

# Useful plants in the Chad region of North-East Nigeria

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## *ABSTRACT*

This paper attempts to examine the various uses of plants in the Chad region of North-East Nigeria. The various plant parts such as root, stem and leaves, fruits and pods, are examined to ascertain their utility. The attempt here, it should be noted, is not exhaustive but a restudy might yield useful results.

*Keywords:* uses of plants, North-East Nigeria

## *RÉSUMÉ*

Cette communication est une tentative pour dresser l'inventaire des divers usages des plantes dans le bassin du lac Tchad au nord-est du Nigéria. Les différentes parties des plantes, comme la racine, la tige et les feuilles, les fruits et les gousses, sont examinées du point de vue de leur utilité. Cet essai ne doit pas être considéré comme exhaustif : une étude plus approfondie produirait de nouveaux résultats.

*Mots-clés :* utilisations des plantes, nord-est du Nigéria

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to examine the various uses of plants in the Chad region of North-East Nigeria. The various plant parts such as root, stem and leaves, fruits and pods, are examined to ascertain their utility. The attempt here, it should be noted, is not exhaustive but a restudy might yield useful results.

### Utilization of plants by man

Numerous types of plants have been put to use since antiquity. Man has, hitherto, continued to use plant materials in very many ways. Today plants are put to different uses varying from area to area and people to people. That is to say the use to which the same plant species can be put by the people in the riverine area may likely be different from those in the savannah and in certain limited cases similar. Man uses plant materials in many forms, the most basic are the following : food, medicine, cosmetics, architecture and domestic implements.

Food-plants play vital part in supplementing man's diet. Some plants are starchy while others yield high protein and others are rich in vitamins. Some of the plants produced in the Chad region are eaten as food range from root crop such as sweet potato, and cassava, cereal crop such as rice, millet, maize, wheat and sorghum, etc., fruits includes tomato, lettuce, cabbage, etc. Some of these plants can be eaten raw, roasted or cooked.

### Architecture

In various parts of Nigeria, wooden plants are being put to erect semi-permanent structures. Walls or buildings are partly or wholly constructed by using wood, though these constructions are proceeded by brick or stone structures. In the North including the Chad region shrubs, like *Panicum subalbidum* and *Andropogon gayanus* are used for thatching of huts in villages and towns. Most tribes in the Chad region utilised shrubs for architectural purposes in one form or the other.

### Domestic implements

These include spades, shovels, handles for hoes, knives, spoon or ladles, bowls and combs, etc. There are large groups of plants from which fibres could be extracted. These include cotton, baobab tree and jute, etc. The fine fibres could be spun into threads or into a massive form of cordage such as ropes. The processing usually consists of soaking the stems or leaves so that partial decomposition disorganises the nonfibrous tissue (retting) and then

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beating the material until fibres are separated from the matrix tissue (Dimbleby 1967 : 48). They could then be spun into yarn or cord.

Some plants are used in the preparation of leather during tanning. An example is the *Acacia arabica* whose pods are used for making black dye for dyeing the leather. There are other plants which serve the purpose of either coloration, dyeing or cosmetics.

These are as follows :

- a) *Lawsonia inermis* (**henna**) : the leaves are used for dyeing the nails, hands and legs. Usually women use it, such as the Kanuri, Shuwa, Bole, Hausa, etc.
- b) *Cochlospermum tinctorium* : the yellow root serve as dye for dyeing materials.
- c) *Solanum sp.* (**goringo**) has a flower which is used for dyeing the teeth yellow. It is mostly used by the Kanuri women and both Fulani men and women.
- d) *Cyperus articulatus* (**kajiji**) with a fragrant tuberous root, is used as a perfume for clothing when processed locally. It is frequently used by the Kanuri and Shuwa. It is used as medicine to drive away evil spirit when put on charcoal fire.

### Medicinal

There are various plants which are medicinally useful. Their method of processing has thus been avoided due to scanty knowledge.

- a) *Momordica balsamina* (**garafumu**) : the leaves are boiled and the laxative taken to cure stomach pain. It serves the same purpose with Chincona (quinine) tree.
- b) *Mitracarpum scabrum* (**goga masu**) is a weed used for driving or killing hair lice, it stops body itching when rubbed, and can be applied to wounds.
- c) *Cochlospermum tinctorium* (**rawaya**) and quinine are both used against yellow fever.
- d) *Crotalaria atropubens* (**maganin kunama**) is a leguminous weed with yellow flowers and the inflated pods are used as a remedy for scorpion bite.

Plant parts can be used as a fuel for fire, to give worming effects to rooms, helps in cooking, protection against wild animals, as in the past, and pottery making, etc. The table below illustrates the uses to which plants are utilized in the Chad region of North East Nigeria.

# Garba

## Tree plants

HAUSA	BOTANICAL	ROOT	STEM	LEAF	FRUIT / SEED / POD
gabarawa	<i>Acacia arabica</i>				Pod used for making a black dye for tanning leather
kuka	<i>Adansonia digitata</i>	Produces fibre for cordage	Produces fibre for cordage		1. Pod eaten raw , 2. Seed pulp sucked, 3. Seed kernel used in production of fermented cakes ; use in soup
dabino	<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i>			Used in weaving mats, straw huts...	Fruit eaten
dorawa	<i>Parkia filicoides</i>				1. Yellow pulp which covers the seed is sucked or used in preparing "gruel" 2. Seed used for fermented weft
auduga	<i>Gossypium parvianum</i>			Used in preparing red dye for thread	Cotton from the pod used chiefly for the warp and weft.
durumi	<i>Ficus syringifolia</i>			Affords splendid shade	Edible
gigiya	<i>Borassus flabellifer</i>			Used in making mats, straw huts...	Edible fruit
kadanya	<i>Butyrospermum parkii</i>				1. Fleshy part of fruit edible. 2. Kernel used for the production of fat by boiling and skimming. 3. Shea butter used as food and medicine against catarrh.
kurna	<i>Zizyphus spina Christi</i>				Seed pulp edible
lemon zaki	<i>Citrus senensis</i>			Used in the preparation of medicine against malaria	1. Fruit sucked 2. Outer part of fruit when put on charcoal fire scare mosquitos
rimi	<i>Eriodendron orientale</i>				1. Cotton used for yarn, 2. Oil extracted from seed ; edible
tsamiya	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>				1. Seed pulp used in preparing gruel 2. Pulp when mixed with pepper acts against constipation 3. Pulp sucked.

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HAUSA	BOTANICAL	ROOT	STEM	LEAF	FRUIT / SEED / POD
lemon daci	<i>Citrus aurantifolia</i>			Used in the preparation of medicine when mixed with the outer wall of fruit	Fruit edible
mongoro	<i>Mangifera indica</i>				Fruit edible
gwaiba	<i>Psidium guajava</i>			Used in preparing medicine against malaria	Fruit edible
maina or neem or dogon yaro	<i>Chincona ledgeriana</i>		All parts used in the preparation of medicine against malaria (juicy pulp sucked)		
aduwa	<i>Balanites aegyptiaca</i>		Produces gum		1. Yellow sweet pulp sucked. 2. Seed yields edible oil 3. Kernel edible

### *Vegetable plants*

HAUSA	BOTANICAL	ROOT	STEM	LEAF	FRUIT / SEED / POD
alaiyafo	<i>Spinacia oleracea</i>			Used as vegetable in soup	
timatir	<i>Lycopersicon asculentum</i>				Fruit edible
lotus	<i>Loctuca sativa</i>			Eaten raw and can be cooked in soup	Eaten raw and can be cooked in soup.
yakuwa	<i>Hibiscus melogena</i>			Use for soup	
gauta	<i>Solanum melogena</i>				Fruit edible and can clean dirt or congestion from chest and stomach

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HAUSA	BOTANICAL	ROOT	STEM	LEAF	FRUIT / SEED / POD
albasa	<i>Allium cepa</i>	All parts eaten cooked in soup, medicine against catarrh. cooked as vegetable soup			
kubewa	<i>Hibiscus esculentus</i>				Immature fruit cooked in soup
karas	<i>Daucus carota</i>	All parts edible			
kabeji	<i>Brassica oleracea</i>		All parts edible		
karkashi	<i>Cerototheca sesamoides</i>			Used for soup	
kai nuwa	<i>Pistia stratiotes</i>				
gidido	<i>Crateva adansonii</i>		Leafs edible when cooked		

## Root plants

HAUSA	BOTANICAL	ROOT	STEM	LEAF	FRUIT / SEED / POD
rogo	<i>Manihot utilisima</i>	Edible either raw or cooked or roasted			
dankalin	<i>Solanum</i>				
turawa	<i>Tuberosum</i>	All eaten when cooked			
dankali	<i>Ipomoea batatas</i>	Edible either raw or cooked or roasted			
kajiji	<i>Cyperus articulatus</i>	Used as perfume and medicinally against evil spirits			

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### Leguminous

HAUSA	BOTANICAL	ROOT	STEM	LEAF	FRUIT / SEED / POD
wake	<i>Vigna sinensis</i>			1. Fresh leaf used in soup. 2. Dried leaf eaten by animals	Young pod. Eaten either raw or cooked. Beans eaten boiled cooked. Husk given to cattle. Beans used for bean cake.
gyada	<i>Khaya senegalensis</i>			Food for domestic animals	Edible raw, cooked or roasted. Oil is extracted from nut.
kabewa	<i>Cucurbita pepo</i>		Smoked when dry	Cooked as vegetable soup	Edible either raw, dry or cooked
garafunu	<i>Momordica balsamina</i>			Cooked in soup medicine against stomach pain	Used in the production of local soup.
barankaci	<i>Canavial ensiformis</i>				Pod used as rattle by children
maganin	<i>Crotalaria</i>		All used for remedy against scorpion bite		
kunama	<i>Atrorubens</i>				

### Shrubs / grasses

HAUSA	BOTANICAL	ROOT	STEM	LEAF	FRUIT/SEED/POD
alkama	<i>Triticum sativum</i>		Used for thatching		Eaten when cooked. Used in the production of taliya similar to macaroni
masara	<i>Zea moys</i>		do		do
damro	<i>Pennisetum spicatum</i>		do		do
dawa	<i>Sorghum vulgare</i>		do		do
baran	<i>Andropogon</i>				
maniya	<i>Ceresiaeformia</i>		Used for thatching		
farar raya	<i>Acacia sieberiana</i>		Produces gum		

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HAUSA	BOTANICAL	ROOT	STEM	LEAF	FRUIT/SEED/POD
<b>gamba</b>	<i>Mitracarpum scabrum</i>	Used for medicine against hair lice itching and wounds			
<b>goringo</b>	<i>Solinum sp.</i>				Pod used for dyeing the i.e. (cosmetic).
<b>gwandar daji</b>	<i>Ammonia senegalensis</i>				Fruit edible
<b>haukata</b>	<i>Solanaceae</i>				Intoxicant
<b>yaro lalle</b>	<i>Lawsonia inermis</i>			Used for dyeing the nails, hands and legs	
<b>tsada</b>	<i>Ximenia americana</i>				Fruit edible
<b>rama</b>	<i>Hibiscus cannabinus</i>	Fibre bark used for cordage		Eaten when cooked	
<b>rawaya</b>	<i>Cochlospermum tinctorium</i>	Used for dye medicinally against yellow fever			
<b>sabara</b>	<i>Guiera senegalensis</i>		Burnt to fumigate cattle pens to keep off flies		
<b>tsin-tsiya</b>	<i>Panicum subalbidum</i>		Used for thatching and as brooms		
<b>tafasa</b>	<i>Cassia tora</i>			Used in soup	
<b>gangamau</b>	<i>Curcuma longa</i>	Used as dye for leather			
<b>gagai</b>		Strengthens potency			

## Beverages

HAUSA	BOTANICAL	ROOT	STEM	LEAF	FRUIT / SEED / POD
<b>barkono</b>	<i>Piper nigrum</i>				As pepper in soup
<b>citta mai</b>	<i>Capsicum</i>				As pepper in soup
<b>yatsa</b>	<i>Frutescens</i>				
<b>kanumfari</b>	<i>Eugenia caryophyllata</i>				As pepper in soup



## CONCLUSION

This paper in essence has succeeded in identifying to a certain extent the importance of plants to man for different purposes - such as food, medicine, shelter and for the production of domestic utensils.

It has also been able to identify the various properties of tree plants and vegetable fibres as used traditionally by different groups within the Chad region.

The identification of the various plants and vegetable properties might be of help to Western Scientist to gear research toward these plants with the intent of processing and producing them in perfect and scientific methods in form of tablets, laxative and suspensions for medical use for third world countries.

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