



Ethnobotanical Characteristics of the Traditional Use of Wild Food Plants in the Jizzakh Region

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ethnobotanical characteristics of the traditional use of wild edible plants by the local population of the Jizzakh region. The study is based on the analysis of scientific literature and available sources, focusing on plant diversity, methods of use, and their significance as food resources. The results indicate that certain wild plants have long been widely used by the local population as a source of food, and that the accumulated traditional knowledge holds important ethnobotanical value.

KEYWORDS: Ethnobotany, wild plants, edible plants, traditional knowledge, Jizzakh region.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnobotany, as a scientific discipline that studies the interactions between humans and plants, is considered one of the key research fields addressing the issues of efficient and sustainable use of natural resources [1; 3]. In particular, the experience of using wild food plants is closely associated with the lifestyle, ecological conditions, and cultural values of the population in a given region [2; 5].

The Jizzakh region is characterized by diverse natural and geographical conditions, representing a convergence of different landscape zones. The presence of mountain foothills, hilly foothill zones, and plains contributes to increased plant diversity in the area [6; 7]. Therefore, the regional flora is rich and diverse, distinguished by a high abundance of wild plant species.

According to data reported by To'xtayev B.Y., the diversity of wild-growing plant species in the region is high, and some of them have long been used as food sources [7].

Analyses indicate that local populations mainly consume the above-ground parts of wild plants—leaves, shoots, and young stems. In the composition of wild food plants in the Jizzakh region, leafy greens and bulbous plants predominate. In particular, wild mint (*Mentha longifolia*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), wild onion (*Allium* spp.), Turkestan spinach (*Spinacia turkestanica*), shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*), and dock (*Rumex* spp.) are widely used in various dishes across almost all parts of the region [4; 7; 9]. The young leaves and stems of these plants are often used in the preparation of traditional dishes such as somsa, herb-based soups, and other national meals. Although these plants are sometimes consumed fresh as salads, they are mainly prepared by boiling or frying. Wild mint and wild onion species are also commonly used as spices in cooking [5; 7].

Additionally, plants such as desert candle (*Eremurus* spp.) and rhubarb (*Rheum* spp.) are actively collected, especially in foothill areas during the spring season. The young shoots of desert candle are consumed after boiling or frying and are sometimes added to dough-based dishes. Rhubarb stems have a sour taste and are often consumed fresh or used as an ingredient in various dishes [2; 8].

Wild food plants are not only used as components of traditional dishes but also serve as important natural resources with high nutritional value [3; 7; 8].

When analyzed across the natural and geographical zones of the Jizzakh region, a significant variation is observed in the level of use of wild food plants among different areas. In particular, in foothill districts such as Zomin District and Baxmal District, natural populations of desert candle (*Eremurus* spp.) and rhubarb (*Rheum* spp.) are relatively dense. These plants are actively collected during the spring season and widely consumed as food. The favorable ecological conditions and high biodiversity in these areas contribute to the expanded use of these plant resources [6; 7].

At the same time, the use of certain plant species is closely linked to regional traditions, and the methods of their preparation and consumption have been shaped by the lifestyle and cultural practices of the local population. This indicates that the use of wild plants represents not only a biological process but also a socio-cultural system [8]. In general, the use of wild food plants constitutes an important body of ethnobotanical knowledge for the population of the Jizzakh region and has developed with distinct regional characteristics.

The use of wild food plants is not limited to meeting nutritional needs. According to Xojimatov O.K., some plant species are also used in traditional medicine, playing a significant role in improving overall health and providing preventive effects. This confirms the multifunctional biological and practical value of wild plants [8; 9].

Conclusion

The use of wild food plants in the Jizzakh region is closely associated with the traditional knowledge of the local population, serving as an important food and cultural resource. This knowledge has mainly been transmitted orally from generation to generation and represents a valuable ethnobotanical heritage.

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