

**IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF SOME UNDERUTILIZED FRUITS
CROPS AND THEIR WILD RELATIVES FOR FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL
SECURITY IN DARJEELING HIMALAYAS**

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ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out in Darjeeling, India during 2013 to 2014. Field survey was conducted for collecting information regarding utilization aspects of some underutilised fruits. Important wild fruits were selected on the basis of their easy availability and on their food, medicinal and other values in Darjeeling regions. Morphological descriptions were given after consulting with botany experts and information gathered from various literatures. The most common and popular value added product was fat/butter extracted from the fruits of *Machilus edulis* and *Diploknema butyraceae*. Similarly, wild fruits were also processed into pickles, jam, curry, juices, confectionaries, vinegar and wine or alcohol by local people. All these fruits were good source of fat, protein, sugars and antioxidants. Most of the species were found to have many therapeutic uses. The most frequently utilized plant parts are bark, followed by roots, fruits, seeds. Majority of the plant parts were prepared in the form of juice followed by paste and powder. Moreover many species were also exploited for various non fruit utilities like charcoal purpose, fuel wood, construction and fence. Indigenous minor or wild fruits had thus crucial contribution towards subsistence economy and livelihood of Darjeeling. Further, such documentation will benefit the community through the use of locally and freely available health giving foods which will also help preserve their cultural pride.

KEYWORDS: Wild Fruits, Morphological, Utilization, Quality