

जटामसी

Local Name: Jatamansi, Bhulte

Common Name: Spikenard, Muskroot, Indian Nard

Scientific Name: *Nardostachys jatamansi* (D. Don) DC.

Family: Caprifoliaceae



Habitat
Alpine pasture



Altitude
3000–5000 m



High Abundance
3700–3900 m

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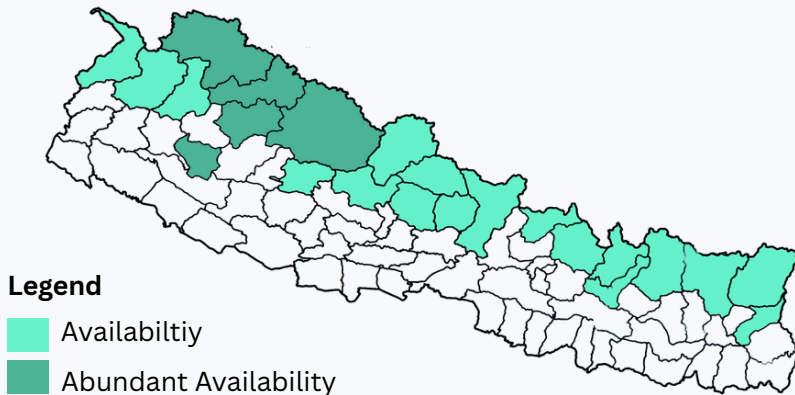
Description

It is a small, perennial, dwarf, hairy, and rhizomatous herb that grows to a height of 10–60 cm. Its underground thick, stout, woody, and dark brown stem or rhizome, which is about 7 cm long and 3 cm wide, has a bitter taste and aromatic smell. The rhizome is covered with reddish-brown fibers which are the remains of old leaves. The rhizome is the marketable part. The spear-shaped, hairy leaves, 5 to 8 cm long and up to 2 cm wide, arise in clusters from the ground surface. Its small, fragrant, pinkish-white or bluish-white, and bell-shaped flowers bloom in a single cluster. A single mature plant can yield approximately 0.05–0.2 kg of dry rhizome. Flowers in June - August (Asar - Bhadra), Fruiting in October - November (Kartik - Mangsir).



Distribution: Native to the Himalaya. Distributed in Nepal, India, Bhutan, Pakistan, Tibet, and western and central China. In Nepal, it is recorded from 23 districts, and mostly found in Karnali Province.

HABITAT



Conservation Status:

- IUCN Red List: Classified as Critically Endangered.
- CITES: Listed under CITES Appendix II.
- National Protection: It is prohibited from export. However, export is allowed only in cases where they are processed within Nepal and their **extracts** are exported, with the approval of DoF and upon the recommendation of DPR or Herbs Production and Processing Company Limited (HPPCL), except in the case of one's own cultivated production.

This plant has been prioritized for economic development and agro-technology development by the Government of Nepal.



USES

Rhizomes and roots contain many bioactive compounds. They are used as a bitter tonic, stimulant, and antispasmodic for treating hysteria, convulsions, epilepsy, headaches, insomnia, heart palpitations, flatulence, and skin diseases. The rhizome is thrashed and consumed with water to treat stomachache. Dried leaves and rhizomes are used in incense. Paste of rhizome is applied to treat hemorrhoids. The oil is used in perfumes, incense, and hair growth. In Nepal, 27 traditional uses are reported, especially for mental health, cardiovascular issues, and ritual purification (Joshi, 2026).

Sustainable Harvesting

Proper Identification: Jatamansi must be accurately identified. Rhizomes should be handled properly and carefully during collection, transportation, and storage to preserve their quality.

Correct Harvesting Time: The ideal harvesting window for Jatamansi is during the post-flowering and seed-setting period, typically from September to November (Asoj-Kartik). At this time, the medicinal compounds are most concentrated in the underground parts, and the plant has completed its reproductive cycle, allowing for seed dispersal.

Selective Harvesting: This is the most critical rule for sustainability. Only harvest mature plants from dense populations, never from sparsely distributed ones. It is essential to leave a portion behind to ensure natural regeneration.



Tool and Technique: Use small, non-mechanized hand tools (e.g., shovel, digging stick, hoe) to carefully extract the plant part without damaging the surrounding soil and vegetation. After extraction, refill the collection pit to protect remaining roots and soil structure, and to promote habitat recovery.



Rotational Harvesting: A harvested site should be given adequate time to recover. A minimum rotation of **2 to 3 years** is recommended before re-harvesting from the same location.



Post-harvest Handling

After collection, attention must be paid to management practices that prevent the deterioration of stem quality.



Cleaning

After digging, the stems, the soil and dirt adhering to them should be immediately cleaned off by hand. If water is needed to clean the stems, only clean water should be used.

Arrangements for drying must be made as soon as possible. A drying shed, or solar dryer must be constructed before the collection work begins.



Shed Drying



Packaging

The dried rhizomes should be packaged in clean bags and properly labeled. They should be packaged in clean, dry gunny bags, high-density polyethylene (HDPE) woven sacks, or food-grade plastic bags. Labels must include the name of the product, collection location,

During transportation, bags should not be stacked too tightly or piled too high during transportation. Bags should be protected from sun and rain during transportation.



Transport



Storage

Bags should not be placed directly against the wall, nor should they be placed directly on the floor. The storage room must be clean, well-ventilated, and not previously used for housing animals.

Challenges

Difficult Geography: Habitat for Himalayan MAPs is in high altitude, where terrain is incredibly steep and rugged. It creates severe logistical challenges, making the harvesting dangerous and time-consuming. Such barriers often limit access and contribute to unsustainable harvesting.

Overharvesting: To maximize the amount of MAPs collection, harvesters may use destructive and premature harvesting, leading to overexploitation and reduced regeneration.

Storage: Improper storage conditions, such as storing in airtight plastic bags or in humid environments, allows bacteria and fungus to grow, causing the MAPs to rot. It causes the degradation of its medicinal properties.

Transportation: Transportation of MAPs relies on challenging logistical routes, including manual transport by local collectors and pack animals. It is time consuming.

Market Demand: The demand for MAPs in Nepal is high and rapidly growing, driven by both domestic use and international demand. It fluctuates the rate of MAPs.

Legal Confusions: There is a confusion on government policy regarding its trade. Collection from wild is prohibited from export without processing within Nepal, except in the case of one's own cultivated production.

Cultivation Potentials: Jatamansi's current supply rely heavily on wild harvesting, led to population declines. Although a few fast-growing MAPs can be cultivated from roots/rhizomes and seeds, in vitro propagation is promised for slow growing Jatamansi. However, its successful large-scale cultivation remains a challenge.



Solar Drying



Shed Drying

Recommendation: It is important to adopt sustainable harvesting methods, comply with policies and regulations, and conserve the environment. Collection from sparsely distributed areas should be avoided. Proper drying technique is vital to preserve the quality of Jatamanshi. Rotational harvesting systems should be adopted. Methods to cultivate the plant should be explored.

DO & DON'T

✓ DO

- Obtain collection permits.
- Harvest mature plants.
- Use clean tools.
- Carefully dig out the plant.
- Leave a small part of rhizome to allow for regeneration.
- Rotational harvesting.

✗ DON'T

- Harvest without a collection permit.
- Premature harvesting.
- Leave collection pits unfilled.
- Overharvest.
- Use plastic bags for packaging.
- Harvest every year from the same site.