dull brown.

**Distinguishing features:** The plants can be easily recognised, as they resemble commonly grown cultivated onions. During flowering time, the plants have distinct flowering spikes, bearing purple coloured flowers.

**Life cycle:** The plants are usually annual or perennial. Roots of this plant remain dormant inside the soil during winter months. During the months of April-May, when the snow starts melting or has already melted, new shoots come up from the soil. After the vegetative phase is over, flowering takes place generally during the months of July-August and by end of October, mature seeds start dispersing with the wind and the plants start drying.

**Uses:** The bulbs and leaves are used as flavouring material by the local people and are sold in the markets of hilly areas. When added to the diet on a regular basis they help reduce blood cholesterol levels and act as a tonic to the digestive system. The juice of the plant is used as a moth repellent.

**Market rate:** *Allium* has a market rate of Rs.150-200/- per kg and sold mainly in the local markets.