

# Wild species used in the traditional pharmacopeia of Trás-os-Montes (Portugal)

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## 1. Introduction

For the last eight years (2000-2008), three research ethnobotanical projects\* have been carried out in 36 rural communities from the north-eastern region of Portugal, Trás-os-Montes, in order to document and report traditional plant knowledge and uses (TK). This presentation synthesises the main results related to the medicinal uses of the wild flora, highlighting the most quoted species, homemade medicines and ritual plants involved in therapy.

## 2. Methods

The fieldwork (concerning this poster) was conducted with 129 informants, using consented unstructured and semi structured interviews, field-walking and participant observation. All plants quoted were gathered and identified following the standard works of the Flora Iberica (Castroviejo et al., 1986-2007) and the Flora Europaea (Tutin et al., 1980). Voucher specimens are stored at the Herbarium of the Escola Superior Agrária in Bragança (BRESA).

## 3. Results

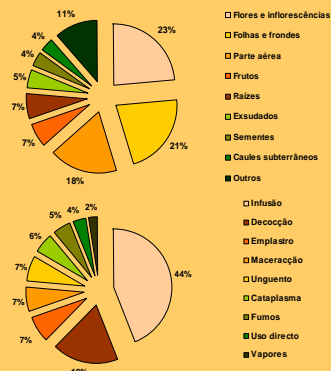
- About 400 species were catalogued and 180 wild species were reported for human therapy, representing 46% of all inventoried.
- Plants of the families *Lamiaceae*, *Asteraceae*, *Rosaceae*, and *Fabaceae* are the most cited and used, coinciding with other European surveys.
- Some plants are neither applied externally or internally, but are used as symbolic objects in healing, e.g. *Ruta montana*.

## 4. Most quoted wild species

Vernacular name	Scientific name	Local main uses
Abrunheiro, abrunho	<i>Prunus spinosa</i> L.	Liqueur, digestive
Alcária, erva alcária, ervas lobas	<i>Xanthoxylum tuberosum</i> (L.) Gallego Muñoz & C. Navarro	Infusion, hepato-depurative, Decoction, skin inflammation
Caneleiro, sabugueiro	<i>Sambucus nigra</i> L.	Infusion, sore throat, cough, bronchitis
Carqueja	<i>Pterospartum tridentatum</i> subsp. <i>tridentatum</i> (L.) Willk.	Infusion, anti-hypertensive, cough, anti-tussive, diuretic, pancreas
Cavalinha	<i>Equisetum arvense</i> L.	Infusion, diuretic, blood circulation, genitourinary system
Ceruda	<i>Chelidonium majus</i> L.	Topical application, warts, corns and callouses
Erva de S. Roberto	<i>Geranium robertianum</i> L.	Infusion, stomachache
Erva-prata	<i>Paronychia argentea</i> Lam.	Infusion, gastritis, stomachache
Folho, funcho	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> Mill.	Infusion and liqueur, stomachache, hepato-depurative
Gesta branca, escova branca	<i>Cytisus multiflorus</i> (L'Her.) Sweet	Infusion, anti-hypertensive, diabetes
Malva rosa	<i>Malva sylvestris</i> L.	Infusion, diuretic, Decoction, skin inflammation, haemorrhoid
Malvela, malvela	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i> L.	Infusion, intestinal depurative, post-partum restorative
Mondrasto, mondrasto	<i>Mentha suaveolens</i> Ehrh.	Topical application, vulnerary, haemostatic
Pericão, hipericão, erva da injeia	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i> L.	Infusion, stomachache, hepato-depurative, urinary bladder
Peçojo, mangreiro do rio	<i>Mentha pulegium</i> L.	Infusion, digestive, stomachache
Urtiga, urtiga-preta	<i>Urtica dioica</i> L.	Topical application, muscular pains; Decoction, choleraid

Plants reported by 73% of informants and listed alphabetically by the vernacular names

## 5. Homemade medicines: plants parts most used and preparation



## 6. Conclusions

- Herbal medicines was a commonly used source of self-treatment in many communities. Traditional pharmacopeia is based on a rich and diverse wild flora and includes uncommon and interesting uses, e.g. ointments from galls and olive oil.
- Despite the intensive use of plants by local inhabitants during the last decades this wild flora is not threatened.
- Pathologies of the respiratory system, digestive tract, and those related to the skin were the most frequently mentioned and show the highest diversity of uses.
- The most quoted species, practices and types of administration reported are similar in all the surveyed areas, reflecting a common heritage.
- Folk medicine is suffering a recent decline, although some plant-based remedies are applied simultaneously with conventional medicines.



## Acknowledgements

Special thanks are due to all the women and men of the surveyed communities, who agreed to share their knowledge of plants and folk remedies.

## References :

Carvalho, A. M. (2005). *Etnobotânica do Parque Natural de Montesinho. Plantas, tradição y saber popular en un territorio del nordeste de Portugal*. <http://hdl.handle.net/10198/689>