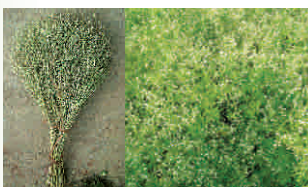


From Director's Desk

This issue of the ENVIS Newsletter gives an elaborate account of the plants consumed by various wild animals in the Rajiv Gandhi National Park, Karnataka. *Dendrocnide sinuata* (Blume) Chew [Urticaceae] seems to be promising as an elephant repellent. Flowering in *Bambusa burmanica* Gamble (Poaceae) has been recorded for the first time from the Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden after more than a century since its introduction. Articles on the use of the seeds of *Celastrus paniculatus* Willd. (Celastraceae) for the treatment of diabetes by the tribals of Sambalpur district, Orissa; the indigenous uses of *Arenga westerhoutii* Griff. (Arecaceae) by the Mishmee tribe of Arunachal Pradesh and the use of noxious weed viz., *Parthenium hysterophorus* L. (Asteraceae) as a broom which has been known while documenting the indigenous knowledge of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve are quite interesting. Information on *Capsicum baccatum* L. (Solanaceae) known as 'Aji pepper or Peruvian hot pepper' and the smell of 'Curry patta' in the leaves of *Bauhinia tomentosa* L. (Leguminosae : Caesalpinioideae) will surely attract the attention of the readers.

M. Sanjappa
Director

Botanical Survey of India



Articles

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An indigenous broom made from *Parthenium hysterophorus* L. (Asteraceae)

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Rao (1956) reported *Parthenium hysterophorus* L. (Asteraceae) as a new record to India from Poona. It is an annual herbaceous seed-propagated weed commonly known as *Carrot grass*, *Congress grass* or *Wild carrot weed*. In Hindi it is known as *Chatak chandani* (*Chatak* means bright; *chandani* means moonlight because of its numerous white flowers) or *Gajar ghas* (*Gajar* means carrot; *ghas* means grass). *P. hysterophorus* came to India along with PL 480 wheat seeds in the 1950's by accident. In over five decades the species has spread throughout the country, even in the remote Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Mohanraj *et al.*, 1994), and invading almost all terrestrial ecosystems and growing almost as a monoculture in most situations (Pandey, 2004). It is one of the ten worst weeds in the world and dangerous to crops, animals and human beings and responsible for afflictions ranging from asthma, bronchitis and hay fever to dermatitis in both human and livestock. However, while documenting the indigenous knowledge of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve [10°45' -12°5' N lat. and 76°10' -77°10' E long.], it was interestingly found that in spite of the noxious nature of this tropical American weed, it has become a part and parcel of the day to day life of the Irulas, who depend primarily on agriculture (Daniels, 1993). In Neeradi village of Pillur area the fully grown plants were observed to be harvested by the Irulas, tied into bundles, sun dried till the leaves fall off and then used as broom (Fig.-2) to clean their homes and surroundings. The same kind of broom was also observed in the Bangalabadigai and Chokkanalli areas.



Fig.-2: An indigenous broom made from the plants of *Parthenium hysterophorus* L.; Inset: *P. hysterophorus* growing in the agricultural field of Neeradi village, Pillur

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