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Preliminary Survey on Ethnomedicinal Value of Spontaneous Urban Plants

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Abstract

One of the major global trends of the twenty-first century that has a big impact on our lives is urbanization. By 2050, two-thirds of the world's population, who currently make up half of the population are expected to reside in urban regions. The demands of urban environments can lead to greater poverty and environmental degradation such as poor air and water quality, shortages in water supply, waste-disposal issues, and excessive energy consumption will become worse. Additionally, urbanization encourages the invasion of non-native species by reducing the diversity of plant species, making it difficult to plant growth. Some species, however, exhibit signs of resilience to these challenges and are adaptable to the urban environment. Spontaneous Urban Plants (SUP), also known as "weeds" are frequently found in abandoned urban landscapes. They are neglected as unwelcome, unwieldy, and unkempt, but they thrive in environments where most plants cannot grow. They can grow out of cracks in the sidewalks, in the wall of a garbage ditches, or even in a tiny space inside the walls of houses. This research aims to identify the SUP species with ethnomedicinal values in urban environment. This roadside surveys were conducted to identify SUP species with ethnomedicinal values in 10 urban areas in the Galle district between January and July 2020. Open-ended and semi-structured questionnaire was used to interview a total of 37 people including Ayurveda and traditional medical practitioners, community elders and people experts in plants. The acquired data were verified using the Ayurveda authentic books and reputed journals. A total of 50 plant species of 27 families were identified as SUP. Asteraceae and Amaranthaceae and Fabaceae were reported as the most represented families. The most plant species are used to treat gastrointestinal disorders, followed by respiratory disorders and dermatological conditions. However, ethnomedicinal values of these SUP are yet to be revealed.

Keywords: Ethnomedicinal, Spontaneous urban plants, Urbanization, Weed