
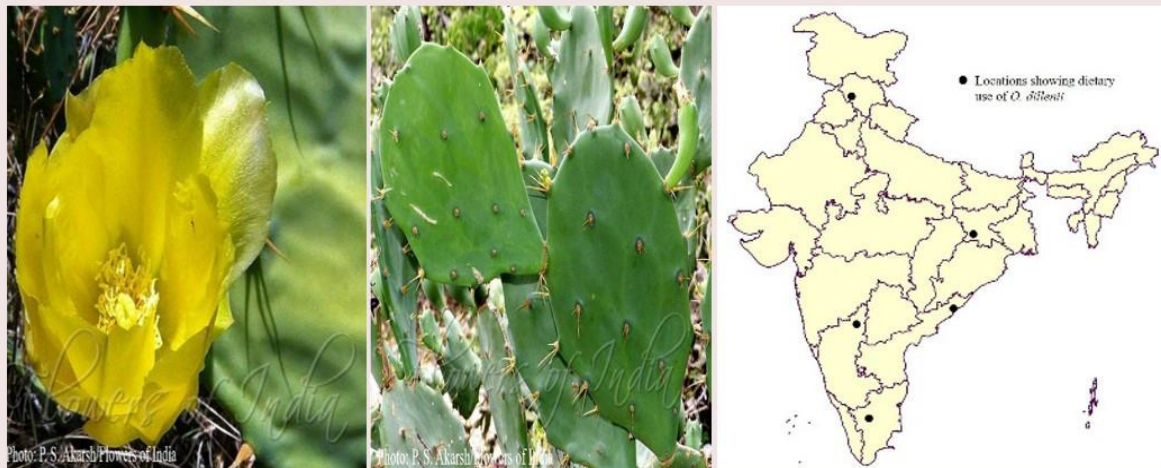
 ***Opuntia dillenii* (Ker Gawl.) Haw.** 
Family: Cactaceae

The plant is different from the common prickly pear (*Opuntia indica*), bears strikingly bright yellow flower and can be found along the coastal regions and beyond. Owing to its resemblance with serpent head, it is called as *naga phana*, but also known as *sappathi kalli*, *chorhathalo*, etc. The plant bears alluring red fruit conspicuously seated on the modified stem (cladode), the fruit is a popular item among tribals of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka as well as in Bihar. Studies say that the juice of the cactus plant possesses many curative, i.e., anti-allergic, anti-oxidative and anti-carcinogenic properties. The young tender shoots (cladodes) is fortified with high amount of macro minerals like, potassium, sodium, magnesium, calcium and phosphorous along with important micro minerals (e.g., iron, zinc, copper, manganese). Fruits too have high nutritional value as they are rich in vitamin C, E and beta carotene, protein, fats, minerals (potassium, magnesium, calcium, phosphorous) and amino acids (proline, taurine and serine). Nutritional beverages from the plant (along with papaya and mango) shows promising anti-oxidant activities and act as a potential energy booster. Initiatives for traditional food preparation using the fruit have been gathering pace (e.g., jam, juice, nectar, juice concentrate, and syrup). Although the cultivation and processing of the plant have already gained popularity, a large majority is unaware of the nutritional benefits of the plant thus left under-utilized.



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