

Botanic name : *Aerva lanata* (L.) Juss. ex Schult. -- -- Syst. Veg., ed. 15 bis [Roemer & Schultes] 5: 564. 1819 [Dec 1819] (IK) (syn. *Achyranthes lanata*)

Common name : Mountain Knot Grass, Polpala, Astana Bayda (Sanskrit)

Family : Amaranthaceae

Habitat : Terrestrial

Distribution : Paleotropics; drier parts of the tropics and the sub tropics; Indian sub-continent, West Asia, Australia, Russia; becomes invasive in introduced regions

Description : A perennial decumbent herb, woody below; stems and braches with dense woolly, whitish or yellowish, shaggy hairs; leaves simple, alternate, pubescent, circular to lanceolate-elliptic, rounded to sharp at the apex; flowers silky white, arranged in a dense spikes, solitary or in clusters; fruits ; seeds bean-shaped

Phytochemicals: Alkaloids, terpenoids, sterols, several flavonoid glycosides, tannins, saponins, and polyphenols; β -sitosterol, campesterol, chrysin, daucosterol, syringic acid, vanillic acid, feruloyltyramine, feruloylhomovanillylamine, α -amyrin, hentriacontane, and betulin

Medicinal/Economic uses : in Ayurveda, used as a diuretic, astringent, anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial, antihelmintic, and mild analgesic. Plant decoction for a few days are helpful for bladder and kidney stones but is not prescribed in Ayurveda for a long time as it reportedly induces structural changes in the urinary tract of the patients resulting in renal failure. Also used in the treatment of lithiasis, cough, asthma, diarrhea and headache, for neck and back pain, fever, anemia, alzheimer, arthritis, cholesterol, lung problems, bone problems, blood circulation, regulates body metabolism, and as an antidote for rat poisoning. Roots of this herb are effective as demulcents while leaf-sap is used for eye problems. One of the prominent ten sacred flowers of Kerala, named Dasapushpam. The plant is used as a lucky symbol for well-being for widows, hunters and against evil spirits