Ethnobotanical Study of Wild Plant Species Used by Local People of Bhageshwor Rural Municipality, Dadeldhura, Nepal

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Research Article

ISSN: 3059-9504 (online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.3136/ajs.v2i1.87745

Article History

Received: September 22, 2025; Revised: October 25, 2025; Accepted: October 28, 2025 Published: December 25, 2025

Keywords

Conservation, Dadeldhura, Ethnobotany, Interview, Semi-structured

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ABSTRACT

Ethnobotany is a science that integrates society and plants, contributing to biodiversity conservation strategy of a country. The study aims to document the ethnobotanical knowledge of wild plant species in Bhageshwor Rural Municipality, Dadeldhura. This study was conducted from October 2023 to October 2024 for data collection through interviews, group discussions with key informants or local knowledgeable individuals (N=200), and semi-structured and open-ended questionnaires, as well as field visits to adjoining villages, using participatory observations. A total of 70 wild plant species with 65 genera and 40 families are recorded, among them 65 species are native while remaining five are invasive alien species. Local people use 28 species (40%) for food and fodder and only two species were used as timber. The ethnobotanical study of wild plant species shows the cultural, heritage and social values of respective plants. So, large number of research works may be helpful for the exploration and conservation of wild plant species; therefore, local governments should manage and document the local wild plant species through ethnobotany.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term ethnobotany was coined by American botanist John William Harshberger at the University of Pennsylvania in 1895. Ethnobotany refers to the study of the interrelationship between plants and people, transmitted many generations through cultural practices and traditional knowledge. Since ancient times communities has utilized plants for various purposes including food, fodder, furniture, medicine, clothing, fabrics, crafts, soaps, detergents, dyes, chemicals, and building materials [1, 2]. Traditional medical knowledge held by the elder members of the community is primarily transmitted orally across generations. This valuable knowledge must be [systematically recorded, explored, and preserved for the benefit of human health [3]. In terms of medicine and treatment, the local older adults have a great experience and knowledge about their surrounding local plants used to cure ailments that were once prevalent in a particular area [4] but are currently decreasing in ethnobotanical uses due to the modernization and the loss of local knowledge [5]. The practice of use of ethnobotanical knowledge is widespread; a total of 136 medicinal plant species [6]. Similarly, in Tripura, India, documented that 113 medicinal plants from 56 families are used in the healthcare systems of human beings [7].

Nepal occupies about 0.1% of the Earth's land surface, which consists of approximately 1762 medicinal and aromatic plants among these medicinal plants *Centella asiatica* was used dominantly. However, their use was found to be high in the mid-hills and mountain regions of Nepal [8]. The species richness of medicinal plants decreased with increasing altitude, but use intensity increased with altitude in Nepal [9]. Medicinal plants are a subset of plants that have a significant role in the healthcare system, such as the treatment of various diseases of human beings, such as gastrointestinal, parasitic, and hepatobiliary ailments, followed by those involving the blood and lymphatic systems [6, 10]. Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) of the Parche community of the Madi rural Municipality, presented within the Annapurna Conservation Area of Kaski, Nepal, were primarily utilized for medicinal purposes, accounting for 67.64% followed by vegetables of 11.67%, commercialization of 5.88%, and fruits of 8.82%, while insecticides accounted for 5.88% [11]. The Far-Western region of Nepal is rich in plant diversity; some of these plants have medicinal properties for human beings [12, 13]. According to Joshi et al., total 76 plants were used by the local people of the Api Nampa conservation area in Darchula, far-western Nepal, for healthcare services and cosmetic purposes among women [14]. Medicinal and aromatic plants have various roles in the improvement of the livelihood of local people, so

developing the knowledge about the sustainable use of their properties is essential for the conservation of biodiversity [15]. Plants have various uses, but overexploitation and unsustainable use, as well as the destruction of natural resources, have been contributing to the decline of biodiversity [16]. Hence, ethnobotanical knowledge is essential for the primary healthcare of local people and a source of economic improvement. Therefore, conservation and management of traditional knowledge should be integrated with scientific processing. This study seeks to document the ethnobotanical knowledge of wild plant species in Bhageshwor Rural Municipality, Dadeldhura, Nepal, contributing to the preservation of both cultural heritage and biodiversity.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Study area

Dadeldhura District is a beautiful hill station of Sudurpashim Province, Nepal, covering an area of 1,538 km² and geographically ranging from tropical to temperate regions, consisting of seven local levels. The geographic coordination of the district lies between 28.59° to 29.26°, latitude 80.12° to 80.47°, and elevation ranges from 462 to 2639 m. The study was conducted in Bhageshwor Rural Municipality, Dadeldhura, Sudurpashim Province, Nepal [Fig. 1]. The Rural Municipality is one of the local levels of Dadeldhura District, consisting of five wards and situated 14 km away West from headquarter Khalanga, Dadeldhura. The Rural Municipality covers 233.38 Km^2 areas and consists of 13132 human populations (Population census survey, 2078 B.S.). The major ethnic groups are Brahmin, Chhetri, Sarki, Kami, Damai, Tamata, and the major religions are Hinduism and Buddhism; however, the languages of communication are Doteli and Nepali. The study area is located in the subtropical region of Nepal, characterized by a moderate climate, with hot summers and cold winters. The vegetation dominantly consists of *Pinus roxburghii* forest with associated species *Alnus nepalensis*, *Rhododendron arborium, Terminalia alata, Indigofera heterantha, Syzygium cumini, Rubus elepticus, Berberis aristata,* and *Myrica esculenta.*

2.2 Data collection and data analysis

The study was carried out during October 2023 to October 2024. Ethnobotanical knowledge on plants and plant parts used by local people was collected by interviewing key informants using frequent field visits in the adjoining five villages (Kurnayal, Bagarkot, Adungra, Chulla, Bogata) by participatory observations, group discussion, and interviews with local knowledgeable people (total 200) through semi-structured and open-ended questionnaires about the uses of wild plants. Plant specimens of the study area were collected, and all information about the plants, such as distribution, habitats, and plant status, was noted. Identification of plant species is facilitated through the use of relevant literatures [17-21]. Data entry and calculation were done by using Microsoft Excel 2016.

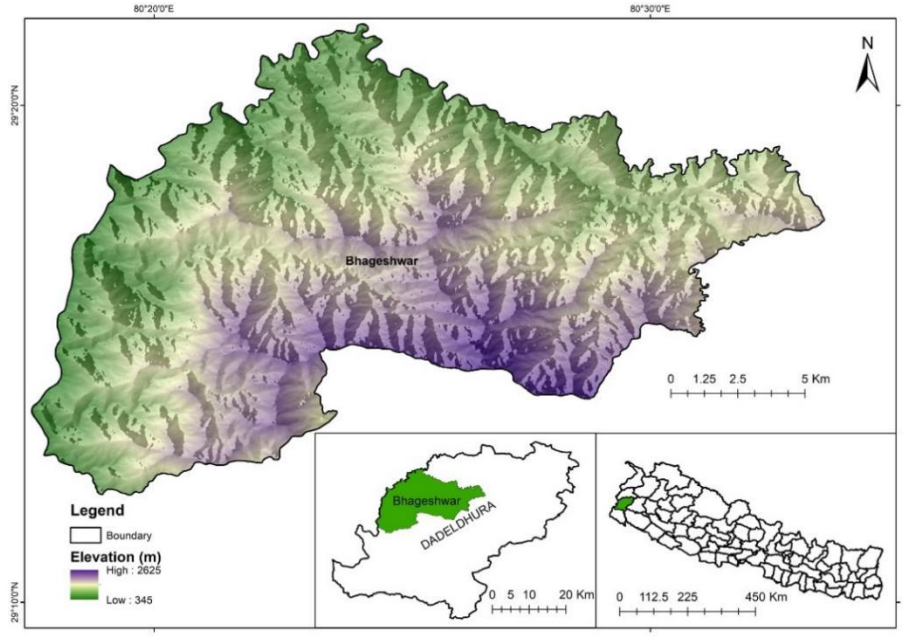

Fig. 1. Map of the study area showing the sampling locations in Bhageshwor Rural Municipality, Dadeldhura, Nepal.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this study, a total of 70 wild vascular plant species were documented, representing 65 genera and 40 families. Of these species, 68 (97%) were angiosperms comprising 60 dicots and 7 monocots while one (1.5%) was a gymnosperm (*Pinus roxburghii*), and another one species (1.5%) was a pteridophyte (*Dryopteris cochleata*). These findings are consistent with [22], who recorded the 54 ethno-medicinal wild plant species belonging to 29 families and 44 genera in the Tharu community of Parsa District, Nepal. In terms of growth habit trees species were the most prevalent, accounting for 27 species (38%) followed by shrubs 18 species (26%), herbs each with 18 species (26%) and climbers with 7 species (10%) (Fig.2a). This pattern is consistent with findings from a previous study [23]; herbaceous plants were the most abundant with 179 (57%) species. These were followed by shrubs with 64 species (21%), trees with 44 species (14%), and climbers with 25 species (8%). Among the recorded families, Asteraceae was the most dominant, comprising six species, followed by Moraceae with five species. Rosaceae and Poaceae each contributed four species, while Fabaceae and Phyllanthaceae included three species

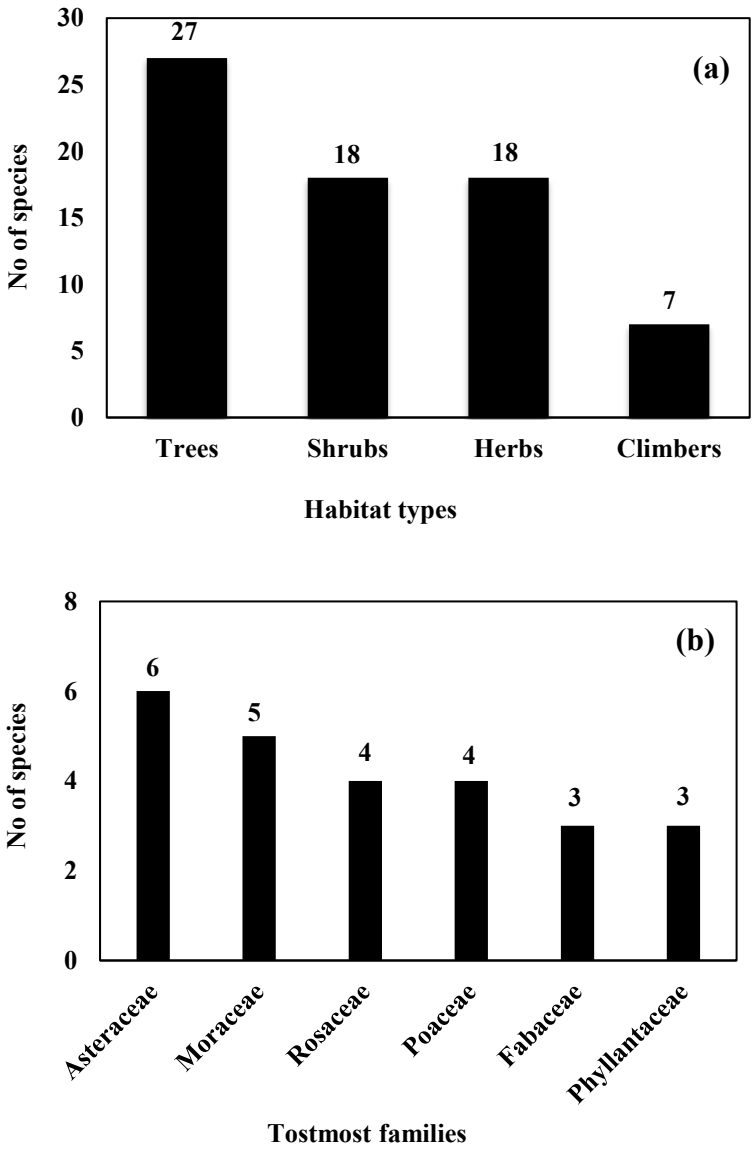

Fig. 2: (a) Different habitat forms; herbs, shrubs, trees, and climbers present in the study area, (b) topmost families present in the study area.

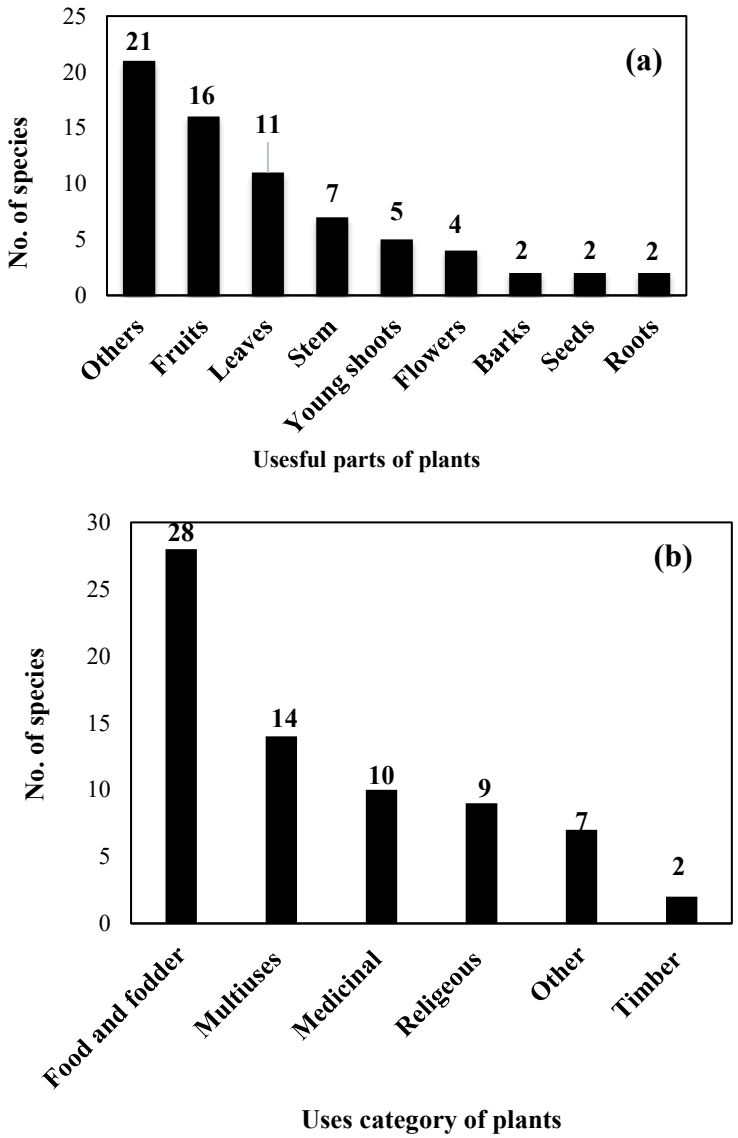

Fig. 3: (a) Number of species in reference to the used parts of plants and, (b) the uses category of the plants.

each (Fig. 2b), consistent with findings from [5]. Of the total species, five species (8%) were identified as invasive. Despite their invasive nature, local communities utilized these plants for medicinal and fodder purposes. For instance, *Ageratina adenophora*, *Ageratum conyzoides*, and *Ageratum houstonianum* were commonly applied to treat cut wounds, while *Bidens pilosa* and *Oxalis latifolia* served as fodder, similar to native species. Likewise, 108 weed species were used medicinally by local people in the Kanchanpur district of Nepal [13].

Regarding ethnobotanical uses, local communities in the study area utilized plant species for various purposes. The most common use was for food and fodder, accounting for 28 species (40%), followed by multi-purpose use with 14 species (20%), medicinal use with 10 species (14%), religious purposes with 9 species (13%), and timber with 2 species (3%) (Fig. 3a). Additionally, 7 species (10%) were used for other purposes such as making rope, using leaves as bedding for domestic animals, and using stems to prepare mats. These uses were grouped under the "other" category. These findings align with Anwar et al. [24], who recorded that leaves were used as medicine for the treatment of human being.

Medicinal plants exhibited a wide range of useful parts. Indigenous people of the Bhageshwor area primarily used fruits from 16 species (23%), leaves from 11 species (16%), stems from 7 species (10%), young shoots from 5 species (7%), flowers from 4 species (6%), bark, seeds, and roots from 2 species each (3%). The remaining 21 species (31%) had multiple useful parts, including combinations such as whole plant, stem and leaves, flowers and young roots, or leaves and bark, which were categorized under "other" (Fig. 3b). Similarly, in the Wana District of Pakistan, leaves were reported as the most commonly used plant part for medicinal purposes by local communities [25].

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study documents a total of 70 wild vascular plant species, with the highest number (28 species) used for food and fodder purposes. This was followed by 14 multi-use species, 10 medicinal species, nine species used for religious purposes, seven categorized under other uses, and two timber species. While plants offer a variety of useful parts, the findings indicate that fruits are the most commonly utilized, whereas bark, seeds, and roots are among the least used. The Dadeldhura district is notably rich in plant diversity and holds extensive ethnobotanical knowledge within its local communities. However, research in this region remains limited. Therefore, further studies should be conducted across other local administrative levels to support the exploration and conservation of indigenous plant species, contributing to both ecological preservation and the sustainable development of the nation.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTINS

All the works were carried by G, Chataut.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There no conflicts to declare.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author acknowledges Mrs. Sarita Paneru help during data collection from the field, and thanks Mr. Rosan Babu Adhikari for grant support during the writing of the manuscript, and Basu Dev Poudel for the preparation of the map of the study area.

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Annex: 1. Ethnobotanically useful plant species of Bhageshwor Rural Municipality, Dadeldhura.

Name of species	Plant group	Local name	Family	Habitat	Useful parts	Uses category	Uses
Achyranthes bidentata Bl.	Dicots	Datiwan	Amaranthaceae	H	Stem	Religious	Stems are used for religious purposes during the Teej puja.
Aegle marmelos (L.) Corrêa	Dicots	Beal	Rutaceae	T	Fruits, leaves	Religious	Leaves are used for religious purposes during worship of the deity Mahadev, and Fruits are used as food.
Agave vera-cruz Mill.	Monocots	Rambas	Asparagaceae	S	Leaves	Other	Leaves retting; used to make rope.
Ageratina adenophora (Spreng) King & H.Rob.*	Dicots	Banmara	Asteraceae	H	Leaves	Medicine	Leaves paste is used to stop the bleeding of a cut wound.
Ageratum conyzoides Sieber ex Steud.*	Dicots	Gandhae	Asteraceae	H	Stem, Leaves	Multiuse	Leaves paste is used to stop the bleeding of a cut wound, and stems with leaves are used as fodder.
Ageratum houstonianum Mill. *	Dicots	Gandhae	Asteraceae	H	Stem, Leaves	Multiuse	Leaves paste is used to stop the bleeding of a cut wound, and stems with leaves are used as fodder.
Antidesma acidum Retz.	Dicots	Emelchi	Phyllanthaceae	S	Fruits	Food	Fruits are used as food
Artemisia indica Willd.	Dicots	Kurjo	Asteraceae	H	Leaves	Medicine	Leaf paste is used to repel the insects of crops.
Asparagus filicinus Buch.-Ham. ex D. Don	Monocots	Jhejarine	Asparagaceae	H	Young shoot	Food	Young shoots are used as food.
Bambusa jaintiana R.B. Majumdar.	Dicots	Bans	Poaceae	S	Stem	Religious	Stem is used for religious purposes, such as the ownership of a new house and a funeral ceremony.
Bauhinia variegata L.	Dicots	Koiral	Fabaceae	T	Flower	Food	Floral buds are used to make a pickle.
Berberis aristata DC.	Dicots	Kirmada	Berberidaceae	S	Fruits	Food	Fruits are used as food
Bergenia ciliata (Haw.) Sternb.	Dicots	Syalpode	Saxifragaceae	H	Rhizome	Medicine	Rhizome is used as medicine to treat intestinal pain and digestive problems.
Bidens pilosa L.*	Dicots	Kalo kuro	Asteraceae	H	Stem, Leaves	Multiuse	Leaf paste is used as medicine for cut wounds, and the young shoot is used as fodder.
Bridelia retusa (L.) A.Juss.	Dicots	Gayo	Phyllanthaceae	S	Bark	Medicine	Bark paste is used during the swelling of the muscles of the body parts.

Bombax ceiba L.	Dicots	Simal	Malvaceae	T	Flower, young root	Food	Flowers are used as food, and the paste of young roots is used as an ingredient in wet bread of rice.
Cannabis sativa L.	Dicots	Aattar	Cannabaceae	H	leaves, seed	Multiuse	Leaves are used in religious purposes during worship of the deity Mahadev, and seeds help make pickles.
Celtis australis L.	Dicots	Khadka	Cannabaceae	T	Leaves	Fodder	Leaves are used as fodder
Chenopodium album L.	Dicots	Bethe	Chenopodiaceae	H	Young shoot	Food	Young shoot is used as vegetables.
Cinnamomum tamala (Buch.-Ham.) T. Nees & Nees	Dicots	Dalchini	Lauraceae	T	Leaves, Bark	Food	Leaves and barks are used as spices.
Cissampelos pareira L.	Dicots	Musebeli	Menispermaceae	C	Leaves	Medicine	Paste of leaves is used to cover wounds.
Colebrookea oppositifolia Sm.	Dicots	Barmeula	Lamiaceae	S	Leaves	Other	Leaves are used as bedding for domestic animals.
Colocasia fallax Schott	Dicots	Gaaba	Araceae	H	Stem, Leaves	Food	Stems with leaves are used as vegetables.
Coriaria nepalensis Wall.	Dicots	Machaline	Coriariaceae	S	Fruits	Food	Fruits are used as food materials.
Cuscuta reflexa Roxb.	Dicots	Akasebeli	Convolvulaceae	C	Stem	Medicine	Used as medicine for the cough, pain, urination.
Cynodon dactylon (L.) Pers.	Monocots	Dubo	Poaceae	H	Stem with leaves	Multiuse	Stem uses during religious purposes: puja, make a bed for the bride and groom during the marriage ceremony, and paste is used on the swollen part of the body.
Cyperus pangorei Rottb.	Monocots	Mutho	Cyperaceae	H	Stem	Other	Stems are helpful to prepare the mat.
Datura metel L.	Dicots	Dathuro	Solanaceae	S	Flowers, Fruits	Religious	Flowers and fruits are used for religious purposes during worship of the deity Mahadev.
Dioscorea bulbifera L.	Monocots	Gheta	Dioscoriaceae	C	Root	Food	Roots are used as food materials
Dioscorea deltoidea Wall. Ex. Griseb.	Monocots	Bhykur	Dioscoriaceae	C	Root	Food	Roots are used as food materials
Diploknema butyracea (Roxb.) H.J.Lam	Dicots	Cheuri	Sapotaceae	T	Flower, Fruits, Seed	Multiuse	Flowers containing honey; useful for the collection of honey, Fruits are used as food, seeds are helpful to prepare the oil, and leaves are used to make a leaf plate.
Dryopteris cochleata (D. Don) C. Chr.	Pteridophyta	Aakudi	Polypodiaceae	H	Young shoot	Food	Young shoots are used as vegetables
Elaeagnus umbellata var. *umbellata*	Dicots	Maleda	Elaeagnaceae	C	Fruits	Food	Fruits are used as food

Engelhardia spicata Lechen ex Blume	Dicots	Mauwa	Juglamdaceae	T	Leaves	Other	Paste of leaves is helpful to kill fish in rivers
Eulaliopsis binata (Retz.) C.E.Hubb	Dicots	Babeyo	Poaceae	H	Leaves	Other	Leaves are helpful to prepare the sweeper
Euphorbia royleana Boiss.	Dicots	Seudi	Euphorbiaceae	S	Latex, stem	Religious	Latex is used in swollen parts of the body. Stems are placed at the center of roof of the house of newly constructed.
Ficus auriculata Lour.	Dicots	Timalo	Moraceae	T	Fruits, Leaves	Multiuse	Young fruits are used as vegetables, and mature fruits are used as food. Leaves are helpful to make a leaf plate in a religious ceremony.
Ficus benghalensis L.	Dicots	Bar	Moraceae	T	Leaves	Religious	Leaves are used for religious purposes
Ficus semicordata Buch. - Ham. ex Sm.	Dicots	Khenayo	Moraceae	T	Fruits, Leaves	Multiuse	Matured fruits are used as food materials, and leaves are used as fodder.
Ficus religiosa L.	Dicots	Pepal	Moraceae	T	Leaves	Religious	Leaves are used for religious purposes
Galinsoga quadriradiata Ruiz & Pav.*	Dicots	Khursanyae	Asteraceae	H	Stem with leaves	Medicine	Paste of the stem with leaves is used as medicine for skin allergies.
Grewia optiva J.R.Drumm. ex Burret	Dicots	Bhaewal	Malvaceae	T	Stem, Leaves, Fruits	Multiuse	Stem fiber is used to make roap, leaves are used as fodder, and fruits are used as food.
Indigofera heterantha Wall. ex Brandis	Dicots	Sakena	Fabaceae	S	Flower	Food	Flowers are used as a vegetable
Justicia adhatoda L.	Dicots	Basinga	Acanthaceae	S	Flowers	Medicine	Leaves are used as manure and medicine for asthma, cough, and fever.
Mallotus nepalensis (Lam.) Mull. Arg.	Dicots	Rueno	Euphorbiaceae	T	Stem, Seeds	Timber	Mature stems help make agricultural tools.
Mentha arvensis L.	Dicots	Podhana	Lamiaceae	H	Young shoot	Food	Young shoots are used as a pickle.
Morus alba L.	Dicots	Kimbu	Moraceae	T	Fruits	Food	Fruits are used as food
Myrica esculenta Buch.-Ham. ex D.Don	Dicots	Kaphal	Myrtaceae	T	Fruits	Food	Fruits are used as food
Persea gamblei (King ex Hook. f.) Kosterm.	Dicots	Kaulo	Lauraceae	T	Bark	Food	Fruits are used as food
Persicaria hydropiper (L.) Delarbe	Dicots	Gaeradae	Polygonaceae	H	Whole body	Other	Paste is used as a soft fish poison to kill fish in the river.
Phanera vahlii (Wight & Arn.) Benth.	Dicots	Damada	Fabaceae	C	Seeds	Multiuse	Seeds are used as food, and leaves are helpful to make a leaf plate.

Phyllanthus emblica L.	Dicots	Oala	Phyllanthaceae	T	Fruits	Food	Fruits help prepare the pickle
Pinus roxburghii Sarg.	Gymnosperms	Sallo	Pinaceae	T	Seeds	Multiuse	Seeds are used as food, and fallen leaves are used as mulch in horticulture.
Prunus cerasoides D. Don	Dicots	Panyue	Rosaceae	T	Stem with leaves	Religious	Stems with leaves are used in religious ceremonies to make gates and mandaps.
Pyracantha crenulata (D.Don) M.Roem.	Dicots	Gangaru	Rosaceae	S	Fruits	Multiuses	Stems are helpful in agricultural tools, and fruits are used as food.
Pyrus pashia Buch.-Ham. ex D.Don	Dicots	Maile	Rosaceae	T	Fruits	Food	Fruits are used as food
Rhododendron arboreum Sm.	Dicots	Laligurans	Ericaceae	T	Flower	Medicine	Flower juice is used for intestinal pain
Rhus chinensis Mill.	Dicots	Bhakmello	Anacardiaceae	S	Fruits	Food	Fruits are used as food
Rubus ellipticus Smith	Dicots	Ausaulu	Rosaceae	S	Fruits	Food	Fruits are used as food
Saccharum arundinaceum Retz.	Monocots	Khus	Poaceae	H	Leaves	Religious	Leaves are used in a religious ceremony.
Sapindus mukorossi Gaertn.	Dicots	Reetha	Sapindaceae	T	Fruits	Other	Fruit paste is used to wash clothes as detergents.
Searsia parviflora (Roxb.) F.A.Barkley	Dicots	Ranayal	Anacardiaceae	S	Fruits	Food	Fruits are used as food
Syzygium cumini (L.) Skeels	Dicots	Jamuno	Myrthaceae	T	Fruits, Bark	Multiuse	Fruits are used as food, and the paste of bark is used during the fabrication of body parts.
Terminalia elliptica Willd	Dicots	Harro	Combretaceae	T	Fruits	Food	Fruits are used as food
Tinospora cordifolia (Willd.) Hook.f. & Thomson	Dicots	Gurgo	Menispermaceae	C	Stem	Medicine	Stem juice is used medicine for diabetes and pain.
Toona ciliata M. Roem.	Dicots	Tuni	Meliaceae	T	Stem	Timber	Stem is used as timber for houses, temples
Urtica dioica L.	Dicots	Sesno	Urticeae	H	Young shoot	Food	Young shoot is used as a vegetable as well as fodder to increase the milk of cows and buffalos.
Woodfordia fruticosa (L.) Kurz	Dicots	Dhaiya	Lythraceae	S	Flower	Food	Flower juice is used as food
Zanthoxylum armatum DC.	Dicots	Timur	Rutaceae	S	Fruits	Multiuse	Fruits help make pickles, and are also used for the treatment of cough and fever.
Ziziphus mauritiana Lam.	Dicots	Bayar	Rhamnaceae	S	Fruits	Food	Fruits are used as food

*Invasive alien plant species, T=Tree, S=Shrub, C=Climber, H=Herb