

Short communication

Wild food plants of Mishing tribe- An ethnobotanical survey

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The wild edible plants are important in the livelihood strategies of tribal people. The value of wild edible vegetables in food security has not been given sufficient attention in India (Reddy *et al.* 2007). Mishing is a tribal community belonged to Mongoloid group – a multitude of people that followed Austro-Asiatic races to India (Singh *et al.* 1996). Mishing or Miri tribe inhabiting the districts of Dhemaji, North Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat of Assam, Northeast India. The Mishings are known to use a good number of wild plants as traditional food and they are also known to be highly passionate for cooking traditionally unique food items (Barua *et al.* 2007). The present study highlights some of the important wild food plants of Mishing tribe of Assam.

The study was conducted in the Bokagaon of Sonitpur district of Assam, Northeast India. The information was accrued after discussions with the village head and the missing inhabitant of the village following a semi structured questionnaire (Fig. 1). Plant specimens were collected and identified with the help of Flora of Assam (Kanjilal & Bor 1934).



Figure 1. Interviewing the Mishing people during the study (A & B).

A total of 41 plant species belonging to 34 families has been recorded in the present study that used as food by the Mishing tribe. The live photographs of some of them have also been provided (Fig. 2). Table 1 enlists the wild plant species commonly used as food by the Mishing tribe of the study area. The preparation of rice beer locally known as ‘Apong’ is one of the common activity of the Mishing house hold. Leaves of few species like *Artocarpous heterophyllus*, *Clerodendrum cloebrookianum*, *Scoparia dulcis*, *Solanum indium* also used in the preparation of ‘Apong’. ‘Apong’ is not only an alcoholic refreshing drink but an integral part of the social, cultural and religious life of the Mishing community of North East India (Pegu *et al.* 2013).

Table 1. Wild plant species used as food by the Mishing tribes of Sonitpur district of Assam

S. N.	Scientific name	Mishing/Assamese name	Family	Plant part used
1	<i>Adhatoda vasica</i> Nee	Bahaka (As; M)	Acanthaceae	Leaves, Flowers
2	<i>Albizia procera</i> (Roxb.) Benth.	Koroi (As); Tantari-asing (M)	Mimosaceae	Leaves
3	<i>Alocasiaa cuminata</i> Schott	Kochu (As.); Ange (M)	Araceae	Shoots, leaves, tubers

4	<i>Alpinia alughas</i> (Retz) Rose	Tora (As); Talayangakhan (M)	Zingiberaceae	Leaves, Young shoot
5	<i>Amaranthus spinosus</i> L.	Hati-Khutora (As); Geang (M)	Amaranthaceae	Leaves stem
6	<i>Artocarpous heterophyllus</i> Lamk	Kothal (As); Bilangaai (M)	Moraceae	Stem, leaves, fruit
7	<i>Azadiracta indica</i> A. Juss.	Moha Neem (As; M)	Meliaceae	leaves
8	<i>Baccaurea sapida</i> L.	Leteku (As; M)	Euphorbiaceae	Fruit
9	<i>Bambusa balcooa</i> Roxb.	Bhalookaabaah (As; M)	Poaceae	Shoot
10	<i>Cassia tora</i> L.	Horumedlua (As)	Caesalpinaceae	Young leaves
11	<i>Centella asiatica</i> Urb.	Bormanimuni (As); Bortan Manimuni (M)	Apiaceae	Whole plant
12	<i>Ceratopteris thalictroides</i> (L.) Ad. Brongn.	Pani dhekia (As); Okangoing (M)	Parkeriaceae	Fronds
13	<i>Clerodendrum cloebrookianum</i> L.	Nefafu (As); Pakcoom (M)	Verbenaceae	Leaves
14	<i>Colocasia esculenta</i> (L.) Schott.	Kochu (As); Ange (M)	Araceae	Tender leaves, tubers
15	<i>Corchorus capsularis</i> L.	Tita Morapat (As); Mura (M)	Tiliaceae	Young plant
16	<i>Dillenia indica</i> L.	Outenga (As); Champa (M)	Dilleniaceae	Fruit
17	<i>Dioscorea alata</i> L.	Kathalu (As); Ali (M)	Dioscoreaceae	Tuber
18	<i>Diplazium esculentum</i> (Retz.)SW	Dhekia (As) Okang (M)	Athyriaceae	Tender leaf
19	<i>Drymaria cordata</i> (L.) Willd ex Roem.	Laijabori (As; M)	Carryophyllaceae	Tender leaves shoots
20	<i>Ficus glomerata</i> Roxb	Dimoru (As); Takpiyang (M)	Moraceae	Leaves
21	<i>Flacourita cataphracta</i> L.	Ponniyal (As; M)	Flacortiaceae	Fruit
22	<i>Garcinia cowa</i> L	Kujithekera (As; M)	Cluciaceae	Fruit
23	<i>Hibiscus subdarifa</i> L.	Tenga Mora (As; M)	Malvaceae	Leaves, fruits
24	<i>Houttuynia cordata</i> Thunb	Mosundori (As; M)	Saururaceae	Leaves
25	<i>Hydrocotyle sibthopioides</i> L	Harumanimuni (As);	Apiaceae	Whole plant
26	<i>Leucas aspera</i> Link.	Doron (As); Durun (M)	Lamiaceae	Leaves
27	<i>Meliosma pinnata</i> (Roxb.) Maxim.	Bon pachala (As); Dermiesing (M)	Sabiaceae	Young leaves
28	<i>Meliosma simplicifoila</i> (Roxb.) Walp.	Dhapapatia (As); Nitak (M)	Sabiaceae	Young leaves
29	<i>Mikania micrantha</i>	Kolialota (As)	Asteraceae	Young leaves
30	<i>Moringa pterygosperma</i> Gaetern	Sajina (As; M)	Moringaceae	Leaves, flower
31	<i>Nyctanthus arbor-tristis</i> L.	Shewali (As; M)	Oleaceae	Leaves, flower
32	<i>Oxalis corniculata</i> L.	Horutengesi (As)	Oxalidaceae	Whole plant
33	<i>Paederia foetida</i> L	Bhedailota (As); Bungkirupug (M)	Rubiaceae	Stem, leaves
34	<i>Sarcochlamys pulcherrima</i> Gaud.	Mesaki (As)	Urticaceae	Young leaves
35	<i>Scoparia dulcis</i> L.	Bondhonia (As); Tirsirkosa (M)	Scrophulariaceae	Leaves
36	<i>Solanum indicum</i> L.	Tit-bhekuri (As); Bangko (M)	Solanaceae	Leaves, Fruit
37	<i>Spilanthes paniculata</i> L	Swoni (As); Malsa (M)	Asteraceae	Leaves
38	<i>Stenochlaena palustris</i> (Burm. f.) Bodd.	Dhekialota (As); Tarong (M)	Baleachnaceae	Young frond
39	<i>Tamarindus indica</i> L.	Teteli (As; M)	Caesalpinaceae	Seed, young leaves
40	<i>Vitex neguno</i> L	Pochotiya (As; M)	Verbenaceae	Leaves
41	<i>Zanthoxylum oxyphyllum</i> Edgn	Mezenga (As); Onger (M)	Rutaceae	Tender shoots

‘As’ means Assamese, ‘M’ means Mishing

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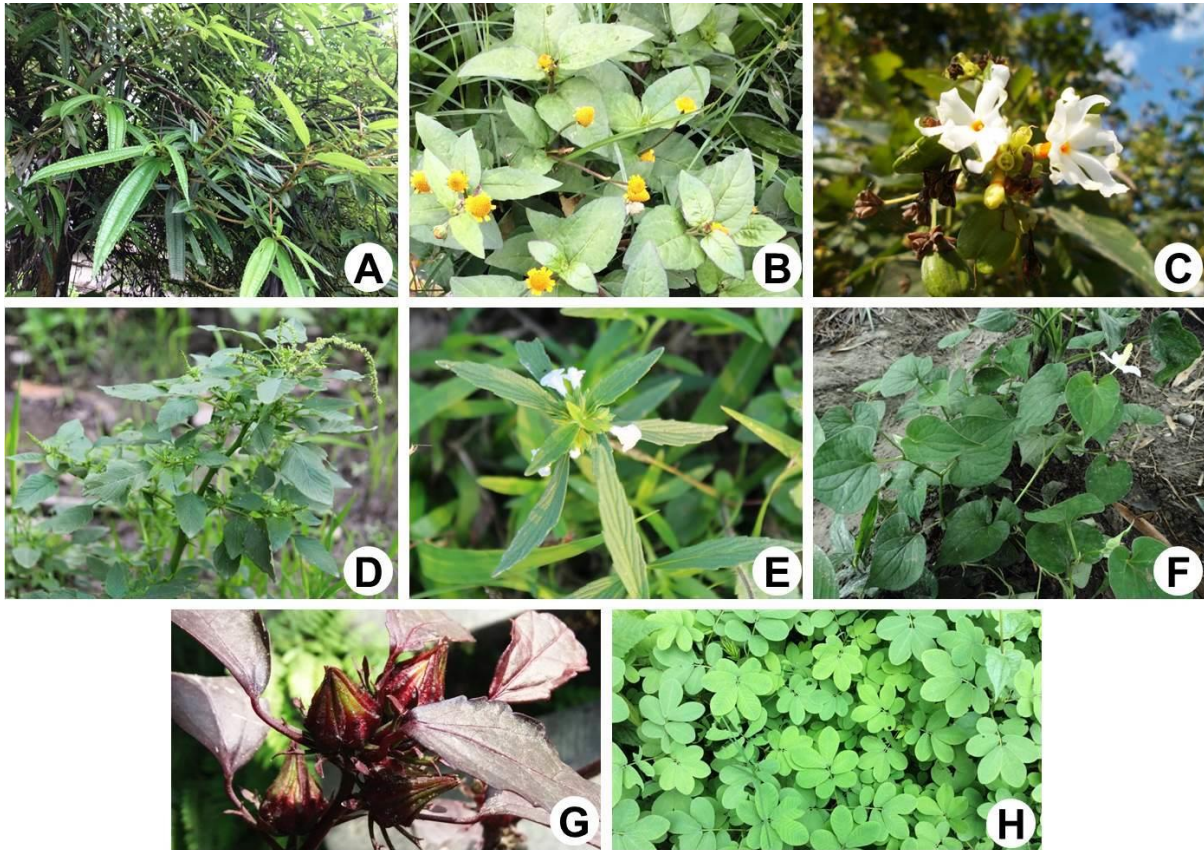


Figure 2. Some ethnobotanically used food plants: **A**, *Sarcochlamys pulcherrima*; **B**, *Spilanthes paniculata*; **C**, *Nyctanthus arbor-tristis*; **D**, *Amaranthus spinosus*; **E**, *Leucas aspera*; **F**, *Houttuynia cordata*; **G**, *Hibiscus subdarifa*; **H**, *Cassia tora*.

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