

Botanic name : *Cardiospermum halicacabum* L. Sp. Pl. 1: 366 (-367). 1753

Common name : Balloon Vine, Little Lanterns (Mexico)

Family : Sapindaceae

Habitat : Terrestrial in dense thickets at moist places

Distribution : Native to Mexico; can also be found in East Asia, India, Africa, Madagascar, USA, and Southern Europe

Description : Woody annual climbers, herbaceous many-branched vine with bi-fid (forked) axillary tendrils, borne at the base of inflorescences; leaves are ovate-lanceolate, alternate-spiral in arrangement and bi-ternately compound, essentially 3-foliolate with each part divided again into 3 leaflets; leaflets with coarse serrate teeth. Leaflets showing toothed margins, are lanceolate, faintly pubescent with pinnate venation. Obtuse-mucronate at apex, obtuse-truncate at base, irregularly deeply incised at margins; flowers white, arranged in axillary corymbose racemes, usually 3-flowered by abortion, white with a yellowish centre. Petals milky-white, obovate. Stamens as long as or slightly longer than petals; filaments sparsely long villous. Ovary obovoid or sometimes subglobose, pubescent; fruits (capsule)- Inflated, thin shelled, papery, balloon-like.

Phytochemicals: β -Arachidic acid, apigenin, apigenin-7-O-glucuronide, chrysoeriol-7-O-glucuronide and 80 luteolin-7-O-glucuronide, crystalline compounds beta-sitosterol and beta-D-glycoside, saponin, L-amino acid, β sitosterol, quebrachitol, capric acid, arachidic fatty acid and DL-DOPA, flavonoids-rutinins, flavonoid glycosides

Medicinal/Economic uses : The whole plant is diaphoretic, antioxidant, anticancer, diuretic, emetic, emmenagogue, laxative, refrigerant, rubefacient, stomachic, analgesic, diuretic, laxative and sudorific. In Siddha medicine of India, the plant acts against arthritis, inflammations, severe bronchitis, constipation and abdominal discomfort. Oil prepared from the leaves is very effective external application for arthritis and other painful conditions of the body while 2 to 3 drops of leaf juice can be used as an ear drops for ear ache, purulent discharge from ears. Crushed leaves are used as uterus cleanser during child delivery and antidruff agent as well as hair growth promoter. Root decoction is employed for haemorrhoids. Ethnomedicinally, the herb has been used in the treatment of nervous diseases, rheumatism, stiffness of the limbs and snakebite. Salted leaves are employed as a poultice on swellings. Young leaves can be cooked as vegetables while crushed leaves are made into a tea, which aids itchy skin. The leaf juice has been used as a treatment for earache as well. The root is diaphoretic, diuretic, emetic, emmenagogue, laxative and rubefacient, occasionally used in the treatment of rheumatism, lumbago and nervous disease, catarrh of the bladder and urinary tract. Leaves and young shoots - cooked and eaten as a vegetable. Seed oil has insect repellent properties and an antifeedant action on insects while stems are useful in basket making.

More read: Raza et al. (2013): Afr J Pharm & Pharmacol 7: 3026-3033.