

Diospyros melanoxylon

Family : Ebenaceae

It's a highly drought tolerant tree found across India and is famous for the leaves used to making bidis (poor man's cigarette) by wrapping tobacco dust inside the leaves. The plant variously known as Tendu, Timru, Kendu, Kinnu in different parts of India. The tree is also called as 'beedi mara' (beedi tree) in the southern parts of India. The abundance of the plant throughout India allows easy collection of its produce by a plethora of forest-dependent tribes. Collection of leaves during summer months has been a prevalent practice. But, it is also valued for its sweet fruit that the tribal communities like Vasava, Oraon, Kondh, Santal, Saora, Kolha, Munda, Juang of Jharkhand, Odisha, Chattisgarh, Gujarat eat raw or cooked. In Rajasthan, the underground parts are also in use. The sweet fruit is also very popular among the large bands of gatherer tribes, such as Gonds, Muria, Abhoj maria, Kawars, Nagesia Pando, Majhwar and Khairwar communities. Forest people use this fruit to beat intense summer heat, and it is believed to boost their stamina to work for long hours.

Apart from eaten raw, there are many local delicacies, such as Tendu-Seeta. It is a pudding prepared from the fruit that is quite famous around Chhattisgarh. Similarly, wine from tendu fruit is also popular among tribals which supposed to have anti-oxidant activity. Recent studies suggest that tendu fruit is a low glycemic fruit and can be a potential replacement of sucrose in sweet beverages.

