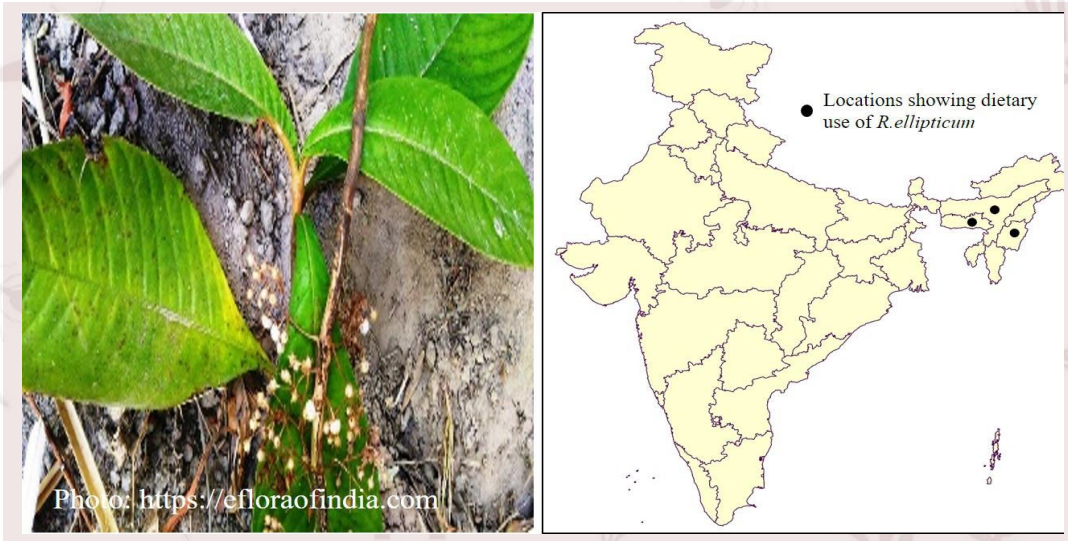


***Rhynchotechum ellipticum* (Wall. ex D. Dietr.) A. DC.**

Family: Gesneriaceae

An erect tiny shrub of family Gesneriaceae produces rose-purple flowers and juicy berries. It is quite abounding in the north-eastern part of India, primarily across the Assam region where it is locally known as *Ja-Kharia* or *Japang esing* or *Mehek*. The *Ja-Kharia* plants are seen in a dry climate as well as in moist wet evergreen areas. The leaves possess a very good amount of protein, carbohydrate, and various minerals. The plant is also rich in antioxidants and essential vitamins, sufficient amounts of essential minerals (such as copper, zinc, magnesium, iron). So the consumption of this vegetable seems to prevent anaemia, help nucleic acid metabolism, control the blood-glucose levels, and might have the potential to support a healthy immune system.

Owing to its abundance in the Assam and contiguous regions, it is extensively consumed by most indigenous communities and others alike; In the Kangchup hills of Senapati district in north-east India, the plant is called as *Yembum* or *Cheklap* by the local tribes who use raw or cooked leaves or the Rongmei tribes of Manipur also cook the leaves along with others wild edible plants in low flame with rice to make '*ganhoi*' or rice porridge. To many of them, it is also a culturally important species such is the case of the Karbis of Assam whose lifeways are closely entwined with the tree. *Mehek* (*Rhynchotechum ellipticum*) is considered as an important plant in the traditional diets of the Karbis. The common method of consumption of *mehek* is cooking with *pholo* (alkaline water) and *manthu* (dried fish). For this, leaves are cut into pieces, washed with water, and cooked by adding *pholo* and *manthus*; while *pholo* softens the tissue *manthu* elevates its acceptance infusing rich aroma - together making a perfect combo to relish over a family chat.



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