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Fodder resources of Kasaragod district, Kerala, India

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SUMMARY

Rural people of Kasaragod district mainly depend on the natural plant resources to feed their cattle. A total of 245 angiosperms are being used as fodder. The graminaceous and fabaceous taxa are represented by the largest numbers. 224 species were found wild in nature, whereas the rest were cultivated. This paper communicates botanical identity, family, local name, habit and morphology of useful part of these plants.

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Kasaragod district boarders North – Eastern side of the state of Kerala, situated between 11^0 18| and 12^0 48| N latitude and 74^0 52| and 75^0 26| E longitude. Topographically it consists of a narrow coastal belt, undulating midland and mountainous highlands of Western Ghats, harboring coastal scrub forests to evergreen forests. Live stock and other domestic animals are part of village folk since time immemorial. The rural people utilize a great variety of green plants, the most suitable natural food to feed their domesticated animals. In Southern peninsular India, Shetty *et al.* (2002) elucidated the fodder resources of Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts of Karnataka, while Patil and Patil (2007) that of Nasik District of Maharashtra. Scrutiny of literature revealed that no work has been done on this aspect from the state of Kerala. Therefore, this paper attempts to communicate the information on fodder resources gathered from rural people of Kasaragod district, Kerala.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Extensive ethno botanical and floristic surveys were carried out throughout the Kasaragod district from March 2007 to January 2010. Information regarding different fodder resources, their properties, availability, local names, useful part and other details were collected from rural people, cattle farmers and elder people through personal interview. The collected data were authenticated by cross check and repeated attempts. These plants were collected and identified using the regional floras (Hooker, 1872 – 1897; Gamble and Fischer, 1915 – 1936; Manilal and Sivarajan, 1982; Mathew, 1984; Ramachandran and Nair, 1988; Gopalakrishna Bhat, 2003; Anil Kumar *et al.*, 2005). Voucher specimens were deposited at the SSC herbaria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During present investigation, a total of 245 angiosperms belonging to 156 genera and 40 families were found in use as fodder for domestic animals, especially cattle. The botanical identity, family, local name, habit and morphology of useful part of these fodder resources are given in Table 1. Among these, dicots comprised of 32 families, 103 genera and 165 species, while monocots 8 families, 53 genera and 80 species. Critical study makes it clear that graminaceous (56 members) and fabaceous (32 members) taxa are the largest groups of plants used for this purpose, followed by 17 Asteraceae, 16 Acanthaceae and 15 Rubiaceae members. Out of these, 162 species were herbs, 41 trees, 32 shrubs and the rest climbers. Among the different plant parts used, whole plants showed greater diversity (162 species) followed by 63 tender shoots, 18 leaves, pseudo bulb of *Bulbophyllum sterile* (Lam.) Suresh and pod of *Samanea saman* (Jacq.) Merr. Twenty one species (asterisked in the Table 1) were found under cultivation.

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