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### *Portulaca oleracea* L. sp. Pl a small herb of religious and medicinal significance

**Jyanti Kumari and Singh CTN**

#### **Abstract**

The genus *Portulaca* L. is known world wide as *Pursalane* representative of the family Portuacaceae in this part (eastern) of India. The genus is represented by the three species namely *Portulaca quadrifida*, *P. oleracea* and *P. pilosa*. All the three species have their own economical horticultural and medicinal uses. *P. oleracea* is a pot herb and is used by the locals as sag. *P. oleracea* is a smaller variety and is called choti Nunia. It has a religious significance in the sense that it is very sought after in “Gitiya” festival where it is eaten by the fasting mothers. *P. pilosa* sub sps. *grandiflora* is a well known ornamental herb (Saxena and Brahman, 1994).

**Keywords:** Pursalane, religious, medicinal

#### **1. Introduction**

The plant is locally (Ramgarh district Jharkhand) known as Nuni. Although the plant is considered as a weed in Ramgarh and near about places, it is eaten as a leaf vegetable. It has a slightly sour and salty taste and is eaten throughout India, Asia and Worldwide. It is also suitable for soups and stews. The sour taste is due to malic acid present in the plant body. The plant has significant religious importance ascribed to it due its uses in “Gitiya” festival of eastern India. The plant status in India is uncertain. As usual it is considered an exotic used. It has since naturalized in Chotanagpur and is found as weed in open fields, Farmalated, Wasteland of Sirka and Argadah area. The plant is located throughout the year in different geographic situation. It could be found in the coal waste of mines as well. It is available in local harts as vegetables although its availability depends on the time of year. It being common during the rainy and autumn season (July to November). The plant was maintained as herbarium in Ramgarh College and was identified by the help of local and renowned flora. The latest citation of the plant being (Jain and Rao, 1978) [2] as under.

*Portulaca quadrifida* L. Mant Pl. 1.73. 1967; Dyer in Hook Fl. Brit. India 1.246. 1874; Gamble, Fl. Madras 1.66. (47) 1915; Haines Bot. Bihar and Orissa 1.47 1481. 1921; Mooney, Supply. Bot. Bihar and Orissa 24. 1950; Geesink, Blumea 17: 290. 1967 and in Stcenis H. Males 1.7:127 1971. Sivrajan J. Bombay, Nat. Hist. Soc. 78:259. 1979.

The morphological features of the plant was thoroughly studied. The plant is a creeping herb, rooting at the nodes, the nodes have a whorl of intra and interpetiolar hairs. Leaves are opposite as opposed to the other two species mentioned which have alternate leaves.

Their shape elliptic – oblong, 3-6 x 1-3 mm, entire acute, succulent, glabrous, axillary hairs. 2-3 m long Flower yellow, Calyx 8 mm across, terminal, solitary foliar involucre. Ca-4 (Hains, 1921; Gamble, 1918) [1] flowers are surrounded by profluce hair. Sepals 4 oblong to 3 mm (Paria and Chattopadhyay, 2005). Petals 4, obovate, 4 mm long, obtuse.

Stamens 8-12, ovary ellipsoid style 3-4 cleft, capsule ovoid, 3.4 mm, operculum 2.2-5 mm, seed black 8 mm.

**Table 1:** Different Parameters of flowers of *Portulca quadrifida* in mm.

No. of reading	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
Leaf (mm)	3	4	3.5	5	6	5.5	5.8	5.2	3.9	4.8	4.67
Hair (mm)	2	2.5	3	3.1	3.2	2.8	2.9	3	3.2	3.3	2.90
Flower (mm)	7	7.2	8	8	8.1	8	7.8	7.8	7.7	8.1	2.91
Sepal (mm)	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.2	2.8	3.2	3	3	3.1	2.9	3.00
Petal (mm)	3.8	4.2	3.7	4.3	3.8	3.8	4	4	4.2	4.2	4.10
Capsule (mm)	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.45
Seed (mm)	7.8	7.8	7.6	7.9	8.2	8.1	8	8	8	8.1	7.95

Noni has great nutritional values and contains more omega-3 fatty acids than any other leafy vegetables plant. It also contains vitamins A, B, C, E and, carotenoids, and minerals such as magnesium, calcium, potassium and iron.

In traditional Chinese medicine its leaves are used for insect bites boils, sores and pains.

It is used as an ayurvedic drug Arukaladi taila (Sivarajan and Balchandra, 1994) [3]. It cures wounds, flatulence, caught etc. (Joshi, 2000).

*Portulaca* is a panatropical weed, seen wild throughout India in diverse-climatic situation. Owing to its herbal remedial properties it should invite interest among people of plant science and pharmogyanacy.

## 2. Acknowledgement

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