

**OCCURRENCE OF MEDICINAL PLANTS IN THE HOLY QUR'AN AND THEIR  
THERAPEUTIC USES**

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## **Abstract**

*In view of the adverse side effects of orthodox drugs, there is a global resurgence to the use of herbs (medicinal plants) for treatment of various diseases. This study identified plants mentioned in the holy Qur'an for different economic and therapeutic uses. Some of the mentioned plants include lote tree, fig, date palm, corn etc. A review of their pharmacological constituents revealed the fact that these plants have therapeutic uses. This study provides information on their tropical species synonyms that are readily available in Nigeria with a view to creating awareness on the plausible therapeutic uses for the management of metabolic and age related diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, atherosclerosis, augine, cancer. Irrespective of religion and belief, plants are naturally endowed with therapeutic effects and economic values and are readily available.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Global resurgence, Medicinal plants, Therapeutic uses,*

## **Introduction**

An important challenge of development and good governance is health, albeit, good health. Over half a century ago, the World Health Organization (WHO) formalized a definition for health as “a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. This definition has been subjected to a lot of criticism and calls made to the world health body to change this definition (Ustun &

Jakob 2015). It is believed that it is highly unlikely that anyone would be considered healthy by this definition within any period of time. It is therefore seen as unrealistic.

The word 'health' was derived from the old English word 'hoelth' which meant a state of being sound. This was accepted to refer to soundness of the body (Dolfman 1973).

In ancient times before the time of Hippocrates, health was considered a divine gift. Hippocrates encouraged environmental sanitation, personal hygiene and balanced diets as focus for maintaining good health. This is epitomized by his belief that 'let food be thy medicine and let thy medicine be food.' (Ustun & Jakob 2005).

The belief that health is a divine gift is still being held by many people in the present times. (Ustin & Jakob 2005). This is in line with the view of the Holy Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) which many practicing Muslims follow about health, sickness and death. This belief is inferred from the Holy Qur'an which states. "The Lord of the worlds; it is He who heals me when I am sick, and He who would cause me to die and live again". (Q 26 vs. 80).

### **Resurgence to the use of Herbs**

The attainment and maintenance of good health is of paramount importance to people worldwide. In recent times, there has been a resurgence to the use of herbs in treating illnesses and maintaining good health. (Sofowora 1982, Abdulrahman 1992, UNESCO 1996, Pan et al 2010; Humber 2002; Ekor 2014). According to WHO (2004) use of herbal medicines and phytonutrients or nutraceuticals continues to expand rapidly across

the world with many people now resorting to these products for treatment of various health challenges in different national healthcare settings. Various reasons adduced to this phenomenon are;

- i. Various claims on the efficacy or effectiveness of plant medicines.
- ii. Preference of consumers for natural therapies and a greater interest in alternative medicines.
- iii. Belief that herbal products are superior to manufactured products.
- iv. Dissatisfaction with the results from orthodox pharmaceuticals and the belief that herbal medicines might be effective in the treatment of certain diseases where conventional therapies and medicines have proven to be ineffective or inadequate.
- v. High cost and side effects of most modern drugs
- vi. Improvements in the quality, efficacy and safety of herbal medicines with the development of science and technology.
- vii. Patients' belief that their physicians have not properly identified the problem and the resort to herbal remedies (Bandaranayake 2006).

In agreement with the above view, Pan et al (2010) reported increased interest in and use of herbs by people to; side effects of chemical drugs, lack of curative modern therapies for several chronic diseases as well as microbial resistance.

From reports, it is estimated that up to four billion people (representing 80% of the world's population) living in the developing world (of which Nigeria is part) rely on

herbal medicinal products as a primary source of healthcare and traditional medicinal practice which involves the use of herbs is viewed as an integral part of the culture in these communities (Mukherjee, 2002; Bodeker et al 2005; Bandaranayake 2006). The committee on the use of complementary and alternative medicine USA and others reported that the use of herbal remedies has also been widely embraced in many developed countries with complementary and alternative medicines (CAMs) now becoming mainstream in the UK and the rest of Europe, as well as in North America and Australia (American public Board on Health promotions and Disease Prevention, Institute of Medicine 2005; Calapai, 2008; Braun et al 2010; Anquez-Traxler 2011).

### **Medicinal Plants**

The use of plants as medicines predates written human history. Any plant with the properties to prevent, lessen symptoms from or cure illness is a medicinal plant (Munks 2015). A plant with health promoting characteristics, that offers relief from symptomatic problems or with curative properties. Plant life international (2013) states that plants are used in medicine to maintain and augment health – physically, mentally and spiritually - as well as the treat specific conditions and ailments. Medicinal herbs are plants or parts of plant used for therapeutic or medical benefit (Nahata 2013). Medicinal plant can be wild or cultivated (Tamboli 2013).

Medicinal plants have been identified and used throughout human history. Plants have the ability to synthesize a wide variety of chemical compounds that are used to perform important biological functions. At least 12,000 of such compounds have been isolated so

far. (Lai & Roy 2004; Tapsell, Hemphill, Cobiac 2006). In continuation, they stated that chemical compounds in plants mediate their effect on the human body through processes identical to those already well understood for the chemical compounds in conventional drugs. They believe that herbal medicines do not differ greatly from conventional drugs in terms of how they work. They are thus taken to be as effective as conventional (orthodox) medicines without the side effects of orthodox medicines. Roughly 50,000 species of higher plants (about 1 in 6 of all species) have been used medicinally. Typically, pharmaceutical drugs are made from or modelled after compounds found in medicinal plants.

Medicinal plants such as herbs like peppermint, basil, oregano, thyme and rosemary have essential oils in their tissues or seeds that prevent bacteria, moulds or other microbes from growing. Other compounds in medicinal plants, like carotenoids, found in carrots and primrose have been suggested to prolong life and lessen the effects of chronic illness. The bark of Willow trees contain large amounts of salicylic acid which is the active metabolite of aspirin. Willow bark has been used for long as an effective pain reliever and fever reducer (Lichterman 2004).

Herbal medicines are often viewed as a balanced and moderate approach to healing and individuals use them as home remedies and over-the-counter drugs. (Roberts & Tyler, 1997; Blumenthal et al 1998; WHO, 2002a; Kong et al; 2003; Pal and Shukla, 2003; WHO, 2005a; Bandaranayake, 2006).

Due to the influence of religion and greater level of spiritual consciousness, many tend to be increasingly disposed to accepting therapeutic value of a treatment based on faith or intuition rather than scientific reasoning (Astin, 1998; Zeil 1999).

### **Plants in the Holy Qur'an**

As an all-encompassing book, plants are not devoid of mention in the Holy Quran.

**Table 1: Occurrence of plants in the Holy Qur'an**

S/N	Plants as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an	SurahS & verses where mentioned	Use as stated in the Holy Qur'an
1.	Corn	a. Q <sub>2</sub> : Baqara: the Heifer Vs. 261 b. Q <sub>13</sub> : Ra'd: Thunder Vs. 4 c. Q <sub>16</sub> : Nahl: The Bee Vs.11 d. Q <sub>18</sub> : Kahf: The Cave Vs. 32 e. Q <sub>55</sub> :Rahman:God,Most Gracious Vs. 12	Food Food Food Food Fodder

2.	Date Palms/Palm trees	a. Q <sub>2</sub> ; Baqara: the Heifer Vs. 266 b. Q <sub>13</sub> : Ra'd: Thunder Vs. 4 c. Q <sub>18</sub> : Kahf: The Cave Vs. 32 d. Q <sub>19</sub> ; Maryam: Mary Vs. 25 e. Q <sub>20</sub> ; Ta-Ha Vs. 71 f. Q <sub>23</sub> ; Mu-minun: The Believers vs19 g. Q <sub>36</sub> : Ya Sin vs. 34 h. Q <sub>55</sub> ; Rahman: God most Gracious vs.11 i. Q <sub>59</sub> ; Hashir: The Gathering Vs.5	Food Food Food Food Crucification Food food Container food
3.	Vines	a. Q <sub>2</sub> : Baqara: the Heifer Vs. 266 b. Q <sub>13</sub> : Ra'd: Thunder Vs. 4 c. Q <sub>16</sub> : Nahl: The Bee Vs.67 d. Q <sub>23</sub> ; Mu-minun: The Believers vs19 e. Q <sub>36</sub> : Ya Sin vs. 34	Food Food Drink & food Fruits Food
4.	Dates	a. Q <sub>6</sub> ; An'am: The Cattle Vs. 141 b. Q <sub>19</sub> ; Maryam: Mary Vs. 25 c. Q <sub>55</sub> ; Rahman: God, Most Gracious Vs. 68	Food Food Food
5.	Olives	a. Q <sub>6</sub> ; An'am: The Cattle Vs. 141 b. Q <sub>16</sub> : Nahl: The Bee Vs.11 c. Q <sub>24</sub> ; Nur: The Light Vs. 35	Food Food Oil/illuminant



		d. Q95; Tin: The Fig vs.1	Sacred symbol
6.	Pomegranates	a. Q6; An'am: The Cattle Vs. 141 b. Q55; Rahman: God, Most Gracious Vs. 68	Food Food
7.	Goodly Tree	a. Q14; Ibrahim Vs. 24	Symbolic of God's word
8.	Evil Tree	a. Q14; Ibrahim Vs.26	Symbolic of bad deeds
9.	Grapes	a. Q16: Nahl: The Bee Vs.11 b. Q18; Kahf: The Cave Vs.32	Fruit Food
10.	Tree of Eternity	a. Q20; Ta- Ha Vs. 120	Symbolic
11.	Bitter fruit	a. Q34; Saba; The City of Saba vs. 16	Symbolic
12.	Tamarisks	a. Q34; Saba; The City of Saba vs. 16	Symbolic
13.	Lote trees	a. Q34; Saba; The City of Saba vs. 16 b. Q53; Najm: The Star vs. 14 & vs. 16 c. Q56; Wa qi 'a: The inevitable Event vs. 28	Symbolic Symbolic Symbolic
14.	Spreading plant of the gourd kind	a. Q37; As saffat: Those ranged in ranks vs. 146	Symbolic
15.	Plantain (Talh) Trees	a. Q56; Wa qi 'a: The inevitable Event vs. 29	Shade
16.	Fig	a. Q95; Tin: the fig vs. 1	Sacred symbol

## Medicinal Plants in the Holy Qur'an and their therapeutic uses.

Of all the plants identified as mentioned in the above table, the following were singled out as being medicinal and their therapeutic uses investigated.

**TABLE 2: Medicinal plants, their details and therapeutic uses**

S/N	Plant	Family	Botanical names	Therapeutic uses
1.	Corn	Poaceae	<i>Zea mays</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Treatment of hormonal problems.</li> <li>b. Enhance fertility in both sexes.</li> <li>c. Treatment of diabetes (antidiabetic)</li> <li>d. Anti viral (Olapade 2002)</li> <li>e. Diuretic</li> <li>f. Poultice for treating bruises, swellings, sores, boils (anti inflammatory) and headaches (analgesic)</li> <li>g. Antiseptic and anti-microbial</li> </ul>
2.	Date palms	Are caceae	<i>Phoenix</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Antioxidants</li> </ul>

		or Palmae	<i>dactylifera .L.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Antitumour</li> <li>c. Anti inflammatory</li> <li>d. Antidiabetic</li> <li>e. Antibacterial</li> </ul>
3.	Vine (Grapevine)	Vitaceae	<i>Vitis vinifera</i> (European)  <i>Vitis amurensis</i> (Asian)  <i>Vitis labrusca</i> (N. American)	

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