

Botanic name : *Hygrophila spinosa* T. Anderson -- J. Proc. Linn. Soc., Bot. 7: 22. 1863 [1864 publ. 1863] (IK) (syn. *Asteracantha longifolia* Nees)

Common name : Kulekhara (Bengali), Kokilaksha (Sanskrit)

Family : Acanthaceae

Habitat : Terrestrial

Distribution : Indigenous to India from the Himalayas to Srilanka, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Nepal

Description : A stout annual spinous herb; stems fasciculate, subquadrangular, erect, thickened at the nodes, hispid with long hairs; with axillary spines, leaves pubescent, oblanceolate, long, in whorls; flowers purple-blue with bract and bracteoles, bilabiate, in whorls; stamens 2; fruits capsule

Phytochemicals: Phytosterols (β -sitosterol and lupeol), polyphenols, proanthocyanins, mucilage, alkaloids, flavonoids, terpenoids, vitamins, and glycosides. Apigenin-7-O-glucuronide and apigenin-7-oglucoiside (flowers), lupeol, betulin, and stigmasterol (the whole plant), betulin

Medicinal/Economic uses : Diuretic, spasmolytic, hypotensive, anti-anemic (hematopoetic), anti-tumor, antipyretic, hepatoprotective, analgesic, antidiabetic, anthelmintic, Described in Ayurvedic literature as Ikshura, Ikshugandha, and Kokilasha "having eyes like Kokila or the Indian cuckoo," Useful in ailments of the urinogenital tract, like dysuria, urinary calculi and cystitis. Used in India as traditional medicine for the treatment of various disorders, including anasaraca, dropsy from chronic Bright's disease, hyperdipsia, vesical calculi, diarrhea, dysentery, leukorrhea, gonorrhea, asthma, flatulence, blood diseases, gastric diseases, rheumatism, painful micturition (tincture of the whole plant), inflammation, cancer, and menorrhagea. The herb is reputed for its use in traditional healing systems; seeds are used as ingredients in various aphrodisiacs and tonic confections, and in the treatment of blood disorders, biliousness, gonorrhea, spermatorrhea, fever, paste and given in buttermilk for diarrhea, leucorrhea, dropsy and gravel (plant ash), rheumatism, gonorrhea, and hepatic obstruction (root decoction), diuretic, good for treating cough and joint pains (leaves). The seeds are also known to increase libido and are beneficial in treating spermatorrhoea.