

albicans and *Staphylococcus aureus* and can be incorporated into cream as antimicrobial agent and as a perfume (Odoh *et al.*, 2004). The hard timber is easy to work and used for various carpentry works. The tree is also cultivated as an ornamental.

A tree is grown at AJC Bose



Monodora myristica; inset: Flower

Indian Botanic Garden, Howrah in front of the Kiosk Building. It was brought from Agri Horticultural Society of India, Alipore and was planted by Dr. R.K. Chakraverty, Ex-Additional Director, Indian Botanic Garden, Howrah. Scanty flowering was observed in March 2011 but it flowered profusely in March 2012. However, fruit setting was not observed yet. Similarly, there is also no record of fruit setting in the trees growing in the garden of the Agri Horticultural Society of India. *Monodora myristica* flowers are pollinated in the wild by beetles and probably the absence of pollinators might be the cause for no fruit setting.

References

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Indian Aconite

Aconitum L. belongs to the buttercup family, Ranunculaceae. The genus comprises *c.* 100 species, distributed mainly in North temperate regions of the world (Mabberley, 2008). It is also known as wolfsbane, leopard's bane, women's bane, devil's helmet or blue rocket. The Greeks named it as the 'Queen of Poisons'. It is also believed that aconite dripped from the jaws of Cerberus, the large three-headed mythical dog that guarded the entrance to the underworld.

The genus is represented by 27 species in India (Rau, 1993) and chiefly distributed in the alpine and subalpine regions of Himalayas. The tuberous roots of several species of *Aconitum* are commonly known as Aconites or monkshood and a number of them are known to contain highly poisonous alkaloids (Chadha, 1985). The roots of only nine Indian *Aconitum* species are commonly found in the trade. The crude drug of *Aconitum ferox*, commonly known as Indian Aconite that is being sold in the markets is actually a mixture

of three or four species. Though the Indian Aconite is used for homicidal purpose, it can be regarded more as a boon than a bane to the human society because of its various medicinal properties. It is used as a natural rodenticide and an effective pesticide. It is also useful in treating various human ailments, especially pain in nerves caused by a change in neurological structure or function, muscular rheumatism, inflammatory joint affections, nasal catarrh, tonsillitis, gastric disorders, debility and fevers of inflammatory origin. Besides, it is useful as a cardio-tonic, sedative and in excessive sweating commonly associated with shock. Six species of *Aconitum* have been used in Homoeopathic medicine.

All the Indian *Aconitum* species have been placed under Negative List of Exports by Government of India and the trade/export of these species collected from the wild sources has been banned.

References

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Aconitum ferox; inset: Tuberous roots

Courtesy: M.K. Pathak