



**Letter to Editor**

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## **HERBAL TREATMENTS IN ALDAI AND KAPTUMO DIVISIONS IN NANDI DISTRICT, RIFT VALLEY PROVINCE, KENYA**

**Keywords:** Ethnobotany; Kenya medicinal plants; Nandi people.

Dear Sir,

Ethno botanical study was done in Aldai and Kaptumo divisions in Nandi district situated on the western part of Rift valley province. It borders Kakamega district to the north–west, Uasin Gishu district to the north and East, Kericho district to the south-east, Kisumu to the south east and Vihiga district to the west (Anon, 1997-2002). With forest reserves occupying 54,487.4 hectares. The district lies within latitudes 0<sup>0</sup> and 0<sup>0</sup>34” North and Longitudes 34<sup>0</sup> 44” and 35<sup>0</sup> 25” East. It occupies an area of 2,873 km<sup>2</sup> with forest reserves occupying 56,019 hectares. South nandi forest covering an area of 1800ha. It has an altitude of 1700-2000m (Kigomo, 1991). It has five administrative divisions. Aldai division occupies 567km<sup>2</sup> and sub-divided into twelve locations and 38 sub-locations (Kigomo, 1991). Aldai division has the highest population density of 382 people in 567 km<sup>2</sup> in 2001 and the same trend is expected to increase with a population growth rate of 2.9%. These people still perform herbal treatments for curing general disorders. For them, use of herbs is the cheapest way for curing various health disorders. A review of literature reveals that much work has been done on ethnomedicinal plants in Kenya and other parts of the world (Jain, 1991; Negi et al., 1993; Ole Sankan, 1995; Singh et al., 1997; Karehed and Odhult, 1997; Bussmann et al., 2006). But still there are some tribal pockets which could be surveyed for the search of new traditional medicines. We report the ethnomedicinal plants of Nandi district for the first time.

Ethnobotanical survey was done in different parts of Aldai division for search of new traditional herbal medicines in Nandi south district. A total of 60 practitioners were interviewed, these included males and females that depended on wild plants as sources of medicine either for self-medication or for treating others. Data was collected by interviewing 50% of the renowned herbalists (30 years and above) using stratified purposive random sampling. The plants were identified and the voucher specimens were deposited in the University of Nairobi Herbarium.

The survey gathered information on 25 medicinal plant species reported by the informants for their medicinal use.

1. *Asystasia schimperi* (Acanthaceae) T.Anders Local name: Chemurguiwet Use: leaves are used as infusion (internal) to treat cough, skin diseases
2. *Dryopteris marginalis* (L.) Kuhn (Aspidiaceae) Local name: Tilalwet Use: Leaves shoot is used as infusion (external) for skin diseases
3. *Pteridium aquilinum* (L.) Kuhn Bracken (Aspidiaceae ) Local name: Tilalwet Use: leaves shoot is used as infusion (internal) for skin diseases
4. *Dyschoriste radicans* Nees (Acanthaceae) Local name: Chemurguiwetab suswek Use: leaves is used as infusion (internal & external) for skin diseases, wounds, eye infections
5. *Lepidagathis scariosa* Nees. (Acanthaceae) Local name: Nyamdutiet Use: leave is used as infusion (internal) for antidiarrhoea, wounds, oedema, foot and mouth in livestock, pneumonia
6. *Barleria grandicalyx* Lindau (Acanthaceae) Local name: Cheperenet Use: leaves is used as paste (external) for snake bites
7. *Thunbergia alata* Sims (Acanthaceae) Local name: Cheptereret, Use: leaves is used as infusion (internal & external) for cough, backache

8. *Justicia betonica* L (Acanthaceae) Local name: Kipkesio Use: leaves and flower ash (internal) are used for cough, anti-diarrhea, orchitis
9. *Acanthus pubescens* (Oliv.)Engl (Acanthaceae) Local name: Ndakariat Use: leaves ash (internal) are used for cough, pneumonia, chronic asthma, cancer, tonsils, flu ( mireiwek')
10. *Justicia flava* Vahl (Acanthaceae) Local name: Rokorabchepkimis/chepyochoit Use: leaves ash (infusion) are used for sorcery, charms, ulcers, pneumonia
11. *Aloe kedongensis* Reynolds (Aloeaceae) Local name: Tangaratwet Use: leaves and roots infusion (internal & external) are used for typhoid, skin diseases, malaria, colds, ear problems, wounds, coccidiosis
12. *Achyranthes aspera* L. (Amaranthaceae) Local name: Chesirimiot/Chesirimto Use: root ash (internal) is used for cough
13. *Amaranthus graecizans* L (Amaranthaceae) Local name: Mbogiat Use: leaves are used as paste (external) for cancer, boils
14. *Cyathula schimperiana* non Moq (Amaranthaceae) Local name: Namgwet Use: leaves and roots are used as decoction (internal) for malaria, antidiarrhoea, fungal infections
15. *Cyathula cylindrica* Moq (Amaranthaceae) Local name: Ng'atumyat Use: roots is used as decoction (internal) for malaria, purgative, emetic
16. *Lannea schimperi* (A.Rich.)Engl. (Anacardiaceae) Local name: Kipng'etingwet Use: bark is used as decoction (internal) for diarrhoea, pain stomach, chest problems
17. *Rhus natalensis* Krauss (Anacardiaceae) Local name: Siriat Use: roots is used as decoction (internal) for venereal diseases, heartburn, abdominal pains, cold, cough, antidiarrhoea
18. *Acokanthera schimperi* ( A.DC.) Schweinf. (Apocynaceae) Local name: Keliot Use: roots is used as decoction (internal) for venereal diseases (syphilis)
19. *Carissa edulis* (Forsk.)Vahl. (Apocynaceae) Local name: Legetetiot/Tamuryekiat Use: roots is used as decoction (internal) for venereal diseases, epilepsy, malaria, heartburns, arthritis, sorcery, cancer
20. *Tabernaemontana stapfiana* Britten (Apocynaceae) Local name: Mabondet Use: roots and stem barks are used as decoction (internal) for pneumonia, chest problems, aids in delivery
21. *Landolphia buchananii* (Apocynaceae) Local name: Nyakinchwet Use: leaves is used as infusion (external) for wounds, gonorrhoea, molluscides
22. *Culcasia falcifolia* Engl. (: Araceae) Local name: Chepnamobon/Kipnamobon Use: leaves is used as ash (internal) for dry cough, ECF,oedema,epilepsy
23. *Polyscias fulva* (Hiern) Harms (Araliaceae) Local name: Soiyet Use: bark is used as decoction (internal) for obesity
24. *Curroria volubilis* (Schltr.) Bullock (Asclepiadaceae) Local name: Simatwet Use: bark is used as decoction (internal) for aid in delivery, malaria
25. *Periploca linearifolia* Dill. & Rich (Asclepiadaceae) Local name: Sinendet Use: roots, milky latex is used as decoction (internal) & exudates (external) for venereal diseases, warts, rituals, pneumonia, cancer, antidiarrhoea, fertility

The survey provides a documentation of 25 plants used by the people of Nandi district to treat various ailments. The plants are generally used in stomach disorders, skin diseases, fever, obesity, ulcer, respiratory diseases, venereal diseases, malaria, eye-diseases and skin diseases among others. These medicinal plants were only found in the wild where they are over harvested and hence there is need of training on cultivation and conservation of medicinal plants. It was noted that continued cutting of plants for different reasons has resulted in scarcity of some medicinal plants in the study area (e.g. *Rhus natalensis* Krauss). In addition, increasing need to use more herbicides in agricultural land and the continued use of farming plots for cultivation without leaving some fallow lands because of over-population could be potential threats to the existence of the herbal medicinal plants normally growing in agricultural fields in the area. Therefore, there is a greater need to develop a garden of medicinal plants of the area. The tribal people can also be encouraged to take up this job as an income generation activity.

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