

## Wild uncultivated edible plants of India

Part 12

(.....after part 11)

*Spilanthes acmella* (L.) L.

**Family: Compositae**

As popularly known as the toothache plant, this commonly available herb belongs to the sunflower family. The plant is visible for its button-like yellow flower head at the top of a long stalk. Although the medicinal properties are well known the knowledge of culinary use is mostly limited to the traditional users and food connoisseurs. Documented sources tell us about its edible use from the north-eastern states of Assam, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh and western Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh. In Assam, tribal groups like Dimasa, Hmar, Mising and Zeme Naga use leaves and young shoots as vegetables in boiled form. It is also a popular ingredient in chicken soup where chicken pieces and *Spilanthes* leaves boil together with ginger, garlic, and black pepper. For the Mising tribe, this plant locally known as *Marsang* and is used for preparing special food during religious festivals. Tender leaves of the plant are roasted with *Numsing* (a traditional fermented fish product) for preparing the final dish. In Manipur, the Zou tribe consumes the boiled leaves as vegetables and chews the raw inflorescence to relieve toothache. Likewise, in Himachal Pradesh, leaves are cooked as a vegetable and fresh flowers are also eaten raw. The plant has another common use in salad preparation. A few shredded leaves add unique flavor to the salad. The popularity of cuisine has nutritional rewards too. Essential micronutrients like Iron, Sodium, Zinc, Manganese, and Copper were reported in various parts of the plant. Similarly, macronutrients like Potassium, Magnesium, and Nitrogen were also detected in considerable amounts.

