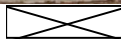


## Seed bank to revive medicinal plant

Pratiksha Ramkumar, TNN | Feb 25, 2015



COIMBATORE: Medicinal plants on the verge of extinction may get a shot in the arm with the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB) in Coimbatore setting up a repository of seeds. The institute plans to grow the plants within its campus, create a seed bank and sell the seeds. "We are trying to save medicinal plants using the tissue culture method. If we are successful, we will give seeds to farmers and medicinal plant lovers," said a senior scientist at the institute. "They will be stored in a seed bank, which is a room with sections for chryopreservation, germination and x-ray facilities to check if the germ is alive," said A Karthikeyan, senior scientist of IFGTB. This is part of their plan to keep tabs on disappearing medicinal plants and preserve the ecology of the region. Three of the plants the institute is looking at are vishnukranti, veldt grape and morning mallow or kurunthotti. The roots of the kurunthotti plant, found in the state's western region and Kerala, can be crushed to make oil which is used to cure fever, asthma, joint pain and cough. Vishnukranti, which is found on the red-soiled plains in the western region, is used with cumin and milk to cure fever, nervous breakdowns and memory issues. Veldt grape is used to in Ayurveda and Siddha to heal fractures and ligament tears. The plants grow on waste land and road sides. "These plants grow in Mettupalayam,

Madhampatti on the way to Siruvani, Thudiyalur and Anaikatti. They thrive in red soil," said C Kunikannan, senior scientist at the institute. "But now their numbers are dwindling," he said. Clearing of weeds to widen roads, large-scale plucking by Ayurveda practitioners and spread of invasive species has led to the decline of the species.

"Many medicinal plants are rhizomes so the roots and stems which grow underground are valuable. People pluck out 10,000 to 20,000 plants with the roots for Ayurveda and Siddha, which have become industries," said T Rajamani, professor, department of medicinal plants, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University. "Invasive species also block sunlight from reaching these plants. "There is a fear that these plants will slowly become seasonal and later when a drought comes become unavailable," adds Rajamani. Dr Joseph T Varghese of Indian Ayurvedic Hospital and Research Centre said suppliers has said there is a decline in the number of medicinal plants. "We use kurunthotti extensively in our hospital, but suppliers have been saying that fewer plants are being found," he said.

**Source:**

**<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/coimbatore/Seed-bank-to-revive-medicinal-plant/articleshow/46364035.cm>**