

**SOME COMMON MEDICINAL AND POISONOUS PLANTS USED
IN ETHIOPIAN FOLK MEDICINE**

by

Amare Getahun,
Associate Professor,
Faculty of Science,
Addis Abeba University,
Addis Abeba, Ethiopia.

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INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is rich in medical lore. The use of plants in religious ceremonies as well as for magic and medicinal purposes is very commonplace and widespread. Based upon strong primitive roots. The art of native medicine is still widely practiced. While much of this lore is indigenous, yet there are strong indications of Hebrew and Egyptian as well as Greek and other Arabic influences.

Among natives of various countries, a knowledge of medicine has been passed by word of mouth from one generation to the next by priests, witchdoctors or medicine men. This is no less true in Ethiopia where written records in this field are almost absent even though the country has had a written language for over two thousand years. The method is crude and highly conducive to distortion in an area where much accuracy is needed. Some of the lore is lost at each point of transfer or otherwise modified and thereby becomes erroneous and dangerous to use. In addition, witchdoctors, to safeguard their interests and win the respect of the afflicted masses, usually compose a long and impressive list of curative herbs for a particular disease when they know that it is only one of those listed that causes a cure. This is also done to fence out or discourage others from becoming herbal doctors if they are forced to tell the secret. For the same reasons, the plants comprising the remedy are selected from different ecological locations such as alpine, highlands, or lowlands; thus rendering it more difficult to exactly duplicate the ingredients. This means that even if one knew and had the list of the alleged curative herbs, he would not necessarily be able to become a practicing witchdoctor.

More fascinating is the belief witchdoctors have been able to implant into the minds of many that the healing power of the plant loses its curative and healing virtues should the secret (that is, the name) of the plant and its reputed use, be disclosed. The informant is also thought to be subject to misfortune and bad luck and a life full of uncertainty. This has meant that a witchdoctor will be hesitant to pass on his knowledge and, as a rule, will not pass on his knowledge of medicine to anyone except his offspring, and even then only as he nears death. In medicine, it is the first-born son that is entrusted with the secrets. If he is found unworthy of the trust and is believed to talk too freely and is generally careless about his ways, then another member of the family is considered. At any rate, whoever merits the honor, is sworn to keep the secret with due care throughout his life and only pass it on in a similar manner. Having given his solemn oath, he is then taken to all the places, near and far, where the plants are known to grow. Should this not be possible, he is given verbal directions and descriptions of the plants and their localities. Thus at each point or act of transfer, secrecy becomes more and more binding and cloaked in mystery. As with the herbalists of sixteenth century Europe, bizarre stories, legends and beliefs developed in Ethiopia; astrological implications became commonplace and were incorporated quite freely as part of the cure. The gathering of the medicinal herbs, their preparation and administration to the patient is still astrologically determined in many cases. Advocating or implementing such practices as the wearing of a certain grass around one's neck to dispel meningitis, or applying lard from a snake to an infected organ as a cure against elephantiasis are seemingly unfounded practices.

It is difficult to determine, much less assess, the role of the native medicine man in a given community. Sometimes he has no other profession. Sometimes priests, students of the church, and farmers are doctors as the need arises. It is always men who take up the art, though many women possess the knowledge. A medicine man does not, as a rule, collect a flat fee for his services. A small and voluntary payment is sometimes made by the patient's immediate family or by the patient himself as a token of friendship and as an expression of gratitude. A more substantial reward is oftentimes made by the patient after his complete recovery.

The sick invariably go to the medicine man at a late stage of the illness; they may turn still later to the modern man of medicine. Many die needlessly when disease strikes because of the ignorance which is translated into negligence and indifference. It is not an unfounded assumption that many seem to think that they may offend God if they should look for a cure other than from His own Hands.

The art of preparing and administering poisons is equally as rich in lore as more conventional medicine. Ethiopians possess an extensive knowledge of poisonous plants and the art of preparing poisons from diverse sources. Poisonous preparations applied to weapons were probably first used for hunting game and arrow poisons are common in East, Central and West Africa. A number of plants are used in Ethiopia in the preparation of poison arrows, i.e. *Acocanthera schimperiana*, *Adenium obesum*, *Adenium somalense*, *Cassia* sp., *Crotalaria retusa*, *Euphorbia* spp., *Securidaca longepedunculata*, *Tephrosia vogelii*. Nowadays, poison preparations are used more for homicidal purposes than for hunting game animals. Homicidal poisoning is quite prevalent in the northern provinces. Its common occurrence is well borne out by the standard custom in this region where a host irrespective of closeness of kin, serving a drink or food, must first consume or taste some before serving the guest. In the case of drinks the host spills some on the cupped palm of the hand and drinks it in front of the guest to establish good faith.

It is difficult to explain why Ethiopia never put any of her medical lore into writing. Only the church may be said to possess records of this nature, but they are unavailable to non-church men. Few accounts have appeared by

people who visited or went through the country, notably German, French, English and Italian naturalists or explorers, fragmentary though these reports may be (Chivenda, 1912 and 1931; Tubiana, 1952; Merab, 1912; Paillieux et Bois, 1890; Branun, 1848; Cacciapuoti, 1941; Burton, 1966; Lemordant, 1960). More recently, American botanists of the United States Department of Agriculture Research Service (F. G. Meyers, New Crops Research Branch, R. E. Perdue, Jr., Medicinal Plant Resources Laboratory, Beltsville, Maryland) have made an extensive collection of native Ethiopian medicinal plants, and from the preliminary screening tests the list of plants showing positive action against cancer has been encouraging. A similar screening program has been developed to test Ethiopian plants by some Institutes of Tropical Medicine in Great Britain. These preliminary efforts will no doubt reveal the need for more work in this line.

No country in Africa enjoys as great a diversification of geology, land forms, soils, and climate as Ethiopia. There are more than forty five vegetation types where forests, savannas, woodlands, steppes and grasslands comprise 75% of the vegetation cover. As a result, Ethiopia (Somalia and Socotra included) possesses one of the richest floras in Africa, with no less than 7,000 species of Pteridophytes and Spermatophytes. Much of this floristic wealth is reflected in the fact that Ethiopia is one of the primary centers of origin of many of the world's cultivated crops, e.g. , wheat, barley, teff, coffee, peas, okra, sorghum, millets, lentils. The flora is 35% endemic and is an Independent floristic region closely allied to the flora of tropical East Africa and Central Africa.

The passion to change occurs nowhere more theatrically than in Ethiopia - a country wanting to change from stone age to nuclear age overnight. The young generation, a product of an aristocratic educational system, is being weaned away from its immediate family ties and removed from its native environment. This is bringing an almost immediate death to the country's heritage of rich oral tradition. The introduction of new and improved agricultural practices and crop seeds has also accelerated this process. The collection and recording of the native lore is essential before it is lost. For this reason, the preliminary study to be presented here was undertaken.

The field work yielding the information herein presented was carried out throughout Ethiopia the bulk of the data was obtained from the Eastern (Harar) region. The information was particularly difficult to obtain for the reasons already explained. Paying informants was hazardous as it encouraged instant fabrication. The recording of the information was done when it was verified by more than one person. Voucher specimens, whenever possible, have been deposited in the Herbarium at the College of Agriculture, Haile Sellassie I University, Dire Dawa, Ethiopia. Duplicate specimens of some of these are deposited in the National Herbarium, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; the East African Herbarium, Nairobi, Kenya; and the Herbarium of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, England. Much of the collection has been sent to the Herbarium of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, England and the East African Herbarium, Nairobi, Kenya for identification. I am grateful to the taxonomic staff of both herbaria for identifying and verifying the plant material I had sent upon which this work is based.

Abreviation of Languages:

A	- Amariya
T	- Tiigrinya
G	- Galinya (G Ar) - Galinya, Arussi
GB	- Galinya, Bale
GH	- Galinya, Harar
GK	- Galinya, Kaffa
GS	- Galinya, Sidamo
Som	- Somali
K	- Kaffa
Sid	- Sidama
Wol	- Wollamo
Sod	- Soddu
Eng	- English

Glossary to some terms used in the text:

berbere: Ripened red pepper, dried and ground and used in preparation for spice for wat. Used as seasoning for various Ethiopian dishes: wat, shirro wat..

tej: A fermented drink made from honey, water and hops (Rhamnus prinoides). The alcohol content varies considerably.

tela: A local beer. Tela is not processed under government regulations, hence the alcohol content varies, but usually less than 4%.

wat: A spicy sauce made from onions, and other spices with addition of either meat (meet wat), chicken (doro wat), or lentils (shirro wat).

Wat is traditionally served with injera.

shirro: Wat made from lentils, legumes, chickpeas, broadbeans, etc. Shirro is a staple food during the fasting days.

katikela: A local drink made from cereals through distillation in homes by local people.

areke: Same as Katikala, but industrially produced.

injera: local bread made from tef (Eragrostis tef)

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ACANTHACEAE

Adhatoda schimperiana Hochst. ex. Nees

sensel, simiza timisa (A)

dumoga (GK)

This plant is very common in villages and towns as well as in cities growing on waste places or grown as a hedge. The plant is relatively fast growing and prefers altitudes of 8,000 ft. or above.

The whole plant is used in the treatment of excessive pelegra or "kuruba", native name of the disease.

The plant is also used as a laxative. It is also an excellent hedge plant and is used as a live fence around native compounds.

AIZOACEAE

Glinus lotoides L.

meterre (A)

terabit (T)

Herb, grayish prostrating, confused in the literature with *Budleya polystachyla* originated from misuse of common names.

Widely used as an effective tapeworm expectorant and often sold on the open markets. The plant is common in alluvial flood plains of lowlands such as the flood plains of Kallafo formed by the Wabe Shebelle River.

AMARANTHACEAE

Amaranthus caudatus L.

lishalisho, ferenjitef (A)

iyaso, jolili (G)

gagabsa (W)

Tapeworm expectorant.

Amaranthus sylvestris (Desf.) Vill

aluma (A)

birnaheo (T)

Tapeworm expectorant.

Celosia argentea L.

The seeds are used against diarrhea, while the flowers are used against dysentery and menstruation.

APOCYNACEAE

Acokanthera schimperi (DC) Olin.

(**Carrissa schimperi**) DC

merz (A)

keraro (G)

oboyo, wabayo (Som)

ghedulejo (Som)

karacha (GS)

mephteh, mepthi, merenz (T)

This is a monoecious shrub or small tree up to a height of 5-6 meters and a diameter of 30 cm, widely used in the preparation of arrow poisons.

Extraction of poison:

Because of the extreme toxicity an underground fire pit is built and the pot is kept below ground level. People are made to stay away from the area of extraction and the operator needs to be careful.

The fire is kept going for 3 to 4 days after which time the lid is removed to let the vapor escape. Allowing it to stay open for one day results in a precipitate deposited at the bottom of the pot. The precipitate is then removed

to a wooden or leather container with a tight lid. It is then carried around for use in the preparation of poison arrows. The bark is also soaked in water to extract the poison.

Effects:

Death results in 30 minutes after entry of poison into the blood-stream" Snake venom is sometimes used in addition. The poison causes hair and nails to drop off

Treatment:

The only treatment against the poison is immediate excision of the flesh surrounding the wound.

Note:

The container used to prepare or hold the poison must never be used in the house again, not even to burn as firewood because the smoke if inhaled, is poisonous as well. Whole plant is smoked to ward off or kill insects the smoke for the wood is inhaled to treat liver diseases.

A French pharmaceutical firm is said to use the bark of the same plant for pharmaceutical purposes.

The fruit is said to be edible

Adenium honkel A.DC.

Adenium multiflorum Klotzch

Adenium speciosum Fenzl

All used as fish poisons

Adenium somalense Balt. f.

Adenium speciosum Fenzl

Juice of plant used as arrow poison.

Most parts of this succulent plant are considered poisonous and a cardiotoxic arrow poison is prepared from it.

Catharanthus roseus G. Don

(= **Vinca rosea** L.)

Madagascar Periwinkle (Eng)

This is a small ornamental shrub grown in dry or low altitude areas. The color of the bloom ranges from pure white to deep pink. It does well both in Dire Dawa and Bisidimo where in both places it is grown as an ornamental plant.

The plant is considered poisonous (especially for children) by some people here in the country.

The natives of Jamaica are reported to use the plant (leaves) to treat diabetes. The same use is made by certain tribes in the Philippines. The natives are said to substitute this plant for insulin.

There are many areas that could profitably grown **Catharanthus roseus** should further research reveal even more hope in this line.

ARISTOLOCHIACEAE

Aristolochia bracteata Retz.

ghaga (Arabic)

boro, grerbaad, ged-hurguma (Som)

Plant used to treat leg itches in Kalaffo (Ogaden), E. Ethiopia.

This vine is a common weed in irrigated fields particularly in citrus farms.

ASCLEPIADACEAE

Calotropis procera (AitQ) Dry. in Ait.

tobbeya, yahara-zaf, ghinda (A)

ghinda, akalo, tomfi (T)

gala, boha (Som)

usher (Arabic)

Shrub or small tree up to 4 meters high with thick bark and characteristically pale green fleshy leaves.

The plant is quite common in low altitude areas from sea level to 1500 meters. It prefers, even in this area, dry sandy stream beds. Plant is very conspicuous because of the large pale green leaves and the inflated fruit.

Its latex is generally considered poisonous both to humans and stock. Animals do not graze on it. However, if the leaves and branches are harvested and left on the ground to bleed overnight, it is safe to feed to stock.

The latex causes heart paralysis and as a medicine it is used to treat leprosy in man.

Green leaves are used to dispel swellings which are applied externally as compresses.

The root is used as tonic.
The plant is reportedly used in the treatment of venereal diseases.

BIGNONIACEAE

Kigelia africana Benth
african sausage tree (Eng)
Fruits are used as purgative and for dysentery

BORAGINACEAE

Cordia africana Lam.
(*C. abyssinica* R. Br.)

wanza (A)

auchi (T)

wodessa (G)

uaddichio (Sid)

mokota (Wol)

This is a very graceful shade tree that produces white blossoms and edible yellow fruits, both of which are attractive.

Wood ash mixed with butter is used for skin troubles locally referred to as "Spider disease" because they believe the spider causes the skin trouble by depositing its urine or other forms of excretion on the skin while they are asleep.

Heliotropium geometricum

A weedy herb of pastures and eroded poor, dry sites that blooms the year round. It may prove a suitable hedge plant in semi-arid areas and poor sandy grounds.

The leaves are crushed and the volatile sap or vapors inhaled for the treatment of fever and influenza.

Heliotropium ovalifolium Forsk

dubj-goreyalle (Som)

Plant is rubbed on the wound of a scorpion sting.

Heliotropium sp.

habak-hid (Som)

Plant extract administered orally to women following childbirth for quick expulsion of the placenta.

BURSERACEAE

Boswellia papyrifera (Del) Hochst.

etan (A)

libanat (GH, Adaric)

Frankincense has been an item of commerce for many centuries in Ethiopia.

The Biblical record mentions that it was one of the gift items the Queen of Sheba took for King Solomon. It is found in most of the low lying arid regions of the country, particularly in Ogaden.

Its use in religious rites and customs is wide-spread both by the Christians and Moslems. It is used with spices against fever and is also believed to have a tranquilizing effect. The smoke is also thought to relieve people from evil spirits. Administration is usually done at night.

Commiphora hodai Sprague

habak-hidd (Som)

kumb (GH)

karabee (Adaric)

Plant is said to be employed by Somalis to expel the placenta after birth.

CACTACEAE

Opuntia vulgaris Mill.

kulkual (A)

beles (T)

tini (GH)

prickly pear (Eng)

Kulkual is a very common sight in low altitudes and dry regions of the Empire. One may be misled to think the plant is native because of its wide occurrence. In some regions, it is the dominant species. Its density is high along highways and caravan routes. The plant is native to Central America.

The colonization of pasture and range areas by kulkual is rapid indeed. Many grasslands are being taken over by it and becoming less useful as range lands with a much lowered grazing capacity. The cost of clearing for farming is also high because of the extreme difficulty in clearing the kulkual.

A moth that feeds on, and destroys, the vascular system of the plant has been employed as a biological control agent against its spread in Australia where kulkual is quite endemic over a wide area. If a light fire can be applied only enough to burn off the spines and bristles without further damage to the rest, it could be made into silage as is reportedly done in Australia.

Some members of the Ethiopian Horticultural Society, Addis Ababa, have found the dried stem-branches an excellent medium to grow epiphytes such as orchide. One may cook or boil the stem-branches and dry them before use.

In Ethiopia, spiny varieties are found and from the popularity of the fruit, spine-less varieties should be introduced. The fruit is on the market during the months of June to September. Farmers and those living on the outskirts of towns drive good income from the sale of the fruit, though the prickly pear is not cultivated. To the farmers, it is a much needed complement to their diet during this non-harvest time when all food grains stored for home use are low or exhausted.

The consumption of considerable amounts causes constipation which results from a drying effect on the digestive system. But most people fond of eating the fruit have learned their own solution for this sideeffect, which usually means consuming large quantities of tea.

In India, the fruit is reportedly eaten for the treatment of asthma.

CANNABIDACEAE

***Cannabis sativa* L.**

hashish (G)

A leafy annual herb 1-3 m. high occasionally grown by farmers as a cash crop in the absence of enforced government restrictions. The plant is a source of a powerful narcotic. Moslems or those with a strong Arabic influence use it or handle the cultivation and marketing.

CAPPARIDACEAE

***Capparis tomentosa* Lam.**

gomor (Som)

gemaro (A)

andal (T)

Effects: Goats--->instant death.

Camels--->the symptoms of poisoning may last as long as two weeks.

Symptoms: In camel-- it loses coordination and collapses after three to four days. There is also a creaking sound of all natural joints brought on by poisoning. After that, the camel either suffers severe diarrhea and is cured, or is short of its natural breath and death finally results.

Duration: As long as two weeks.

Treatment: Drenching the animal with a mixture of soap from a well cooked sheep or goat, and milk with its fat unremoved. This apparently acts as a purgative as the animal injects this soapy mixture by licking itself.

***Gynadropsis speciosa* (H.B.K.) D.C.**

A tea preparation from this herb is taken for a period of two weeks. This is considered effective against kidney stone.

A close relative, ***G. gynadra* (L.) Berqu.**, is used as a vegetable in parts of Ethiopia when food is scarce. This herb grows profusely in gardens or on old and abandoned village yards.

Maerua longifolia

Medicinally highly esteemed but not specified to me.

CELASTRACEAE

Catha edulis (Vahl) Forsk. ex Endl.

chat (A)

gofa; jima (G)

gat (Arabic)

dat (Som)

Tree up to 7 meters high, occasionally attaining 15-20 m. The shrubby tree is cultivated for its leaves and tender shoots mostly in Eastern Ethiopia where it competes with coffee as an important cash crop.

Chat is believed to have 501 different kinds of cures equalling the numerical value of the letters of its Arabic name, Ga-a-t (400 + 100 + 1). The root is used in some parts of Africa as a remedy for influenza, for stomach troubles and diseases of the chest. The most wide spread use is as a masticatory agent. The leaf has an inebriant narcotic and stimulatory effect which produces a marked release from fatigue and hunger. It is also said to have a euphoric effect.

Quality tej is made using equal amounts of chat and hop (**Rhamnus prinoides**). Quality of the chat tej deteriorate after 8 days, after which time, the tej becomes more sour.

Maytenus ovatus (Wight & Arn.) Loes.

kambolcha (G)

atat (A)

Very common shrub in Ethiopia, much so, that two large localities, Kombolcha in Wollo Rnd Kombolcha in Harar are named after this shrub signifying its ecological dominance in these localities.

Recent investigations have shown that this plant is an important source of anti-cancer drug. Locally the leaf decuction is used to control external parasites both in domestic animals and in humans.

CHENOPODIACEAE

Chenopodium album L.

nechillo (A)

This is a very common weed of garden and abandoned areas. The plant varies in size depending on the fertility of the soil.

The plant is used for its anthelmintic properties and the oil from the seeds is effective against many forms of intestinal parasites.

COMBRETACEAE

Combretum paniculatum Vent.

baye, buggie (G)

gabai (K)

shaga (K)

A very showy shrub which grows over tall trees. It is seen growing in the warm, moist areas of Wollega and Jimma, and flowers in January and February.

The fresh flowers are ground and the juice is used in the treatment of conjunctivitis and other eye ailments. It is also used to treat leprosy. In this regard, it may actually be **Terminalia glaucescens** Engl. ex Benth, that is used and not **Combretum paniculatum** Vent. as the same common names are used for both species.

The plant should be introduced wherever possible into cultivation for its bright red flowers.

Quisqualis indica L.

rangoon-creeper (Eng)

This plant is an introduced ornamental creeper that seems to do well in Harar area.

The raw half-ripened fruits are used as a vermifuge. The plant has a high tannin content.

COMPOSITAE

Ageratum conyzoides L.

gunyato, arema (G)

Plant is commonly found in damp places near river beds under shady areas and on waste grounds.

The whole fresh plant is used to dress wounds and sores.

Artemisia afra Jacq. ex Willd.

ariti (A)

chukun, jukun (GH)

kodo (G)

kapani (GB)

This is a very odoriferous shrubby herb found in high altitude areas. It is invariably found in wet depressions and in meadows.

Ariti is used to relieve stomach pains. The juice of the crushed leaves is mixed with water or honey and is administered orally. It is also used to clean containers perhaps because of the pleasant odor. The plant is harvested when in the flowering stage.

Cynara scolymus L.

kenchofe (G)

Extract of leaves is used to treat liver diseases.

Galinsoga parviflora Cav.

yeshewa-arem (A)

Very common annual weed of cultivated fields and waste grounds. An extract of the fresh leaves and inflorescence is used to dress fresh wounds or cuts as well as saddle sores and rawness of the skin to foster quick healing.

Kleinia spp.

kinchive (A)

There are few species under the same local name found in a wide range of altitude but mostly at mid-altitude (2,000 meters). In most old settlements where the area is denuded and overgrazed, "kinchive" becomes plentiful because it is not browsed by stocks nor does it have other uses by man. In the absence of other sources of firewood, the natives are forced to use it for fuel. But in so doing they invite difficulties, for the smoke from the burning wood is an irritant to the eye, even causing cumulative damage to the eye sight as time goes on.

In the central province there is a severe case of kinchive damage to the eye where in one particular sub-province there is an unusually high incidence of blindness. Older people are more susceptible to it.

Sphaeranthus suaveolens (Forsk.) D.C.

(**Sphaeranthus ukambesis** Vatke & O. Hoffm.)

gubbisna (G)

ala-schina (GH)

Weed of wet and low lying areas. The plant contains fragrant oil. The whole plant is used in the treatment of coughs.

Women, particularly the Gallas, use it as a perfume mixed with butter.

Taquetes minuta L.

Common weed of old and abandoned farms and dwelling areas. The plant seems to prefer well drained sites and is of variable height depending on the site. The plant has oil glands giving it a characteristic odor.

A scratch made on human skin by a branch or stem of the plant causes irritation and swelling.

The oil is reportedly used as an insecticide and preliminary results from trials carried out by the College of Agriculture, Ethiopia, showed that the whole plant if mulched or plowed into the soil controls nematode infestations.

Veronia amygdalina Del.

grawa (A)

ebicha (G)

dumoga (GH)

A very common shrub or small tree, sometimes attaining a height of 10 m. Shrubs usually grow in overgrazed areas or forest edges and in secondary scrub, in altitudes between 1700 and 3000 m.

The shrub is very conspicuous when in full bloom and is sweet-scented. It is often popular with bees when it is in bloom. The shrub is one of the fastest growing shrubs under cultivation, it reseeds itself and transplants easily. The sap is used as purgative. The dried flower is used to treat stomach disorder.

The plant is also reportedly used in the treatment of malaria.

The leaves are sometimes used in the preparation of the local drink, *tela* in place of *gesho* (**Rhamnus prinoides** L'Herit.) and cooked leaves are edible. **Vernonia pauciflora** (Willd) Lees.

The leaves of this plant are used as a substitute for cigarettes.

CONVOLVULACEAE

***Evolvulus alsinoides* L.**

erirao (T)

The whole plant is used as a bitter tonic and as a vermifuge.

CRASSULACEAE

***Kalanchoe* spp.**

bosoke (G)

indahula (A)

same (G)

There are several species in Ethiopia, some growing in dry and rocky areas, while others grow at the edges of streams and forest areas. They are all succulent, but of varying height and flower color.

The leaves are used in the treatment of sores, boils, and malignant wounds. Several skin disorders are also treated with the same plant. Wounds (malignant) resulting from constant irritation of the yoke on oxen are also treated by applying the freshly pounded leaves on the wound. This will force the pus accumulations to move down to the dulap of the animal where it can be cut open so as to remove it.

The fresh roots are used in the treatment of gonorrhoea, intestinal parasites and worms. The root is infused to make tea and only a small amount is taken, as it is very potent and may in itself be harmful to the patient.

CRUCIFERAE

***Lepidium sativum* L.**

fetto (A)

shimfi (G)

kotto, shimfa (T)

shimp (K)

shufu (GH, Aderic)

Fetto is commonly grown in Ethiopia as a garden plant or as a cultivated crop in tef (***Eragrostis tef*** (Zucc) (Trotter) fields. It is generally found on any market, though usually in small quantities. Siegenthaler (1960) reports the following uses for fetto:

a) The ripe, dried seeds are ground into a fine flour and mixed with water to use as a drench for stomach disorders of livestock.

b) A paste is made of the seed-flour and water and used on chapped lips, sunburn, and other skin disorders.

c) The flour is mixed with honey and taken as a treatment for amoeba.

d) The paste is rubbed onto the skin to repel mosquitoes and other insects.

e) In times past, the paste was rubbed onto the skin by warriors for warmth during cold nights.

f) For stomach cramps, fetto, tukur-asmu (***Nigella sativa*** L. Ranunculaceae) and salt are ground together to make a thick dough and allowed to ferment for seven days. One teaspoon of this is taken once a day for stomach cramps.

g) The ground flour of the seed is mixed with chopped injera and water to make a dish known as fetto fitfit. This is eaten early in the morning to help increase the appetite. In Begemder province it is customary to eat fetto fitfit on New Year's Eve preceding the big feast that is traditionally held on the next morning.

In Harar, fetto is reported to be used in the treatment of a disease of cows' udder called "gigo" (Kotu Galla). The solution is massaged onto the surface.

In humans, it is used in the treatment of acute side pains which often result from overeating.

CUCURBITACEAE

***Coccinia abyssinica* (W & A) Cogn.**

anchote (G)

This wild and cultivated tuberous cucurbit is regarded as medicinal as well as an important dietary item in S. and S.W. Ethiopia. The tuber is eaten while the fruit is not.

***Cucumis prophetarum* L.**

yemder-inbuyi (A)

This prostrate herb is often seen in pastures and has variously colored attractive fruits. These fruits are often picked by small boys to play with like a ball.

Fruits, if eaten, are highly poisonous, perhaps due to a bitter principle (glycosides).

An extract of the plant, if administered to a cow that has just calved, will help remove the placenta quickly.

The plant, like endod (**Phytolacca dodecandra**, Phytolaccaceae), is used to cause abortion in women.

It is also reportedly used in the treatment of rabies.

Zehneria scabra (L. fil) sonder

areg-ressa (A)

hafafelo (T)

An extract of the leaves is used to treat skin rashes"

Cucurbita maxima.

duba (A)

dry seeds used as tapeworm expectorant

CUPRESSACEAE

Juniperus procera Hochst ex Engl.

tidh (T)

gattira (G)

Tidh and *zigba* (**Podocarpus gracelior**, Podocarpaceae) are the two leading timber tree species in Ethiopia.

The young twigs and buds, but and ground are used in the treatment of stomach worms.

CYPERACEAE

Cyperus rigidifolius Steud.

gicha (A)

Obnoxious weed of (wet) cultivated fields.

A concoction of the bulbs is used in the treatment of fever, diarrhea, and stomach troubles.

The decoction of the bulbs mixed with butter is also used as hair dressing by natives, especially by the Galla tribe because of its pleasant smell.

DIPSACACEAE

Scabiosa coluombaria L.

theiabi (T)

Plant often used for the treatment of constipation in the northern provinces, namely Gojam and Begemder.

EBENACEAE

Euclea schimperi (DC) Dandy

dudiho (A)

dubis (G)

This shrub is quite common in overgrazed rolling hills or fallow land.

The ripe fruits are edible but if eaten in large quantities, one invariably experiences stomach troubles due to a bloating effect.

The black fruits are also used as dyes giving a purple color.

EUPHORBIACEAE

Croton macrostachyus Hochst.

bissana (A)

makanissa, badessa, alaleh, dogoma (G)

wush, masincho (Sid)

ambuk, tambuk, tambush, berberi-islami (T)

The tree is very common in Ethiopia usually 7 to 15 meters high but sometimes attaining considerable height in areas of high rainfall.

The fruits and a decoction of the roots are used as a medicine against venereal diseases and seeds are used to cause abortion.

The pulverized bark mixed with kosso (**Hagenia abyssinica**, Rosaceae) is a very effective purgative and vermifuge.

The seeds and the resins are toxic and are used as a fish poison. The resin is more toxic than rotenone.

Extract from the leaves is used against itchy scalp

The decoction from the young shoots and leaves mixed with sensel (*Adethoda schimperana*, Acanthaceae), is used to treat jaundice. The preparation is made with pepper and butter. The paste is eaten with bread for at least three days. Plenty of milk is drunk but meat and oily food must be avoided.

Euphorbia hirta L.

The drink made from the whole plant is used in the treatment of asthma.

Euphorbia pulcherrima Willd.

poinsettia (Eng.)

Poinsettia is a shrub or small tree grown for its ornamental value. The floral bracts or leaves just below the clusters of small, greenish flowers with bright yellow glands are colored bright red. All parts exude a milky sap when injured.

The milky sap that is characteristic of poinsettia is irritating to the skin of persons. The leaves and stems are poisonous if eaten.

Euphorbia tirucalli L.

milk-bush, pencil-cactus (Eng.)

Milk bush is a shrub often making large clumps and is easily distinguished because the whole plant is green. The branches and twigs are cylindrical, fleshy and 1/4 inch thick or more. The leaves, 1 inch or less long, are narrowly oval and green, produced at the ends of the twigs and soon fall off.

The milky sap of the milk-bush contains a vesicant that is quite irritant to the skin. If eaten, the plant parts are reputed to be toxic. It has been used as fish poison in its native land, India.

Monadenium mains (Pax.) N.E.Br.

A relatively rare succulent tuberous herb of semi-arid areas. The latex and its vapors is a strong poisonous irritant that makes handling of the plant dangerous.

Ricinus communis L.

gullo (A)

kobo (G)

castor bean (Eng.)

Gullo in Ethiopia is grown as a perennial crop and is a garden weed in farm villages, as an escape, it often grows to a fair sized tree. The seed oil is used as a mild purgative and widely used in tannery work.

LABIATAE

Ajuga remota Benth.

(*A. integrifolia* Ham-Buch.)

ungo-quasot (T)

tale (Wol)

akorarchigne (A)

An extract of the leaves is used against dysentery, swelling of the legs as well as for the treatment of high blood pressure.

The extract is very bitter and it is used to make babies stop suckling by applying to the teats when such is desired by the mother. A paste of the extract prepared by mixing with honey, can be stored for longer periods and for later use.

The plant is common on the College farm in Alemaya and natives as far as Dire Dawa and Kersa come to collect it.

Leonotis raineriana De Visiani

ras-kimmir, feres-zeng (A)

Root extract is bitter and poisonous. The extract (plant part not specified) is used to treat excessive menstruation in women.

Otostegia integrifolia Benth.

tinjute (A)

A very common shrub in overgrazed hillsides or old and abandoned farms. The plant is easily recognized and stands out due to the grayish color of the leaves. The yellow flowers are also showy when in full bloom.

In Northern Ethiopia (Begemder, Tigre, etc.), where it is common, it is used to smoke utensils to flavor them and to sterilize them at the same time. Clothes are also smoked, perhaps the most common practice is the ritual custom that a mother is smoked with tinjute on the tenth day after giving birth to a child. She is "cleansed" with the smoke after which time she can leave her confinement and again resume a normal daily life.

Thymus schimperi Ron.

(= **T. serpyllum** (Auct Ron)L.

tossigne (A)

A small herb of very high altitude areas. The herb, though not cultivated, is a useful condiment. It is also reportedly used in the control of gonorrhoea. When it is added to boiling water and drunk, it is used against cough and liver disease. Some prefer to smoke it as a cigarette.

As a spice, tossigne is dried, ground and mixed with other spices that are used in the preparation of berbere and "shirro". In some provinces, it is used to flavor tea or drunk alone as tea.

LEGUMINOSAE (CAESALPINIACEAE)

Cassia cf. floribunda car.

sornema (K)

Seeds are boiled for use against snake bites. It is also used as a laxatives.

Cassia holosericea Fresen

source of Aden senna, used in medicine.

Pterolobium stellatum (Forsk.) Brenan.

kenteffa (A)

arangama (G)

Fresh leaves are chewed for medicinal purposes, e.g. for tuberculosis and related respiratory diseases.

Tamarindus indicus L.

homar (A)

roka (G)

ragai (Sod)

tamarind-hendi (Arabic)

A fairly large evergreen tree up to 15 m high. It is found in humid lowland woodland areas between 800 and 1600 m. in altitude, and in this range it is commonly seen near river edges and anthills.

The wood makes an excellent charcoal.

The fruit is used as refrigerant, digestive, carminative, laxative, and antiscorbutic. With sugar and water, the fruit makes a cooling drink and is use in place of lime juice. In Asmara both the dried fruits and the juice are actually sold in shops. The leaves are high in acid and are used as poultices in boils. The seeds are used against diarrhea.

The over-ripe fruit is used to clean copper and brass perhaps because of acidity.

The older bark contains 7 per cent tannin and is used in tanning.

Note: Sitting under the shade of one of these large trees seems to give a cooling effect in much the same way as the drink. The shade has an "acidic" feel. This is no doubt due to the volatile oils that saturate the air surrounding the tree when it is in flower or fruit.

LEGUMINOSAE (MIMOSIDAEAE)

Albizia anthelmintica (A. Rich.) Brongn. (Leguminosae)

rhaybit (Somali)

shina (Amaharic)

kebita (? Kaffa)

A shrub or small tree common in dry savannas in East Africa with a geographical distribution from the Sudan to Botswana or further south.

Plant common in the Rift Valley System, often showing ecological variations, particularly in leaf size.

A good sample was brought from Southern Kaffa where it was also reported to be used as a tapeworm medicine. In: Uphof, J.C.Th., 1959. Dictionary of Economic Plants on page 14, it is said that "Bark is used as an anthelmintic in Abyssinia."

LEGUMINOSAE (PAPILIONACEAE)

Cadia purpurea (Picc.) Ait

kadi (Arabic)

hasaus (T)

salema (Som)

saele (GH)

The plant is widespread in low and mid-altitude areas in Ethiopia.

Some drug companies in Europe have recently become interested in the plant in the manufacture of drugs from it. The nature of the finding has not been made public.

Indigofera coerulea Roxb var. **occidentalis** Gillett.

(= **I. houer** Forsk.)

darko (Som)

houer (Arabic)

The dried leaves and roots are ground and used as a wound dressing in Kalaffo (Ogaden).

Lathyrus sativus L.

guaya (A)

sebere (T) ~

rough pea (Eng.)

This species is widely cultivated in the highlands of Ethiopia as a pulse crop for human consumption. The seeds cause "Lathyrism" and the natives believe drinking milk along with foods prepared from guaya enhances the rate of incidence of the disease.

Millettia ferruginea (Hoches.) Baker

birbira (A)

sotallo, kotalu (G)

enghediksho (Sid)

sari (GA)

zaghia (Wol)

yego (GH)

A relatively fast growing tree or shrub up to 12 to 15 meters in height. The tree is found at the edge of forests or in forests as an understory tree. The tree is widely distributed in Ethiopia.

Its use as a fish poison is widely known. The bark and mature fruit (pod and seed) are ground into powder and spread over the water.

The fish stunned by the effects of the drug start to come close to the surface, thus enabling an easy catch.

It is a nice ornamental tree and is sometimes planted in towns lining streets.

Tephrosia vogelii Hook. f.

The seeds, leaves and roots of this shrubby herb are considered poisonous. The leaves are reportedly used as fish poison and in bringing about abortions.

Trigonella foenum-graecum L.

abish (A)

sunko (G)

abacham, abacheh (T)

Fenugreek is commonly cultivated as a garden spice or as a field crop. It is widely grown in the semi-highland and highland regions.

It is found in the traditional open markets as the whole fruit or in the form of a powder.

Fenugreek, mixed with bakella (*Vicia faba*), is used to treat boils. The paste is plastered on the ebtet (boil).

The plant is also reportedly used to treat leprosy as well as muscular dystrophy. It is, moreover, used against rheumatism.

Fenugreek or abish is considered good food both for adults and infants. The powder mixed with quantities of honey makes a good and nourishing drink for adults. The person gains weight quickly because it is said to improve the individual's appetite.

In some northern provinces where coffee is both scarce and expensive, abish is used as a substitute. Abish 'coffee' is made by first roasting it lightly and then boiling it without pounding. It is drunk with sugar.

LILIACEAE

Aloe spp. (Aloe vera L.)

erret (A)

argeber (Som)

There are many species of **Aloe** in the dry parts of Ethiopia and they provide quite a show when they are in bloom, with colors ranging from light yellow to deep red.

The fresh juice of the thick leaves is cathartic and cooling and is used in the treatment of fever, spleen and liver troubles. It is also used for knee troubles in old age.

The sap is also used in eye treatment. Mothers with suckling babies apply the juice of the plant on their teats to cause their babies to quit sucking because of its bitter taste like **Ajuga remota** Benth.

Salted, chopped erret is an excellent food for goats and sheep.

Asparagus sp.

Tuberous roots are used as cooling medicine as well as in venereal diseases.

LINACEAE

Linum usitatissimum L.

telba (A)

flax-seed (Eng)

As elsewhere, flax is cultivated for its seed in Ethiopia. It is generally used as a demulcent laxative drink. At the end of the lenten period, people take telba drink to soften their system in preparation for the big meat meal on Easter Day and thereafter. The seeds are lightly roasted before they are ground to make the drink.

Cooked seeds are placed on wounds to cause quicker healing. A wound with a bullet inside is stuffed with the same and wrapped. After a given time period, the flax 'draws' the bullet to the surface where it can be extracted easily.

LOGANIACEAE

Strychnos spinosa Sam.

angora (GH)

Seeds are poisonous but pulp of the fruit is edible.

MELIACEAE

Melia azedarach L.

nib (T, Arabic)

This is a handsome tree with lilac-blue flowers. The shrub or tree seems to have been recently introduced to Ethiopia but has already established itself as a roadside tree in several lowland towns.

It is also sometimes seen as a backyard tree in villages. The tree is native to Asia, but is now naturalized in Ethiopia.

In Harar (Eastern Ethiopia) it is known as a tree of many remedies though these were not specified to me at the time. The remedies depend on the plant part used.

According to William (1955) the bark contains a bitter alkaloid, margosine, a bitter amorphous resin, margosic acid and tannic acid.

Trichillia emetica Vahl

(= **T. roka** (Forsk.) Chiov.)

kota, gmmeh (T)

yahy (Som)

roka (Arabic)

Medium-sized handsome evergreen tree 3-20 m. tall with a wide crown particularly when growing in the open; bark is dark grey or dark brown, rough or smooth, foliage is very dark green, glossy. The trees are usually found in flood plains or river edges from 700 to 1700 m in altitude.

Oil from the seeds is used for cooking, soap-making, and as a hair oil. The seed is edible.
An infusion of the root is drunk to facilitate labor in pregnancy.
The plant is reportedly used against malaria.
Note: The tree should make a good shade tree if planted in towns.

MELIANTHACEAE

Bersama abyssinica Fresen

azamrr (A)

lolchissa (G)

This is a graceful tree with nice blue or lilac flowers found in mid-altitude regions.

The extract from the growing shoot tips is used in the treatment of dysentery and roundworms.

MENISPERMACEAE

Cissampelos pareira L.

var *orbiculata* (d. C.) Misquel.

Both the root and leaves are considered curative agents against snake bites and are also widely used in dressing wounds.

Stephania abyssinica (Qu-Dill. A. Roch.) Walpers

engotichit, ye-aitareg, Itse-Eyesus (A)

The extract of the whole plant is used to treat mastitis in cattle by natives and to treat syphilis and "kuruba" in man.

MORACEAE

Ficus glomerata Rox B

The latex is a very effective antidyentery agent. For best results it is mixed with sugar in equal amounts. This preparation is taken orally three times daily for one week and twice daily for another week.

Note: It is said to be best to collect the latex early in the morning since it is apparently easier to obtain.

Ficus sp.

shola (A)

This is a large tree with edible fruit. The boiled extract for the root when drunk improves urinary problems.

MYRGINACEAE

Embelia schimperi Vatke

(= **E. abyssinica** Baker)

ankoko (A)

enkoko (T)

unkoko (G)

kanko (Sid)

hanku (G)

The fruits are often seen in markets and are sold as purgatives and vermifuge or tapeworm expellant.

This is a small tree up to 7 meters high said to have edible leaves.

Maesa lanceolata Forsk.

kelawa, akalua, killabo, shehwaria (A)

abaunie, geshy, gergesho, abagi (G)

soarea (T)

arar, maas (Arabic)

Shrub up to 7 meters with large leaves and redbrown bark.

Dark brown resin exudes from the veins of the leaves if broken or slashed. This plant is common high altitude forests as an understory tree.

The yellow, globose fruits yield an oil which is used to grease new pottery as a water proofing agent and as a vermifuge. The extract from the leaves is a strong fish poison and an effective muluscide.

Myrica salicifolia Hochst. ex. A Rich.

kalawa, shinett (A)

abaya, kataba, radji (G)

nebi (T)

Dioecious shrub or tree as small as 3 meters or as big as 20 meters in height and usually found in humid lower highlands between some 1800 and 3000 meters in altitude.

The pulverized young leaves, mixed with butter, are used extrenally to treet skin diseases.

Myrsine africana L.

kechemo (A)

katchu (Adaric, GH)

small bushy tree up to 3 meters tall and fruits the size of sorhum seed. The plant is often found near or at the edge of high altitude forests.

The fruits are used to control tapeworm.

Myrsine africana L., **Maesa lanceolata** Forsk., and **Embelia schimperi** Vatke, all in the same plant family, MYRSINACEAE, are used as tapeworm expellants.

Note: The lion is believed to feed on kechemo as 2 cure of infection with internal parasites.

MYRTACEAE

Eucalyptus globulus Labill.

bahir-zaf (A)

kaliti (G)

The volatile oil from the leaf is used for colds. Leaf extract is gargled for meningitis. The young leaves, especially from the copice growths, are used by housewives as an insect repellent. The leaves are also used as bedding of floors. The Eucalyptus, introduced in 1898 is now common to many mid-and high-altitude regions of Ethiopia.

Even the city of Addis Ababa is dotted with Eucalyptus forests. Bere it is used as firewood end for the contruction of small dwellings. Some are inclined to think Eucalyptus is more at home and does better in Ethiopia than its native home, Australia. It grows to the exclusion of any other plants for nothing grows inside a Eucalyptus grove. The most commonly grown species are **Eucalyptus globulus** and **E. camaldulensis** Denhart.

NYCTAGINACEAE

Boerhaavia plumbaginea Cav.

Decoction from leave used for jaundice, and to heal wounds.

OLACACEAE

Ximenia americana L.

inkoy (A)

huda (G)

mellau, maleta (T)

aure-mudube, mandraut, mondruk, morod, amirgudud (Som)

oda (GK)

Deciduous shrub or tree up to 7 m. high occurring from sea level up to 2000 meters.

The yellow fruits are eaten in large quantities and act as a vermifuge. The fruits are seen on the open market brought in by nearby farmers. The juice makes a refreshing drink and has an acidic flavor. The boiled fruit, filtered and sweetened with sugar, is often stored for later use. It can then be served during meals by adding water.

The seed of inkoy is poisonous.

Ximenia caffra Sond.

hurranh-addee (Som)

inginkada (Kon)

Description and use same as **Ximenia americana** L.

OLEACEAE

Jasminum abyssinicum R. Br.

The fresh root-tips are chewed to relieve tonsillities. The leaves are used as soap-substitute.

OXALIDACEAE

Oxalis semiloba Sond.

micha-micho (A)

Bulbs of this garden weed are ground and drunk with water for the treatment of tapeworm. This is a well known and popularly used medicine in the north.

PASSIFLORACEAE

Adenia cissampeloides (Planch) Harms

Plant when crushed is used as fish poisons.

PHYTOLACCACEAE

Phytolacca dodecandra L'Hérit.

endod (A)

endoda (G)

endott, shebeti, shipti, sobet (T)

This is a relatively common plant throughout Ethiopia, especially in the semi-highland regions.

The root is used in the treatment of excessive pelegra (kuruba).

The decoction of the root (1 in. long) is used in the treatment of genorrhoea.

There is also a wide application made of the root to cause abortion. The dosage must necessarily be regulated to avoid death of the woman.

It is believed the male plant (cut in mid-October) effectively serves in the treatment of many internal diseases. Here too, the , decoction or extraction must be diluted to the desired strength and effect, for, if too strong, it will kill the patient.

The harvested, dried, and ground fruit makes a good detergent as it probably contains saponins. Drying is necessary, however, for prolonged storage for use during the course of the year.

The plant is also reported to be used by farmers to treat their domestic animals during birth troubles, primarily to cause abortion.

The plant (extract) is sometimes added to local drinks such as tej to produce a stronger drink. This practice must be considered risky.

The plant is generally toxic to stock. Wat, local sauce, is also made from endod.

Note: This plant may in general, have a potential application in biological control. Recent investigations by the Pathobiology Institute, Haile Sellassie I University, Ethiopia, have indicated its potential use in the control of schistosomiasis (bilharzia) by destroying the snail (Lemma, 1971).

POLYGALIACEAE

Polygala spp.

There are several spp. of Polygala ranging in their habitat from xerophytic to mesophytic areas. Those of the drier regions are generally employed or used in the treatment against snakebite, perhaps due to a more thickened and extensive root system. The stem is sometimes used in the preparation. It is reportedly used as an expecterant and cough remedy.

POLYGONACEAE

Polygonum senegalense Meisen.

gummamilla (A)

chomo (G)

Shrubby herb found in wet areas such as lake shores and river edges or water runways.

An extract of the fresh leaves is used externally to treat skin troubles and is highly effective.

Rumex abyssinicus Jacq

mokmoko (A)

choldia (Wol)

This is a common weed of cultivated lands or disturbed grounds.

The tubers are widely used to dye the palms of the hand and feet red by ladies, particularly in the northern parts of the country. Such a practice is considered decorative. The cooked tuber makes a strong dye often used in butter preparation to impart yellow coloration as well as in other spice preparations.

Rumex berquaertii de Wild.

Rumex berquaertii de Wild. is medicinally used in rheumatism. The aqueous root extract is administered with water for stomachaches.

Rumex hepalsensis Spreng.

tult (A)

shomboba, shombobata (T)

arab-sari (GH)

Tult is a common name applied to both species but more to **Rumex nepalensis** Spreng. Both are common weeds of cultivated fields, and near dwelling areas.

Rumex nepalensis Spreng, is used as an antidote for poisoning as well as a laxative.

Rumex nervosus Vahl

embwacho (A)

dengego (G)

hohet, thiteh (T)

alegango (Adaric)

Woody shrub up to 2 m. tall with several stems arising from ground level as well as by repeated branching above; bark is grayish and leaves slightly succulent.

The plant is common over a wide range of altitudes. It seems to prefer poor, but well drained soils. It is common on road sides and in over-grazed areas. Dengego mountain near Dire Dawa enroute to the city of Harar is named after this plant where it is particularly abundant.

The stems and leaves of dengego are extensively used in chat (*Catha edulis*) wrapping. Bundles or loads of chat are packed neatly with it to reach the market. The thick, relatively succulent leaves with their high exalic acid content keep the chat fresh for longer periods.

The charcoal of the stem mixed with egg yolk is used to dress skin burns. Butter is added to prevent flaking and drying of the wound. The plant is reportedly used to treat skin itches.?

The tender and succulent young shoots are eaten by shepherds. Putting the young shoot in the fire and quickly removing it, weakens or reduces the acid resulting at the same time in a mushy and jello- like pith, highly relished by children.

PRIMULACEAE

Anagalis arvensis

Small annual herb: useful in home remedies.

Runica granatum L.

roman (A, GH, Adaric)

Pomegranate is not grown as a commercial fruit tree and, as a rule, the fruit does not appear on the market, but many dwelling houses have a tree or two in the yard.

The fruit is astringent, and is taken for diarrhea and other similar ailments. The leaves are used as a vermifuge and sometimes consumed as a vegetable. Branches are made into brooms for general duty cleaning.

RANUNCULACEAE

Clematis simensis Fresen

esdillee (GH)

elaydeea (Adaric)

harag (A)

Plant is very showy when in bloom and is known to cause permanent 'burns' on human skin. A row of circular permanent scars on a man's arms is considered manly and decorative. The mechanism appears to be a chemical irritation on the skin resulting in a bad wound which when finally healed leaves a scar. The plant is used as a rope to tie chat (*Catha edulis*) bundles as well as firewood by farmers.

***Nigella sativa* L.**

tikur-azmud (A)

Tikur-azmud, a spice, is used for several reasons, one of which is its flavoring quality.

It was used quite frequently in olden days to flavor bread.

Now however, it is used more in beverages where it is mixed with black papper, korerima (*Aframom leonorima*), and ginger (*Curcuma lonqa*)

Such strong local drinks as areke and katikala contain this preparation.

The reason advanced for the use of tikur-azmud is that it allegedly possesses the ability to dispel headaches and various diseases. To dispel headache, the seeds, mixed with melted butter, are wrapped in a clean piece of cloth, and sniffed.

RHAMNACEAE

***Ziziphus mauritiana* Lamk"**

(-*Z. jujuba* Lam.)

gava (T)

ghob, gheb, jumuba (Som)

kurkura (GH), (Adaric)

A shrub or small tree up to 6 meters high, generally found in lowlands forming a sub-desert scrub.

The dried wood is used by Somali women to fumigate their hair.

The bark is employed as a fish poison in some parts of Ethiopia.

The roots may have enough tannin to be used as astringent and in the treatment of scrofula.

Its fruit is edible however, only children seem to eat it. But in drier areas, the fruits have a more significant role in the diet of adults. Children use the seeds as beads. The red wood is expensive and is used over fire to give smoke.

***Hagenia abyssinica* (Bruce) Gamelin**

habbi (T)

duchia, edo, fieto (G)

heto (GK)

The kosso tree is typically a highland tree occurring only above 2.000m. It is a very handsome tree, indeed, particularly when in bloom. It should make a nice ornamental tree.

The dried pistillate flowers of kosso are perhaps the most widely used of all tapeworm expellant preparations. It is widely sold on the open markets. The kosso drink is strong and should be regulated according to the person's health condition. Excess dosage of kosso can cause death, and repeated use is suspected to cause blindness in man.

Kosso is sometimes used to cause abortion in women.

ROSACEAE

***Rosa abyssinica* R.Br.**

keqa (A)

wild Ethiopian Rose (English)

The edible fruits are good tapeworm and round worm expectrants as well as excellent source of vitamin.

***Pygeum africanum* Hook. f.**

tikur-inchet (A)

homi (G)

The leaves reportedly are used in dressing wounds. The wood is hard and is lumbered.

RUBIACEAE

***Rubia discolor* Turcz**

enchibrr (A)

Very common vine found in varying altitude zones.
The boiled leaves are used as cough remedy. The root is a valuable dye imparting black color.

Clausenia anisata (Wild) Hook. f. ex. Benth

ulmae (G)

limich (A)

Plant used is the ritual washing of a mother after childbirth.

This is especially practiced by the Galla tribes of Western Ethiopia.

SALVADORACEAE

Salvadora persica. L.

adai (T)

dadaho (Som, Danikil)

adz (som)

imu-garreh (G, Ar)

Dadaho is a medium sized tree which grows in very dry lowland areas.

The hot berries are consumed for the treatment of colds. The plant is reportedly used for stomach disorders.

SAPINDACEAE

Allophylas zeylanicus L.

Fruits used as expectorant for tapeworm.

Gardiosperimum helicacabum L.

schuelet (T)

samak (A)

Climber with tendrils easily recongnized by the triangular, inflated fruits.

Plant is used against common cold.

Paulinia pinnata L.

The leaf, root and seeds are used as nerve poison and cause paralysis.

SIMARUBACEAE

Brucea antidysenterica Mill

woinos, kolla+wanza(A)

meleta (T)

abalo, tamija, komeni (G)

hadawi (Sam)

Shrub or tree up to seven meters high. Very common shrub at the edge of semi-humid forests or overgrazed mid-highland areas

The pulverized leaves mixed with butter are highly valuable in the treatment of skin diseases and leprosy. Wounds are dressed with the same preparation.

The boiled bark of the root and the fruits are used as medicine against dysentery and fever hence the name of the plant, *B. antidysentaria*.

The yellow-red fruits if eaten are said to be fatal to livestock, especially sheep.

The decoction of the plant is used by some natives to prevent bloat in livestock.

SOLANACEAE

Capsicum annuum L.

mitmitta (A)

Chili is a spice grown widely in the backyards of many Ethiopians' homes. Both chili and black pepper are common spices used.

There are other uses of chili but the most common and important use is to eat raw meat with, a common dietary practice in Ethiopia. The raw meat is ground and the chili powder is mixed with it. A lavish amount of butter may be added to it. Nowadays the preparation is usually lightly roasted before it is consumed as a popular dish, "kitfo". The Gaurage tribe is noted for its art of making "kitfo". People's ideas differ as to the reason for using

mitmitta with raw meat; some maintain the view that it is a flavoring agent while others think it is used to kill "germs" in the meat as well as in the stomach. Those who believe the latter use mitmitta against amoeba infections and stomach worms. There are also reports that it is used externally in ointment as an irritant.

Datura stramonium L.

attefaris, astenagrt (A)

A very common annual weed of cultivated fields and disturbed grounds.

Both seeds and leaves are used in medicine. Dried, ground leaves are mixed with butter and used as a fungicide to treat scalp infections and sometimes on the face.

The vapor of boiled seed pods is inhaled to alleviate the pain of toothache.

The leaves are crushed and made into a paste that is used to treat open sores of pack animals.

The black seeds are poisonous and a few seeds in a cup of tea or coffee are enough to produce instant death resulting from heart paralysis and in smaller quantity the powder from the ground seeds when mixed in local drinks such as areke, tej, and tella causes temporary insanity, a practice often used to make the drink more strong.

All parts of the plant are considered poisonous.

Nicotiana glauca R. Graham

tree tobacco (Eng.)

The tree tobacco is a shrub or small tree up to 10 ft. or more. The upright branches tend to be flexible, slender and often green in color. The leaves 2-6 inches in length are characteristically light or grayish green in color due to the tin waxy coating on both surfaces. The leaves are leathery in texture, hence the plant is draught resistant, often preferring well drained limestone areas.

This plant, now quite common in eastern Ethiopia is said to be of recent introduction. It is seen along highways in low to mid-altitude areas. Farmers remark that it was introduced by the desert locust whose droppings produced the first seedlings.

Some people although they cannot be specific, consider it to be a plant of generally good medicinal value and may be poisonous to cattle.

The shrub contains a powerful insecticide, like nicotins (UNESCO, 1960). The plant, if not for anything else deserves investigation for its insecticidal property. It grows on dry limestones and poor soil.

Solanum incanum L.

ingulla (T)

inboye (A)

hidi (G)

apple of Sodam (Eng.)

Shrubby herb up to 4 ft. high, widely spread throughout the country. Generally very common in overgrazed range areas or road-sides.

The globose fruits are bright orange in color and children are thus tempted to eat them. Poisoning in youngsters is not uncommon. The teeth are damaged and tarnished permanently. The fruits are used to treat gonorrhoea and in leather tannery by mixing with urine.

Solanum marginatum L.f

geber-imbway, zerch-imbway (A)

heda, iddi-orabissa (G)

angulle (T)

Plant up to one meter in height and quite common in mid to high altitudes, usually occurring in damp spots on roadsides"

It is easily recognizable from the more common imbway (Solanum incanum) by its larger leaves that are white beneath and the large fruits. The flower is white.

The ripe yellow fruits are boiled and used as a soap substitute in clothes.

The seed, roasted lightly, is used as medicine for weak heart and stomach complaints. The fruits are also used in leather tannery.

Withania somnifera (L.) Dunal.

gisewa (A)

agolla, athmai (T)

gutita (GH)

shuna (Som)

Shrub usually under 1 m. in height. Leaves, stems, and fruits are tomentose. Flowers are greenish, fruit red. The plant is common in open grasslands.

This is a widely known medicinal plant in India. The plant is also regarded as narcotic. It is used to treat coughs and asthma and is used as well as an anti-epileptic. However, no specific use was reported to me by Ethiopian natives.

UMBELLIFERAE

Carum copticum D. C.

netch-azmud(A)

kamon (G, Adaric)

A cultivated spice plant usually mixed with red pepper in which it tends to reduce the "hotness". Some people add netch-azmud before fermentation and distillation of katicalla, a local, strong alcoholic beverage.

The roots of this herb are used in the treatment of stomach complaint. The spice is found in all local open markets.

Clerodendrum myricoides (Hochst.) R. Br.

missiritch, abek'a(A)

surrubatri (T)

aghio (K)

Shrub of varying height but usually over 1 meter high with blue, lilac, and white flowers. The plant is very common near old dwellings and overgrazed rolling hills.

A decoction made by boiling the roots is drunk as an antidote in poisoning.

The plant is also used as a vermifuge, expellant and to cause diarrhea in stock.

The decoction of the plant is also used to dress wounds.

Mixed with the shoots of bissana (**Croton macrostachys**) and the roots of inbuye, it is taken orally to cure constipation. Butter is added to the paste.

Conium maculatum L.

chof-chof(GHO or (Som)

There is only one species so far reported in Ethiopia. This plant may be found on roadsides and on waste lands as a weed.

The plant produces a very poisonous narcotic acid. This plant was used in ancient Greece to kill criminals and political enemies. The poison was used by Socrates in his suicide.

Foeniculum vulgare Mill.

ensilal (A)

kamuni, insilali(G)

Weed of cultivated or disturbed grounds, sometimes common in grassland areas too. Plant is green and blooms when it is dry for anything else.

The seeds from this wild or at least not usually cultivated plant, are found in the traditional or open markets.

The seeds and dried plant parts are used to flavor local drinks such as areke and tej.

The boiled or roasted roots are used in the treatment of gonorrhoea.

VERBAENACEAE

Lantana camara L.

Infusion of leaves used as tonic and stimulant.

VITACEAE

Rhoicissus erythroides Planch.

hida-rafa (G)

It is used to treat rabies.

ZINGIBERACEAE

Zingiber officinale Roscoe.

zingibil (A)

dendabil (T)

Ginger is cultivated as a spice in the higher altitudes and humid areas.

The rhizome, as much as it is a common spice in the preparation of traditional foods, is generally recognized as medicine for stomach cramps. It is chewed or masticated with feto (**Lepidium sativum** L") for the treatment of stomach disorders.

It is sometimes consumed with chat (**Catha edulis**) because of its flavoring qualities.