



Wild uncultivated edible plants of India

Part 8

(.....after part 7)

 ***Physalis minima* L.** 
Family: Solanaceae

Physalis minima or little gooseberry is one of the common plants in agricultural fields and rural roadsides. Considered as a weed, this herbaceous member has wider culinary acceptance among the tribes of Southern India. Communities like, Toda, Kota, Kurumba, Paniya, Irula, Badaga and Lambanis use the leafy shoot as vegetable in different forms viz., boiled with spices, cooked with tubers (potato), etc. Similarly, fruit is consumed in both unripe and ripe forms. Unripe fruits are tangy in taste suitable for pickle, while ripe fruits are sweet in taste and widely popular among the wandering forest dwellers. The edible value of the plant is widely accepted in the southern Western Ghats, Nilgiri mountains, Tamil Nadu and Deccan plateau. In the north-east, especially in the upper Assam both leafy shoots and fruits are well accepted among the peoples of Shan tribe. While leafy shoots are eaten in boiled forms fruits are consumed directly. Nutritional assessment of the fruits shows that it is a good source of vitamins (A and C) and minerals like phosphorous, potassium, calcium, magnesium and iron. Recent studies on leafy shoots and roots detected the presence of Withasteroids (a group of phytochemicals) important for preventing the growth of tumours in human body. Despite its nutritional potential the plant is yet to be accepted in mainstream culinary network, though kitchen garden enthusiasts have started procuring and sharing the seeds online.

