

Part 2

(.....after part 1)

Nelumbo nucifera

Family: Nelumbonaceae

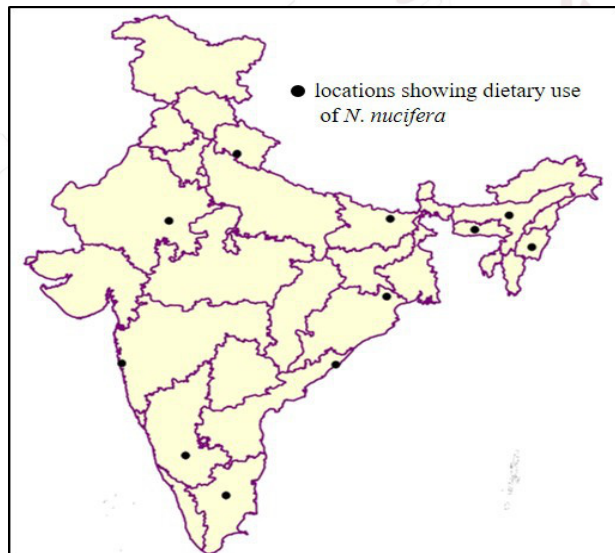
A perennial aquatic herb boasting soft pink flowers does not only soothe our eyes but also fills up our stomach with all edible parts. Like its ubiquitous distribution in the stagnant water bodies across the country, its culinary tradition is diverse as well. Starting from distant north-eastern state of Manipur, locally known as '*thambal*' or '*thamau*' the plant is widely available in local markets as a common food. Down along the river Brahmaputra, the Shan tribes of Assam, living in areas like Golahat, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh and Karbi Anglong, use the seeds, flowers and underground parts of the plant. The plant is well known as '*padumphovl*' in local tongue. In other parts of Assam, it is called as '*padum*' and even the carpel and petiole of the plant find a place in the plate. In Uttarakhand Himalaya, the plant is cultivated in ponds up to 1300 m altitude and fruit is a popular local food among the peasants. The culinary use from the local communities has been reported from Bhadrak and Mayurbhanj districts of Odisha. Locally known as '*padma*' or '*kaani*', the rhizome is used as vegetable and seeds are eaten as raw. In coastal Andhra, the tribes especially living in the Vizianagaram and Sreekakulam district (Bagata, Konda Dora, Valmiki, Konda Kammara, Mali, Kotia, Khond, Jatapu, Muka Dora, Gadaba, Porja, Khond and Savara) call it '*kamalam*' or '*thavare beru*' for the rhizome and use it for edible purposes. The shoot of the plant well known in Tamil Nadu as '*thamarai kizhangu*' is a delicacy and is used to make chips.



Photo: Rajasri Ray



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It is especially popular among the 'Tamil Brahmin' communities settled across Tamil Nadu, parts of Kerala and other parts of the country. The lotus stems are cut into round pieces, marinated with chili powder and salt, dried well and fried whenever required. The product can be stored in airtight containers for longer periods. The local people of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and some states of north India cut and stir fry the lotus roots and stems. Lotus stem and root recipes are very much available in popular websites. However, there is a misconception of availability of puffed lotus seed in market. The item sold as 'puffed lotus seed' is actually the seed of fox nuts (*Euryale ferox*) or *Makhana* which is an edible aquatic plant also known as a highly nutritious food.