

Less known uses of *Schoenoplectus articulatus* (L.) Palla of Lower Assam

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A less known use of *Schoenoplectus articulatus* (L.) Palla (Family Cyperaceae) from Lower Assam is reported. The methodology of making *Laddu* from the roasted endosperm of matured nuts is provided.

Key words: *Schoenoplectus articulatus*, Traditional food, *Laddu*, Lower Assam

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Schoenoplectus articulatus (L.) Palla (Cyperaceae) is an aquatic annual herb distributed through Indo-China to Malaysia regions¹. The plants are commonly found in low lying water logged areas at Lower Assam (Bongaigaon district). Taxonomic description, habitat, distribution and methodology of its use are provided in the paper.

Schoenoplectus articulatus (L.) Palla, Bot. Jahrb. Syst. 10: 229.1889. *Scirpus articulatus* L., Sp. Pl. 1: 70.1753; C.B. Clarke in Hook. f., Fl. Brit. India 6: 566. 1893.

Vern. Names: Chichora (Assamese), Chechka (Bengali), Putputi-chechka (Hindi).

Annual herbs, 70-120 cm high; roots stoloniferous, fibrous; stems (culms) erect, unbranched, smooth, intercepted by transverse septums at every 1.2-2.5 cm. Leaves absent or 1 or 2, short sheath(s) involving base of culm. Spikelets many flowered, in a single lateral, dense bead, near base of stem; bracts many, oblong-pointed. Flowers small, bisexual; glumes ovate, acute. Stamens-3, anther basifixed. Nuts triquetrous smooth, white when young, black when matures (Fig. 1-4).

Ecology: Commonly, grows as weed in low lying water-logged areas, usually in rice fields.

Flowering: June-August; **Fruiting:** September-November.

Distribution: India (throughout the country), Africa, China, Malaysia, Philippines and Australia.

Specimens examined: Assam, Abhayapuri, 15.10.2009, D K Roy 118598 (ASSAM); North Lakhimpur, 13.11.1959, SK Kataki 41560 (ASSAM).

Known uses: Tubers are used as a purgative^{3,4}, curing diarrhoea and also check vomiting.²

Less known use: Nuts are used in making *Laddu* by local communities of Lower Assam and are sold in market of Abhayapuri, Bongaigaon district @ Rs. 20-30/kg.

Methodology for preparation of *Laddu*

The local communities, viz. Bengali and Koch-Rajbangsi of Bongaigaon district take the roasted endosperm from the matured nuts by making delicious food stuffs. The details of the methods of processing nuts and traditional food stuffs are as follows:

Matured spikes are collected from field and stored in damp-moist place for 20-25 days, to complete decomposition of the spikelets. Regular water supply is provided for quick decomposition. Decomposed spikes are then spread under sunlight and crusted to separate the nuts from the debris. Then nuts are dried in sunlight and stored. Well dried nuts are fried in hot sand oven to split open the nut-shell giving out the endosperm in large soft puffy form. The nut-shells and the sands are removed from the soft puffy endosperms by sieving. Then the soft puffy endosperms are eaten either with warmed milk with sweet as a delicious traditional food or by making *laddu* with melting sugar or *gur*. The *laddu* may be stored in air tight container for some days (Fig. 5).

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Fig.1 *S. articulatus*

Fig.2 Fibrous roots

Fig.3 Spike

Fig.4 Extracted nuts

Fig.5 *Laddu* of roasted endosperm

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