

HIMACHAL PRADESH

State Flower: Bell Rhododendron

Botanical Name: *Rhododendron campanulatum* D. Don

Common Names: Tree Rhododendron (English); Chimura (Garhwal); Cherailu (Hindi); Gaggar, Nichnai (Kashmir); Chimul (Kumaon).

Family: Ericaceae

Etymology: '*Rhododendron*' means a tree bearing 'rosy red flowers'; '*campanulatum*' refers to bell-shaped corolla.



***Rhododendron campanulatum* D. Don**

Botanical Description: A shrub or small tree, up to 5 m high. Stems are well-branched and branchlets are glabrous or glaucous. Leaves are simple, alternate, oblong to elliptic, 6 – 15 × 2 – 12 cm, rounded or cuneate at base, entire at margins and acute to apiculate at apex. Flowers are arranged in terminal clustered corymbose racemes, pale purple, pink-tinged white or pink to rosy purple. Calyx is 5-lobed.

Corolla is tubular-campanulate with up to 4 cm long tube. Fruits are cylindrical, straight to curved, green, turning brown and many black-seeded.

Flowering & Fruiting: May – November.

Range of Distribution: It is native to India and widely distributed in Himalayan regions from Jammu & Kashmir to Sikkim, at altitudes between 2400 and 5200 m. It is also widely distributed in Bhutan, China, Nepal and Pakistan.

Economic Importance: Wood is moderately hard and used as an excellent fuel. However, the smoke from the wood is an irritant.

Medicinal Uses: Leaves are used in chronic rheumatism, syphilis and sciatica. They are mixed with tobacco and used as snuff to cure hemicrania and cold. Leaves are poisonous to live stocks due to the presence of a toxic substance called andromedotoxin.

Note: The plant can be propagated through natural seed germination.

Manas Ranjan Debta, Debasmitra Dutta – Pramanick & S.K. Srivastava

Northern Regional Centre, Botanical Survey of India, Dehra Dun.