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Some medicinal plants from Gangetic plains of west Bengal as alternative source of food and vegetables

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Abstract
The present paper deals with the wild medicinal plants used as edibles in different parts of the World based on the publishd literature and useful for the natives of Gangetic plains of West Bengal during the period of scarcity of food and vegetables. The study was conducted in the Gangetic plains starting from Rajmahal hills to meeting point of River Ganga to the Bay of Bengal in the Gangasagar areas. For gathering the informations and collection of plants samples an area of 10 km range on either side of the Genga river five spots at the equal distance of approximately 100 kms. on the river bank were selected and the plants samples were collected. During the exploration, 160 plants belonging to angiosperms and ferns were identified, according the literary remarks on its edible nature which have also been recorded as medicinal as well as useful in traditional healing practicesas m. All the edible plants from the study sites were categorized into family wise; habit of the plants like herbs, climbers, shrubs and trees; edible parts like tuberous roots, tender shoots, leaves, fruits and seeds; alongwith the mode of use as major food preparations, fress edibles, cooked food form, flavour, beverage, sauce, and vegetables etc.

Keywords: Edible plants, wild source, grains, vegetable, flavour, Gangetic plains

Introduction
Plants play a vital role in human life as a source of food and medicine for oral consumption in various ways including fresh use as vegetables, spices, salads, sauces, decoctions of plant parts, powdered plant parts, pills made from fermented plant parts, etc. to maintain the health of the body and prevent civilization diseases. Many of the plants falls in the category of being used as food as well as medicines say to providers of health benefits and nutrition. Different plant parts are used as edible part or as vegetables, cooked, roasted or fresh form. Several plants are recogniged as agricultural crop/ vegetables whereas the other group pf plants are available as the wild plants and their use as food culinary is not known for the particular areas. These plants are used as wild vegetables or grains or other food forms in far away part of the world either in the localized areas, country wise or only in a limited area in the same country. Gangetic plains in West Bengal initiates from Rajmahal hills bordering with Jharkhand to Gangasagar traversing through the districts of Hazarduwari, Nadia, Hoogley, and South 24 Pargana. Seeking out this an exploration was made in the gangetic plains in the West Bengal where, most of the areas are falling under flood during rains and moist humus soil in other seasons. Number of rivers in West Bengal are serving as tributaries of River Ganga. Literary documents were recorded for edibility of the various plants occurring in the areas of exploration and being used in any other part of the World based on published records. During exploration, 161 speciew were found to be used as edible plant in the form of fresh edibles, cooked, roasted, curry, inscence, flavour and for making sauce and soup. Out of the plants recorded as edible plants 33 plants along with otherswere used by the local natives of Maldah district [1-27].

Methodology
Exploration sites were divided by the selection of 5 main spots i.e. Farakka and Hazarduwari in the district of Hazarduwari, Mayapur in the Nadiya, Hoogley in Hoogley district, Diamong Harbour and Gangasagar in the district of South 24 Pargana district (Map 1).

The study areas were demarcated by the areas of 10 kilometres on both sides of the River Ganga. Plants were collected from the earmarked ares from each five spots. Plants materials were dried poisoned and mounted on specific herbarium sheets by the use of herbarium techniques [28]. Identification of the herbarium sheets were made by the available literature and matching the herbarium sheets kept in the herbarium of Patanjali Research Foundation as well as on line herbarium of Kew [29]. Worldwide literatures on edible plants were consulted from on line as well as offline libraries. Records were maintained properly by depositing the herbarium sheets in the Herbarium of Patanjali Research Foundation (Acronym PRFH). Current names of the plants were mentiones according to the Plants of the World online [30].

Results

During the course of exploration, 160 medicinal plants were recorded for use as edible plants out of which 33 plants were used by nearby areas of Maldah District used by local people as vegetable or other types of food (Table 1). The records have been presented with photographs (Figures 1, 2).

Table 1: Wild Edible plants from Gangetic plains of West Bengal

S. No.	Botanical name	Family	Habit	Common name	Flower/fruit	Locality	Parts used	Mode of uses
1	*Abutilon indicum* (L.) Sweet	Malvaceae	Shrub	Kanghi, Ban kukra	Round the year	Gangasagar, Farakka,Mayapur, Mahula, Hazarduari (4551)	Seeds	Seeds pounded with Bajra seeds flour [2]
2	*Achyranthes aspera* L.	Amaranthaceae	Herb	Prickly Chaff Flower, Apamarga	Round the year	Farakka, Mayapur (4651)	Root, leaf, seeds, flowers	Cooked as diet ingredient [1]
3	*Acmella calva* (DC.) R.K.Jansen	Asteraceae	Herb	Toothache plant	March-June	Hooghly (4102)	Shoot	Eaten in cooked form [3]
4	*Acmella paniculata* (Wall. ex DC.) R.K.Jansen	Asteraceae	Herb	Panicled Spot Flower	March-July	Bhatpara, Mahula (4252)	Shoot	Eaten in cooked form [4]
5	*Albizia procera* (Roxb.) Benth.	Fabaceae	Tree	White siris, Safed siris	April-October	Farakka, Mayapur (4547)	Tender leaf	Cooked as vegetable [5]
6	*Allophylus serratus* (Roxb.) Kurz	Sapindaceae	Shrub	Toothed-Leaf Allophylus, Tippani	July-November	Hooghly (4805)	Fruits	Sweet and eaten raw [6]
7	*Alocasia indica* (Lour.) Spach	Araceae	Herb	Kachchu	Not seen	Bhatpara Hazarduari (4302)	Corm, leaf, petiole	Cooked as vegetable, leaves fried with gram flour to dumplings [7]
8	*Alternanthera philoxeroides* (Mart.) Griseb.	Amaranthaceae	Herb	Alligator Weed	March-June	Farakka, Mayapur (4546)	Tender shoot	Consumed as vegetable [8]
9	*Alternanthera sessilis* (L.) R.Br. ex DC.	Amaranthaceae	Herb	Kanphuli	May-September	Bhatpara Diamond Harbour, Falta Farakka, Gangasagar Hooghly (4527)	Tender shoot, leaves	Consumed as vegetable [9]
10	*Amaranthus spinosus* L.	Amaranthaceae	Herb	Prickly Amaranth, Kanta chaulai	February-May	Bhatpara Farakka, Gangasagar, Hoogly, Mayapur (4517)	Leaf	Consumed as vegetable [1]
11	*Amaranthus viridis* L.	Amaranthaceae	Herb	Jungli chaulayi	January-May	Bhatpara, Farakka , Hazarduari, Gangasagar (4754)	Leaf	Consumed as vegetable [1]
12	*Anethum graveolens* L.	Apiaceae	Herb	Soya	November-April	Bhatpara Hazarduari Mahula (4288)	Leaf, tender shoot	Consumed as vegetable [1]
13	*Anisomeles indica* (L.) Kuntze	Lamiaceae	Herb	Bengal pogostemon, Gobura, Gopali, apang	May-October	Farakka, Falta Hazarduari (4522)	Leaf	Consumed as vegetable on scarcity of food [10]
14	*Antigonon leptopus* Hook. & Arn.	Polygonaceae	Climber	Coral vine, Honolulu creeper, Anantalata	August-December	Gobindarampur Hazarduari (4601)	Tuber, flower, Tender shoot	Food, Used as tea [11]
15	*Argemone mexicana* L.	Papaveraceae	Herb	Sialkanta	March-June	February-March	Stem	Curry [1]
16	*Artocarpus heterophyllus* Lam.	Moraceae	Tree	Jackfruit, Katahal	February-June	Farakka (4240)	Fruit, seed	Unripe fruits vegetable, ripe edible.
17	*Arundo donax* L.	Poaceae	Herb	Tinta, Baranai, wild cane	September-December	Hazarduari (4584)	Root	Powdered for bread [12]
18	*Avena fatua* L.	Poaceae	Herb	Wild oats	March-July	Farakka (4245)	Seeds	Like oats, bread flour [13]
19	*Azadirachta indica* A. Juss.	Meliaceae	Tree	Neem	March-July	Mahula (4248)	Leaf, flower	Culinary preparations [1]
20	*Bacopa monnieri* (L.) Wettst.	Plantaginaceae	Herb	Brahmi, brahmi	February-June	Bhatpara, Mahula (4287)	Shoot	Sauce, vegetable [1]
21	*Basella alba* L.	Basellaceae	Climber	Poi, Pui Shaak	Feburary-April	Mayapur (4694)	Leaf, shoot	Vegetable [5]
22	*Bauhinia acuminata* L.	Fabaceae	Tree	Safed Kachnar, Shwetkanchan	August-January	Gangasagar (4746)	Flower, tender shoot	Vegetable [14]
23	*Boerhavia diffusa* L.	Nyctaginaceae	Herb	Red hogweed, Punarnava	Round the year	Diamond Harbour Hazarduari, Hooghly Mayapur (4699)	Tender shoot	Vegetable [1]
24	*Brassica juncea* (L.) Czern.	Brassicaceae	Herb	Kali Rai, Indian mustard	Decmber-March	Farakka Mayapur (4625)	Leaf, seed	Vegetable, tadaka, fry
25	*Cannabis sativa* L.	Cannabaceae	Herb	Bhang, ganja, charas, Gallow grass	June-October	Mahula (4254)	Seed	Sauce
26	*Capparis zeylanica* L.	Capparaceae	Climber	Ceylon caper, Indian caper, Aradanda	March-June	Gobindarampur (4146)	Fruit	Vegetable, pickle [5]

27	*Capsicum annuum* L.	Solanaceae	Herb	Chilli, Mirch	August-November	Mayapur (4679)	Fruit	Vegetable
28	*Cardiospermum halicacabum* L.	Sapindaceae	Climber	Balloon Vine, kanphuta	October-April	Diamond Harbour, Farakka Gobindarampur Mayapur (4559)	Tender shoot, leaf, seed	Vegetable, spice, oil [5]
29	*Carica papaya* L.	Caricaceae	Tree	Papeeta, Papeya	Round the year	Falta, Mayapur (4688)	Fruit	Vegetable, edible fruit
30	*Causonis trifolia* (L.) Mabb. & J.Wen	Vitaceae	Climber	Amal-lata, Bush Grape	July-December	Falta, Farakka (4668)	Young leaf	Vegetable [5]
31	*Celosia argentea* L.	Amaranthaceae	Herb	Flamingo Feathers, Wheat Celosia, Silmili	August-November	Hooghly (4814)	Leaves, tender stems, young flower spikes	Vegetable, sauce [1]
32	*Centella asiatica* (L.) Urb.	Apiaceae	Herb	Indian Pennywort, brahmi	April-July	Bhatpara (4160)	Shoot, leaf	Sauce, vegetable [15]
33	*Chenopodiastrum murale* (L.) S. Fuentes, Uotila & Borsch	Amaranthaceae	Herb	Bathua, fat hen, bathuwa	February-June	Bhatpara (4159)	Tender shoot, leaf	Vegetable [1]
34	*Chrysopogon zizanioides* (L.) Roberty	Poaceae	Herb	Khas, Khuskhus, Vetiver	Round the year	Farakka, Mayapur (4640)	Root	Flavourin [16]
35	*Cleome rutidosperma* DC.	Cleomaceae	Herb	Fringed Spider Flower	May-November	Falta, Hazarduari, Mayapur (4653)	Leaf	Vegetable [17]
36	*Cleome viscosa* L.	Cleomaceae	Herb	Asian spider flower, Bagra	January-June	Bhatpara, Farakka (4537)	Seed	Frying ingredient [18]
37	*Clitoria ternatea* L.	Fabaceae	Climber	Aprajita, Butterfly Pea	September-December	Gangasagar (4737)	Young pod, flower	Eaten as cooked [19]
38	*Coccinia grandis* (L.) Voigt	Cucurbitaceae	Climber	Ivy Gourd, Kundru	January-June Round the year	Farakka, Hazarduari Mayapur (4683)	Green fruit, ripe fruit, tender leaf	Soups and curries, raw or stewed with other vegetables [20]
39	*Commelina benghalensis* L.	Commelinaceae	Herb	Kankawa, Bengal Dayflower	August-November	Falta, Farakka, Gangasagar Mayapur (4628)	Tender shoot	Vegetable [2]
40	*Commelina erecta* L.	Commelinaceae	Herb	White-Mouth Dayflower	August-November	Diamond Harbour (4376)	Tender shoot	Vegetable [21]
41	*Corchorus capsularis* L.	Malvaceae	Herb	White Jute, koshta, patta shaak	June-October	Gangasagar (4732)	Tender shoot	Vegetable [1]
42	*Crateva magna* (Lour.) DC.	Capparaceae	Tree	Large Garlic Pear, Bama	February-July	Farakka (4227)	Young fruit	Edible [22]
43	*Crotalaria pallida* Aiton	Fabaceae	Undershrub	Smooth Rattlepod, salts rattlebox	January-June	Diamond Harbour, Mahula, Mayapur, Gangasagar (4652)	Flower	Vegetable [5]
44	*Cucumis melo* L.	Cucurbitaceae	Climber	Wild Melon, senat seed, small gourd	July-November	Farakka (4569)	Fruit	Raw, vegetable
45	*Cucumis sativus* L.	Cucurbitaceae	Climber	Cucumber	June-October	Bhatpara, Mayapur, Gangasagar (4707)	Fruit	Raw, vegetable
46	*Cucurbita pepo* L.	Cucurbitaceae	Climber	Pumpkin	March-June	Bhatpara, Mayapur (4329)	Fruit, flower, tender shoot	Vegetable
47	*Dendrocalamus strictus* (Roxb.) Nees	Poaceae	Woody Herb	Bamsa, Karali	Not seen	Mahula (4279)	Tender shoot	Eaten cooked [23]
48	*Digera muricata* (L.) Mart.	Amaranthaceae	Herb	False Amaranth, chanchali	February-July	Farakka, Mahula, Mayapur (4548)	Tender shoot	Laxative, edible [1]
49	*Echinochloa colonum* (L.) Link	Poaceae	Herb	Wild rice, Jangali Chawal, Shama millet	June-September	Farakka, Gangasagar, Hooghly (4564)	Seed	Cooke as rice [24]
50	*Echinochloa stagnina* (Retz.) P.Beauv.	Poaceae	Herb		August-January	Farakka (4519)	Culm, seed	As porriage, rice [25]
51	*Eclipta prostrata* (L.) L.	Asteraceae	Herb	Trailing eclipta, Bhringaraj	Round the year	Farakka, Gangasagar, Mayapur (4722)	Tender shoot	Vegetable [2,5]
52	*Enydra fluctuans* Lour.	Asteraceae	Aquatic herb	Buffalo Spinach	January-March	Bhatpara, Diamond Harbour, Mahula (4262)	Leaf, tender shoot	Vegetable [1]
53	*Erythrina stricta* Roxb.	Fabaceae	Tree	Dhol dhak	January-June	Farakka (4230)	Flower	Vegetable [26]
54	*Ficus hispida* L.f.	Moraceae	Tree	Hairy Fig, gobla	March-July	Diamond Harbour, Farakka, Hazarduari, Mayapur (4611)	Unripe fig	Curry [1]
55	*Ficus religiosa* L.	Moraceae	Tree	Peepal, holy fig tree	May-September	Farakka, Mayapur (4681)	Tender leaf	Vegetable [1]
56	*Glinus oppositifolius* (L.) Aug.DC.	Molluginaceae	Herb	Jima, Grishma-sundaraka	March-May	Bhatpara Mahula (4281)	Tender shoot, leaf	Vegetable [1]
57	*Glycosmis pentaphylla* (Retz.) DC.	Rutaceae	Undershrub	Van nimbu, Pilu	February-December	Farakka, Hazarduari (4609)	Ripe fruit	Edible [27]
58	*Grangea maderaspatana* (L.) Poir.	Asteraceae	Herb	Madras Carpet, mukhtari	March-May	Hooghly (4112)	Tender shoot	Vegetable [25]
59	*Hibiscus vitifolius* L.	Malvaceae	Undershrub	banakapasa, Grape Leaved Mallow	September-December	Hooghly (4801)	Tender leaf, flower	Vegetable, beverage [31]
60	*Holoptelea integrifolia* (Roxb.) Planch.	Ulmaceae	Tree	Indian Elm, Chilbil	February-April	Gobindarampur (4209)	Fruit	Eaten raw [32,33]
61	*Ipomoea aquatica* Forssk.	Convolvulaceae	Aquatic herb	Water Morning, Nali	April-September	Bhatpara,Diamond Harbour, Farakka, Gobindarampur (4497)	Shoot	Vegetable [1]
62	*Ipomoea cairica* (L.) Sweet	Convolvulaceae	Climber	Railway Creeper, Neeli-bel	Round the year	Hooghly (4837)	Root, tendr shoot	Cooked and fresh [34]
63	*Ipomoea obscura* (L.) Ker	Convolvulaceae	Climber	Obscure Morning	December-	Farakka, Mayapur (4571)	Tender leaf	Soup, vegetable [5]

	Gawl.			Glory	April			
64	*Ipomoea sagittifolia* Burm.f.	Convolvulaceae	Climber	bankalami, bawn peyanj, Purple Heart Glory	July-December	Gangasagar, Hooghly (4747)	Shoot, leaf	Soup, vegetable [35]
65	*Ipomoea triloba* L.	Convolvulaceae	Climber	ghanti kalami, Little Bell Morning Glory	July-November	Hooghly (4827)	Leaf	Vegetable [36]
66	*Leucaena leucocephala* (Lam.) de Wit	Fabaceae	Tree	Subabul	Round the year	Diamond Harbour, Falta (4768)	Tender shoot, very young pods	Vegetable im Mexico, Thiland [5]
67	*Leucas lavandulifolia* Sm.	Lamiaceae	Herb	Guma, halkusa	February-July	Farakka, Gobindarampur, Hazarduari (4508)	Tender shoots	Vegetable1
68	*Litchi chinensis* Sonn.	Sapindaceae	Tree	Leechee	February-April	Hazarduari (4313)	Ripe fruit	Eaten as edible fruit
69	*Ludwigia adscendens* (L.) H.Hara	Onagraceae	Herb	Water Primrose, Water Dragon	March-June	Farakka, Gobindarampur, Hooghly (4482)	Tender shoot,	Salad [5]
70	*Ludwigia perennis* L.	Onagraceae	Herb	Perennial Water Primrose, paddy clove	August-December	Farakka (4545)	Leaf	Vegetable [36]
71	*Luffa cylindrica* (L.) M.Roem.	Cucurbitaceae	Climber	Turai	July-November	Hooghly (4789)	Fruit	Vegetable
72	*Marsilea minuta* L.	Marsileaceae	Aquatic herb	Sunisanaka	Not seen	Diamond Harbour, Gobindarampur (4386)	Leaf	Vegetable [1]
73	*Medicago lupulina* L.	Fabaceae	Herb	Black Medic, Hop-clover	February-May	Bhatpara (4167)	Tender shoot	Vegetable [37]
74	*Melochia corchorifolia* L.	Malvaceae	Herb	Bon-pat, Tikiokra, Chocolate Weed	July-January	Hazarduari (4582)	Leaf	Vegetable [38]
75	*Mesosphaerum suaveolens* (L.) Kuntze	Lamiaceae	Undershrub	Vilaiti tulsi, American Mint	January-May	Bhatpara, Diamond Harbour, Farakka, Mayapur 4541)	Shoot tips	Flavour [39]
76	*Momordica charantia* L.	Cucurbitaceae	Climber	Bitter Gourd, Karela	Round the year	Mahula (4247)	Fruit	Vegetable
77	*Momordica dioica* Roxb. ex Willd.	Cucurbitaceae	Climber	Spiny Gourd, Ban karela	July-November	Mayapur (4696)	Fruit	Vegetable
78	*Moringa oleifera* Lam.	Moringaceae	Tree	Sojna, Drumstick Tree, Horseradish tree	March-July	Mayapur (4623)	Fruit, leaf	Vegetable, soup [1]
79	*Murraya paniculata* (L.) Jack	Rutaceae	Shrub	Orange Jasmine, Kamini	April-June	Farakka, Hazarduari (4475)	Leaf	Flavour
80	*Neolamarckia cadamba* (Roxb.) Bosser	Rubiaceae	Tree	Kadamb	July-February	Farakka, Hazarduari, Hooghly, Mayapur (4808)	Inflorescence	Curry [1]
81	*Nephrolepis cordifolia* (L.) C.Presl	Polypodiaceae	Herb	Tuber Sword Fern	Sori in September-October	Hooghly (4791)	Tuber, tender frond	Roasted and consumed, vegetable [40]
82	*Nigella sativa* L.	Ranunculaceae	Herb	Kalaunji, Black Seed	January-April	Mahula (4277)	Seed	Flavour
83	*Nyctanthus arbortris-tris* L.	Oleaceae	Tree	Harshringar	August-March	Gangasagar, Hazarduari Hooghly Mayapur (4700)	Leaf	Curry [1]
84	*Nymphaea nouchali* Burm.f.	Nymphaeaceae	Aquatic herb	Kumuda, Sada Shapala, Neelkamal	Round the year	Gangasagar (4734)	Rhizome, seed, its flour	Roasted for food [1]
85	*Nymphaea pubescens* Willd.	Nymphaeaceae	Aquatic herb	Swetshaluk, Nilofar, Romanian White Waterlily	Round the year	Gangasagar (4734)	Rhizome, seed, its flour	Roasted for food [1]
86	*Ocimum tenuiflorum* L.	Lamiaceae	Herb	Holy basil, Tulsi	Round the year	Bhatpara, Farakka (4540)	Leaf	Flavour [41]
87	*Oldenlandia corymbosa* L.	Rubiaceae	Herb	Corymb Diamond Flower, pitpapra	May-December	Farakka, Mayapur (4544)	Shoot, leaf	Flavour, herbal tea [42]
88	*Oryza sativa* L.	Poaceae	Herb	Rice, paddy, Chaval, Dhan	Round the year	Gangasagar (4738)	Seed	Cooked food
89	*Ouret lanata* (L.) Kuntze	Amaranthaceae	Herb	gorakhbuti, gorakhganja	March-June	Bhatpara (4163)	Leaf	Vegetable [43]
90	*Oxalis corniculata* L.	Oxalidaceae	Herb	Creeping Wood Sorrel, Amrul	Round the year	Diamond Harbour, Gobindarampur (4434)	Leaf, shoot, seed	Sauce, sour [1]
91	*Oxystelma esculentum* (L.f.) Sm.	Apocynaceae	Climber	Dudhi, Dudhiyalata, Kshirai	July-December	Farakka (4509)	Leaf	Vegetable [44]
92	*Passiflora foetida* L.	Passifloraceae	Climber	Running Pop, Passion flower	May-December	Farakka, Gangasagar, Mayapur (4568)	Fruits	Edible in North Australia [45]
93	*Peperomia pellucida* (L.) Kunth	Piperaceae	Herb	Shiny Bush, Slate pencil plant	September-December	Hooghly (4796)	Whole plant	Edible raw or cooked [46]
94	*Pergularia daemia* (Forssk.) Chiov.	Apocynaceae	Climber	Dholi dudh, Gadaria ki bel	March-June	Bhatpara, Farakka, Gangasagar, Mayapur (4565)	Tender leaf, tuberous root, fruit (precations for being toxic)	Vegetable mixed with Yam in [47]
95	*Persicaria hydropiper* (L.) Delarbre	Polygonaceae	Herb	Water Pepper, marsh-pepper smartweed	Round the year	Bhatpara, Farakka, Hazarduari, Hooghly (4812)	Leaf, flower	Cooked with other ingredients for spice [48]
97	*Persicaria lapathifolia* (L.) Delarbre	Polygonaceae	Herb	Pale Knotweed, Pale Persicaria	June-November	Farakka, Hooghly (4502)	Tender leaf	Vegetable, raw or cooked [5]
97	*Persicaria pubescens* (Blume) H.Hara	Polygonaceae	Herb	Drooping Knotweed	February-April	Mayapur (4339)	Tender leaf	Vegetable [5]
98	*Phoenix sylvestris* (L.) Roxb.	Arecaceae	Tree	Wild date palm, Khajur	April-June	Diamond Harbour (4346)	Fruit, stem juice	Edible, sugar, beverage [5]

99	*Phragmites australis* (Cav.) Trin. ex Steud.	Poaceae	Herb	Common reed	Round the year	Farakka (4514)	Tender leaf, root, stem	Vegetable, raw or cooked [49]
100	*Phyllanthus reticulatus* Poir.	Phyllanthaceae	Shrub	Black-Honey Shrub, Makhi, Panjuli	March-June	Farakka, Gobindarampur (4513)	Fruit	Edible [25]
101	*Physalis angulata* L.	Solanaceae	Herb	Cutleaf Ground Cherry	Round the year	Farakka, Hooghly, Mahula, Mayapur (4649)	Fruit	Edible [50]
102	*Pistia stratiotes* L.	Araceae	Aquatic herb	Water Cabbage, jalakumbhi	August-October	Gangasagar (4359)	Plant	Cooked [5]
103	*Pluchea indica* (L.) Less.	Asteraceae	Shrub	Indian Camphor-Weed	March-June	Diamond Harbour, Gangasagar, Hooghly (4739)	Leaf	Raw or cooked Salad [5]
104	*Polygonum plebeium* R.Br.	Polygonaceae	Herb	Small Knotweed, chimati saag	February-April	Hooghly (4105)	Leaf	Cooked for vegetable with potato [47]
105	*Pontederia crassipes* Mart.	Pontederiaceae	Aquatic herb	Water Hyacinth, Jal Kumbhi	March-May	Hooghly (4103)	Tender leaf	Vegetable [2]
106	*Pontederia hastata* L.	Pontederiaceae	Aquatic herb	Arrow Leaf Pondweed	September-February	Farakka, Mahula, Mayapur (4534)	Tender leaf, petiole, flower	Vegetable [51]
107	*Potamogeton crispus* L.	Potamogetonaceae	Aquatic herb	Curled Pondweed	Not seen	Diamond Harbour, Gobindarampur (4387)	Tuber, leaf	Edible use [52]
108	*Potamogeton natans* L.	Potamogetonaceae	Aquatic herb	Broad-leaved pondweed, floating pondweed	Not seen	Gobindarampur (4216)	Root	Raw or cooked [52]
109	*Potentilla supina* L.	Rosaceae	Herb	Spreading Cinquefoil	January-April	Gobindarampur (4218)	Tender leaf	Cooked vegetable [1]
110	*Pouzolzia zeylanica* (L.) Benn.	Urticaceae	Herb	Graceful Pouzolz's Bush	May-July	Bhatpara (4170)	Tender leaf	Vegetable mixed with other vegetables [5]
111	*Pseudognaphalium luteoalbum* (L.) Hilliard & B.L.Burtt	Asteraceae	Herb	Weedy Cudweed, Jersey Cudweed	February-April	Diamond Harbour Gobindarampur (4430)	Leaf	Raw or cooked [53]
112	*Psidium guajava* L.	Myrtaceae	Tree	Guava, Peyara, Amrood Amrood	Round the year	Diamond Harbour Falta, Mayapur (4767)	Fruit	Edible ripe
113	*Ricinus communis* L.	Euphorbiaceae	Tree	Castor bean, Arandi	February-July	Bhatpara, Falta Hazarduari (4574)	Seed, seed oil	Edible [1]
114	*Rorippa indica* (L.) Hiern	Brassicaceae	Herb	Indian Field-Cress, Chamsuru	January-April	Bhatpara, Diamond Harbour (4415)	Tender shoot	Raw or cooked vegetable [53]
115	*Rumex crispus* L.	Polygonaceae	Herb	Curly dock, yellow dock	January-April	Gobindarampur (4222)	Tender leaf	Vegetable [54]
116	*Rumex dentatus* L.	Polygonaceae	Herb	Toothed Dock, Ambavati	February-June	Bhatpara (4122)	Tender leaf	Vegetable [55]
117	*Sagittaria sagittifolia* L.	Alismataceae	Aquatic herb	Chinese Arrowhead	March-July	Gobindarampur (4184)	Tuber	Edible after cooked [55]
118	*Schoenoplectiella mucronata* (L.) J.Jung & H.K.Choi	Cyperaceae	Herb	Bog Bulrush, Rough-seed bulrush	June-September	Diamond Harbour Hooghly (4416)	Root	Vegetable [57]
119	*Scoparia dulcis* L.	Plantaginaceae	Herb	Sweet Broom Weed, Ghoda tulsi	February-May	Farakka, Hooghly, Mayapur (4680)	Leaf, tender shoot	Sweet flavouring, vegetable [58]
120	*Senegalia catechu* (L.f.) P.J.H.Hurter & Mabb.	Fabaceae	Tree	Khayer, Black Cutch Tree	June-November	Farakka (4539)	Heartwood exudate cake	Chewed for flavour mixture with bete [15]
121	*Senna alata* (L.) Roxb.	Fabaceae	Shrub	Candle Bush, Dadmurdan	Round the year	Mayapur, Gangasagar, Hoogly (4708)	Tender shoor, leaf	Cooked as vegetable, substitute for coffee [59]
122	*Senna occidentalis* (L.) Link	Fabaceae	Undershrub	Coffee Senna, Kalkashunda, Kasunda	July-December	Farakka, Gangasagar, Hooghly (4709)	Leaf, flower, seed	Vegetable, substitute for coffee17
123	*Senna siamea* (Lam.) H.S.Irwin & Barneby	Fabaceae	Tree	Siamese cassia, Seemia	Round the year	Farakka (4483)	Tender leaf, flower	Cooked [60]
124	*Senna sophera* (L.) Roxb.	Fabaceae	Undershrub	Kasaunda, Kasaundi	October-March	Hazarduari, Mayapur (4612)	Tender leaf, pods, seed	Curry, substitute for coffee [1]
125	*Senna tora* (L.) Roxb.	Fabaceae	Herb	Panevar, Chakunda	August-December	Falta, Farakka Hazarduari (4531)	Tender leaf, seed	Vegetable, substitute for coffee [61]
126	*Sesamum indicum* L.	Pedaliaceae	Herb	Sesame, Safed til	June-November	Mayapur (4468)	Seed, oil	Roasted, sweet ingredient, cooking
127	*Setaria verticillata* (L.) P.Beauv.	Poaceae	Herb	Bristly bristle grass.	Round the year	Diamond Harbour (4379)	Seeds	For grain [62]
128	*Solanum anguivi* Lam.	Solanaceae	Undershrub	African Eggplant, Barhanta	September-December	Farakka, Hazarduari, Mayapur (4538)	Berries	Vegetable [63]
129	*Solanum giganteum* Jacq.	Solanaceae	Shrub	Red Bitter Berry, healing-leaf tree	July-December	Hazarduari (4606)	Berries	Edible but bitter [47]
130	*Solanum nigrum* L.	Solanaceae	Herb	Black nightshade	March-June	Bhatpara, Farakka, Hooghly, Mayapur (4654)	Shoor, berries	Vegetable, edible fresh1 [64]
131	*Solanum sisymbriifolium* Lam.	Solanaceae	Undershrub	Sticky Nightshade, Bitter apple	November-April	Farakka, Gangasagar Gobindarampur, Hooghly, Mayapur (4536)	Berries	Edible [65]
132	*Solanum torvum* Sw.	Solanaceae	Shrub	Bhurat, Bhankatiya	January-June	Bhatpara, Falta (4780)	Green berries	Vegetable [64]
133	*Solanum violaceum* Ortega	Solanaceae	Shrub	Indian Nightshade	November-May	Diamond Harbour, Gobindarampur (4426)	Berries	Vegetable [64]
134	*Sonchus brachyotus* DC.	Asteraceae	Herb	Corn sow thistle	February-May	Diamond Harbour (4421)	Tendr shoot	Vegetable [66]

135	*Sonchus oleraceus* L.	Asteraceae	Herb	Hare's-lettuce, Milk thistle, Dudhi	February-May	Mahula (4241)	Tender shoot,leaf,	Salad [67]
136	*Sonneratia alba* Sm.	Lythraceae	Tree	Sweet-Scented Apple Mangrove	November-February	Gobindarampur 4356)	Fruit	Edible [5]
137	*Sphenoclea zeylanica* Gaertn.	Sphenocleaceae	Herb	Goose Weed, Chickenspike	Round the year	Gangasagar (4736)	Leaf, tender shoot	Vegetable [68]
138	*Streblus asper* Lour.	Moraceae	Tree	Sand Paper Tree, Dahia	March-June	Mahula (4278)	Fruit	Edible [5]
139	*Stuckenia pectinata* (L.) Börner	Potamogetonaceae	Aquatic herb	Fennel Pondweed	Not seen	Mayapur (4337)	Root, stem, leaf, seed	Raw, cooked [5]
140	*Suregada multiflora* (A.Juss.) Baill.	Euphorbiaceae	Tree	False Lime, Ban Naranga	February-June	Gobindarampur, Hazarduari (4608)	Ripe fruits	Edible raw [7]
141	*Synedrella nodiflora* (L.) Gaertn.	Asteraceae	Herb	Cinderella Weed, Pig grass	June-September	Gangasagar, Hooghly, Hazarduari (4643)	Tender shoot	Vegetable [69]
142	*Terminalia arjuna* (Roxb. ex DC.) Wight & Arn.	Combretaceae	Tree	Arjun	March-December	Gobindarampur (4182)	Seed, bark decoction	Edible, beverage [5]
143	*Terminalia catappa* L.	Combretaceae	Tree	Indian Almond, Jangli badam	June-December	Falta (4769)	Fruit, seed	Acidic, seed like almond [70]
144	*Thelypteris prolifera* (Retz.) C.F.Reed	Aspleniaceae	Herb	Daly river fern	Sori in September	Diamond Harbour (4410)	Tender shoot	Vegetable inferior to Diplazium sp. [40]
145	*Tinospora cordifolia* (Willd.) Hook.f. & Thomson	Menispermaceae	Climber	Giloy, Gulunch	March-April	Farakka Hazarduari Mayapur (4670)	Fruit	Edible [71]
146	*Tragia involucrata* L.	Euphorbiaceae	Herb	Barhanta	October-January	Farakka, Mahula (4481)	Leaf	Vegetable [72]
147	*Trichosanthes cucumerina* L.	Cucurbitaceae	Climber	Jangli Chichinda, Wild Snake Gourd	July-January	Farakka (4543)	Immature fruits, tender shoot	Vegetable [1]
148	*Trichosanthes dioica* Roxb.	Cucurbitaceae	Climber	Parwal	July-February	Farakka (4232)	Fruit	Vegetable
149	*Trigonella foenum-graecum* L.	Fabaceae	Herb	Methi, Greek-clover	February-May	Hazarduari, Mahula (4270)	Leaf, seed	Vegetable, spice
150	*Typha domingensis* Pers.	Typhaceae	Herb	Patera, Pater, Hogla	May-November	Farakka (4494)	Tender shoot, Rhizome	Roasted or cooked as food [73]
151	*Urochloa reptans* (L.) Stapf	Poaceae	Herb	Running grass, para grass	Round the year	Hazarduari (4319)	Seed	Edible in cooked form
152	*Vachellia nilotica* subsp. indica (Benth.) Kyal. & Boatwr.	Fabaceae	Tree	Babul	January-May	Farakka, Gangasagar, Gobindarampur (4507)	Exudate gum	Edible in roasted form
153	*Veronica anagallis-aquatica* L.	Plantaginaceae	Herb	Wavy-Leaf Speedwell	February-June	Gobindarampur (4200)	Leaf	Edible raw or cooked [5]
154	*Vicia sativa* L.	Fabaceae	Herb	Common Vetch, Akra	December-March	Diamond Harbour (4407)	Leaf	In tea form [16]
155	*Xanthium strumarium* L.	Asteraceae	Undershrub	Chota dhatura	January-June	Hazarduari, Hooghly (4573)	Seedlings	In curry [1]
156	*Vitex negundo* L.	Lamiaceae	Shrub	Nirgundi, Chaste Tree	September-January	Diamond Harbour Gangasagar (4758)	Leaf, seed	Curry, ondiment [1]
157	*Zea mays* L.	Poaceae	Herb	Maize, Corn, Bhutta	June-September	Mahula (4267)	Seed	Flour, pop, cornflake
158	*Ziziphus mauritiana* Lam.	Rhamnaceae	Tree	Ber, Indian plum	April-June	Farakka (4476)	Fruit	Edible, pickles [1]
159	*Ziziphus nummularia* (Burm.f.) Wight & Arn.	Rhamnaceae	Shrub	Jhar Beri, Bhubadari, Bhui kul	May-September	Gangasagar (4749)	Fruit	Edible unripe and ripe when mature [74]
160	*Ziziphus oenopolia* (L.) Mill.	Rhamnaceae	Climber	Makoh, Siakul	July-December	Mayapur (4661)	Fruit	Edible, dried for offseason use [1]

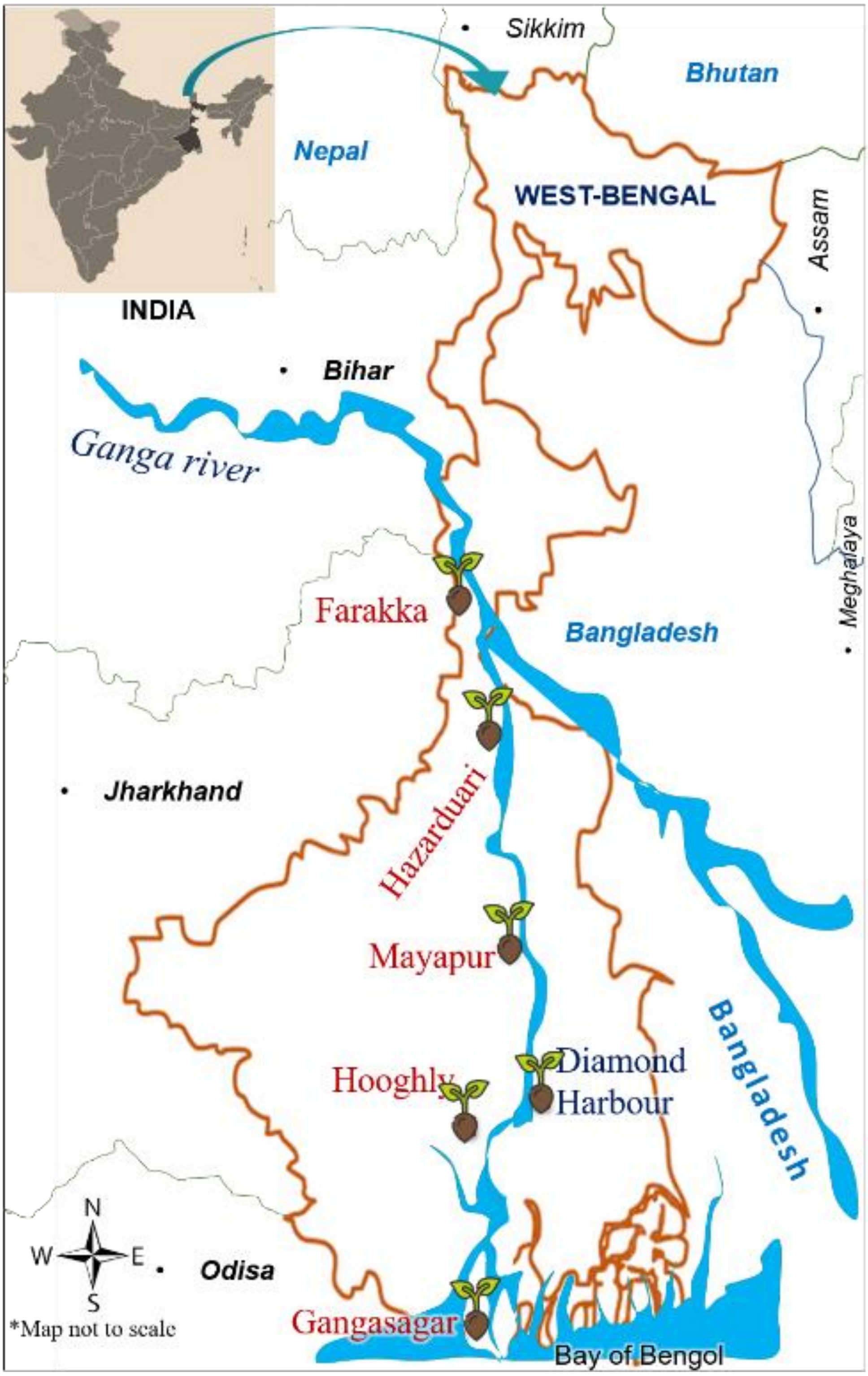
Discussion and Conclusion

Raising population of India and the world as a whole needs to find out resources for fulfilling the need of food and the land resource for agriculture is limited due to which for getting more production of agricultural resources, use of chemical fertilizers are being made beyond the requirements. According this is the need of hour to find out alternative sources of either edible plants from wild sources which have been used in past or being reported from other countries where, thse plants are available and are reported as edible plants. Accordingly, the studies ere made on exploration of such edible plants being used in India or other countries as the wild edible plants. Edible plants were categorised based on number of plants per family for taxonomic status, category of habit of plants i.e. herbs, aquatic herbs, climbers, shrubs, undershrubs and trees. Further, all the plants have been categorised with the parts of planrs use for various types of fresh eating and preparation of food items, *viz.* major food items, vegetables sauces, soupe, beverage like coffee, tea etc.

Maximum number of plants were recorded from the Family Fabaceae i.e. 16 which in turn is followed by Asteraceae and Poaceae with 11 plant species, Amaranthaceae and Cucurbitaceae with 9 plant species; Solanaceae with 8 species, Polygonaceae with 7 plant species. Convolvulaceae and Lamiaceae with 5 plant species; Malvaceae and Moraceae with 4 species. Euphorbiaceae, Plantaginaceae, Potamogetonaceae, Rhamnaceae and Sapindaceae with 3 plant species; Apiaceae, Apocynaceae, Araceae, Brassicaceae, Capparaceae, Cleomaceae, Combretaceae, Commelinaceae, Nympheaceae, Onagraceae, Pontederiaceae, Rubiaceae and Rutaceae with 2 plant species. Remaining 30 families Alismataceae, Arecaceae, Aspleniaceae, Basellaceae, Cannabaceae, Caricaceae, Cyperaceae, Lythraceae, Marsileaceae, Meliaceae, Menispermaceae, Molluginaceae, Oleaceae, Oxalidaceae, Papaveraceae, Passifloraceae, Pedaliaceae, Phyllanthaceae, Piperaceae, Plantaginaceae, Poaceae, Polygonaceae, Polypodiaceae, Ranunculaceae, Rosaceae, Sphenocleaceae, Typhaceae, Ulmaceae, Urticaceae and Vitaceae with only 1 plant species (Figure 3).

Considering the habit of the plants used as edible plants maximum plant species were herbs i.e.77 species followed by trees 27 species, climbers 24 species, aquatic herbs 12 species, shrubs 11 species and 9 species were undershrubs (Figures 4). The parts used and mode of used have been presented through graphs [Figures 5, 6].

Since several plants are used as edible having some toxic effects like *Xanthium strumarium* hence there is need of study of nutritional value and toxicity of the plants recorded in this communication.



Map 1: Map showing the areas under study in Gangetic plans of West Bengal

Fig 1: Photographs of the plants used as edibles

Fig 2: Photographs of the plants used as edibles.

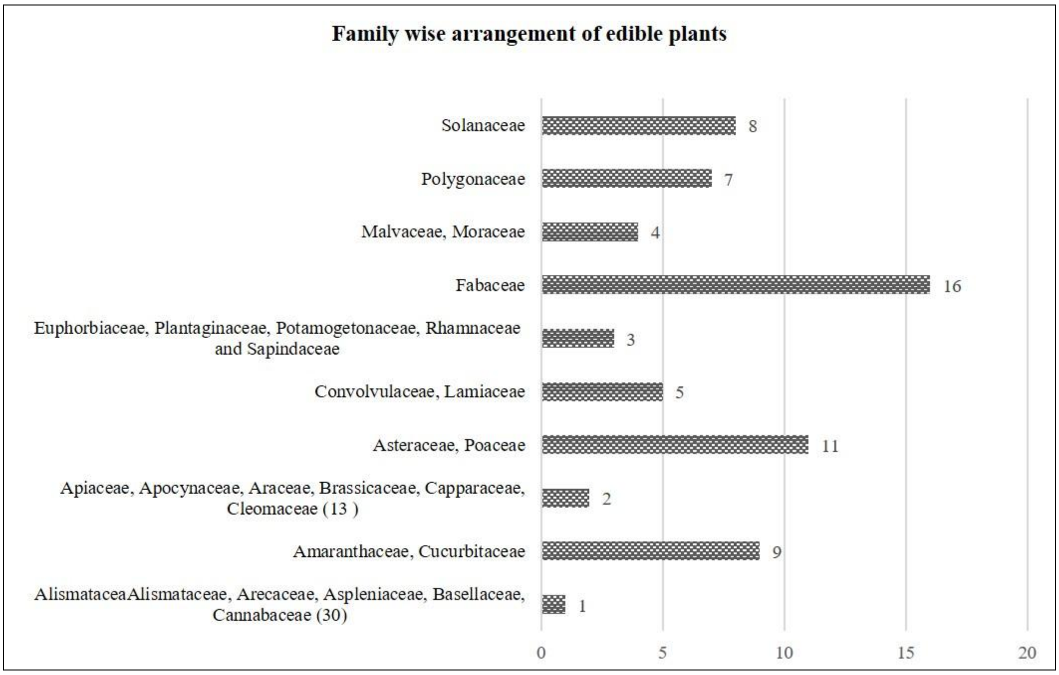


Fig 3: Graphical representation of the family wise distribution of the edible from Gangetic plains of West Bengal

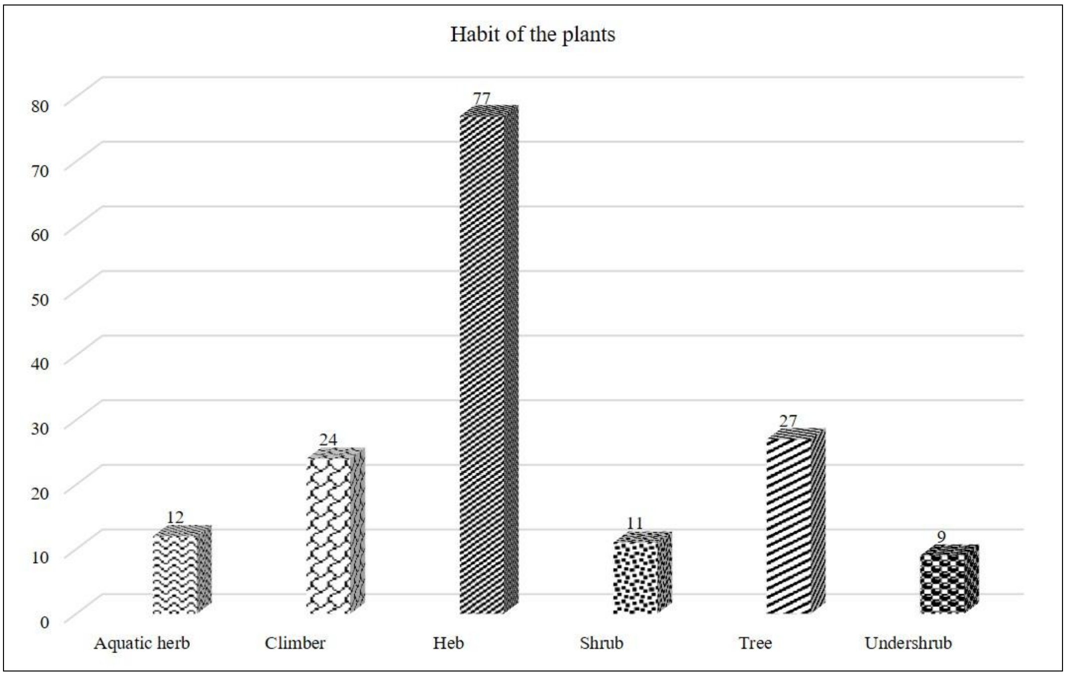


Fig 4: Graphical representation of the habits of the edible from Gangetic plains of West Bengal

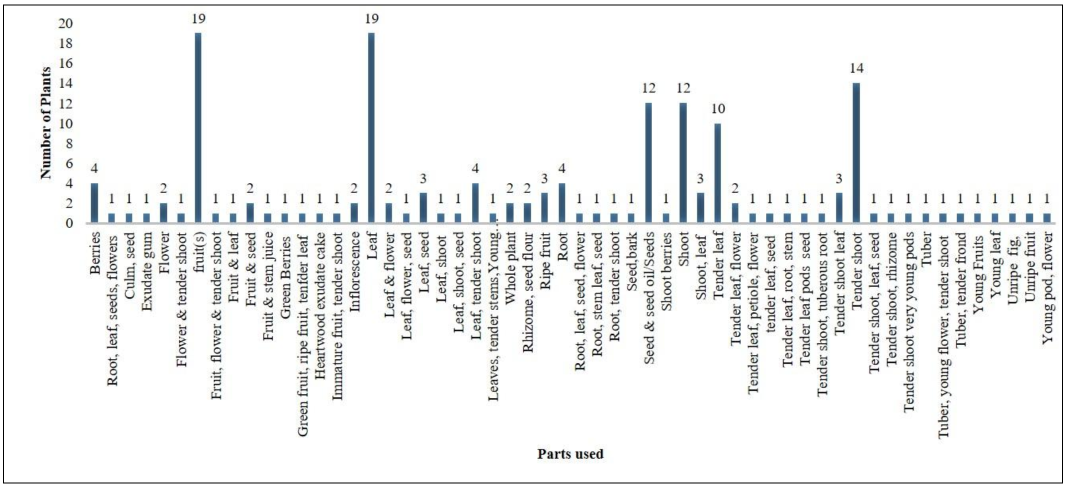


Fig 5: Graphical representation of the edible from Gangetic plains of West Bengal

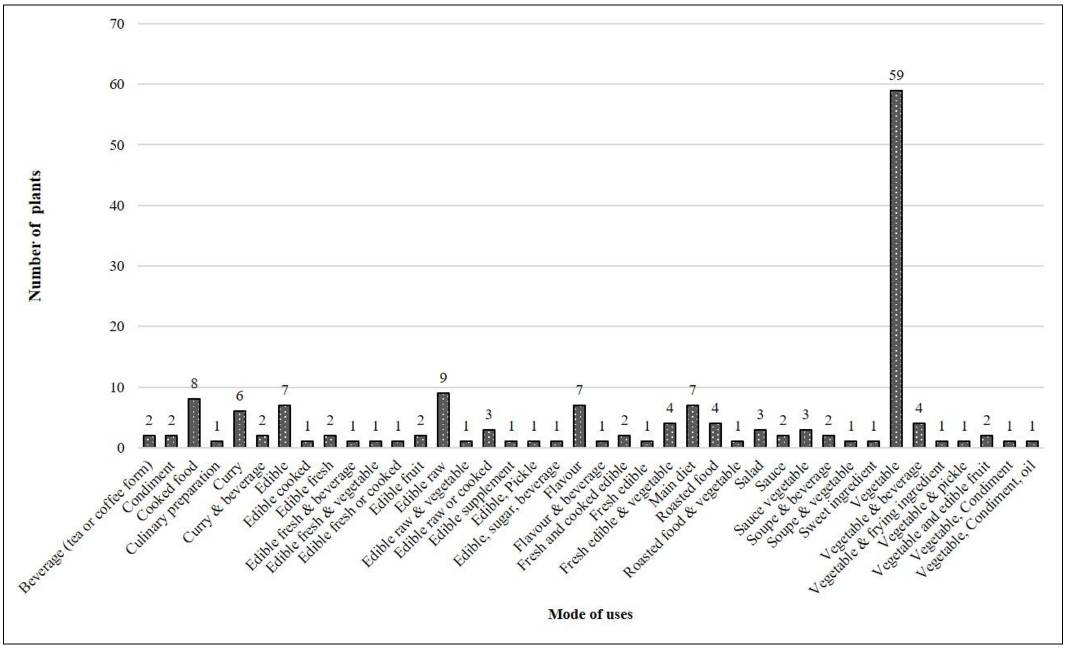


Fig 6: Graphical representation of the mode of use of the edible from Gangetic plains of West Bengal

Conflict of interest: The authors declear no any conflict of interest.

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