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## A Review of Common Medicinal Plants in Chin State, Myanmar

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Promising sources of novel bioactive compounds include plants growing in several third-world countries where the local flora is still largely uninvestigated. A paradigmatic example is represented by medicinal plants growing in Myanmar, especially in Chin State, in northwestern Myanmar. This is one of the least developed areas of the country where the people still use natural remedies derived from a rich biodiversity. This review mainly covers the investigations done on phytochemical constituents and biological activities of 20 medicinal plants, namely *Alangium chinense, Anemone obtusiloba, Anneslea fragrans, Antidesma bunius, Croton oblongifolius, Embelia tsjeriam-cottam, Ficus heterophylla, Gaultheria fragrantissima, Hydnocarpus kurzii, Leea macrophylla, Leucas cephalotes, Millingtonia hortensis, Myrica nagi, Olax scandens, Pimpinella heyneana, Pterospermum semisagittatum, Ruellia tuberosa, Smilax zeylanica, Stemona burkillii, and Tadehagi triquetrum, that have long been used in the Chin State for curing various diseases. These plants have been selected on the basis of their medicinal uses not only in Myanmar but also in the related Ayurvedic healing system. Moreover, besides their medicinal importance, most of them grow in the Chin State more abundantly than in other regions of Myanmar. Although the efficacy of some of these plants have been verified scientifically, the chemical constituents and biological activities of most of them still need to be investigated to confirm the claimed therapeutic effects.* 

Keywords: Myanmar, Chin State, Medicinal plants, Phytochemical constituents, Biological activities.

Myanmar is a country with a rich cultural heritage and comprises more than 100 ethnic groups, among which Chin people are a major one. Chin State, which remains one of the least developed and poorest areas of the country, lays in the northwestern Myanmar, approximately between North Latitude 20° 35' and 24° 05' and East Longitude between 92° 20' and 94° 05'. It borders India in the northwest and Bangladesh in the southwest, extending over a mostly mountainous area of 13,906 square miles, with hills densely covered by subtropical rainforests and separated by vast valleys and gorges. Mt Victoria is the state's highest peak with an altitude of 3100 meters above sea level. The climate is typically temperate with three seasons like other regions of Myanmar. In the rainy season, southwestern monsoon winds bring abundant rainfall to the Chin State, creating a habitat that favors the explosive growth of countless plants.

Although the origin of traditional medicine in Myanmar, which is practiced over the entire country and exists from time immemorial, is unidentifiable, Buddhist philosophy has influenced the traditional art of healing, as most people practice Buddhism. The traditional medicine is also based on Ayurvedic concepts, which originated from the Indian system of medicine. Indeed, knowledges about medicinal plants are mainly retained by monks in the local language which is hardly accessible to a wide audience.

Recently, there has been in Myanmar a fast development of private and government pharmaceutical companies dealing with traditional plants. They manufacture massive amounts of registered drugs according to the GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) standards and obtain quality raw materials from natural forests and herbal gardens around the country. In this way, many states of Myanmar, including the Chin State, are rapidly losing resources from their biodiversity. Therefore, it is important to protect the variety of Myanmar medicinal plants and to preserve the traditional knowledges about plants used in local healing systems, raising the awareness of the scientific community and common people via easily accessible documents. As a part of our ongoing project on the phytochemistry of traditional medicinal plants of Myanmar, we report in this paper, for the first time, a complete account about the uses of a few plants widely used in the Myanmar and Ayurvedic traditional medicine, which grow in the Chin State more abundantly than in other regions of Myanmar. Moreover, the chemical components reported in the literature and their biological and pharmacological activities are described, although investigations have mainly been performed on plant samples collected in other Asian countries. In addition, the therapeutic applications of these plants are highlighted. All the information have been condensed in Table 1.

The ethnomedicinal relevance of the selected medicinal plants is primarily based on direct documentation and information collected from traditional medicine practitioners who know and use medicinal plants for treating a variety of ailments, while a few therapeutic applications are part of the popular knowledge of local people.

Alangium chinense (Lour.) Harms: A. chinense is a deciduous shrub and belongs to the family Alangiaceae. The plant commonly occurs in China while it is rarely found in some subtropical areas of Myanmar. It is locally used for the treatment of piles in Myanmar. Other documented uses include the plant as a sedative, anthelmintic [1], muscle relaxant and analgesic agent [2]. Itoh et al. reported, as chemical constituents of the leaves, 6'-O-trans-caffeoylsalicin [3], 6'-O-β-D-xylopyranosylsalicin [3-5], benzyl alcohol β-D-glucopyranosyl( $1\rightarrow 2$ )-[ $\beta$ -D-xylopyranosyl-( $1\rightarrow 6$ )]- $\beta$ -D-glucopyranoside, 2'-O-B-D-glucopyranosylsalicin, 2'-O-B-D-glucopyranosyl-6'-O-B-D-xvlopvranosvlsalicin. benzvl alcohol  $\beta$ -D-xvlopvranosvl(1 $\rightarrow$ 6)- $\beta$ -D-glucopyranoside, (Z)-hex-3-en-l-ol  $\beta$ -D-xylopyranosyl (1 $\rightarrow$ 6)- $\beta$ -D-glucopyranoside [4], salicin, 4',6'-O-(S)-hexahydroxydiphenoylsalicin, 6'-O-β-glucopyranosylhenryoside [4-5], 6'-O-galloylsalicin (1), 4',6'-di-O-galloylsalicin, 4',6'-O-(R)-hexahydroxydiphenoylsalicin, pyrocatechol 1-O- $\beta$ -D-xylopyranosyl (1 $\rightarrow$ 6)- $\beta$ -D-glucopyranoside, (6S,9R)-roseoside, 6'-O-trans-caffeoylsalicin, benzyl alcohol  $\beta$ -D-xylopyranosyl (1 $\rightarrow$ 6)- $\beta$ -D-glucopyranoside, quercetin

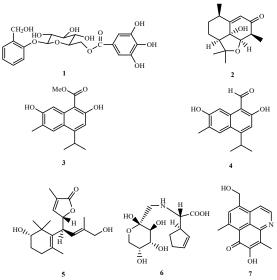


Figure 1: Some compounds isolated from Alangium chinense.

 $3-O-\beta-D-xylopyranosyl(1\rightarrow 2)-\beta-D-galactopyranoside, kaempferol$ 3-O- $\beta$ -D-glucopyranosyl (1 $\rightarrow$ 2)- $\beta$ -D-galactopyranoside, kaempferol 3-O- $\beta$ -D-xylopyranosyl (1 $\rightarrow$ 2)- $\beta$ -D-galactopyranoside, quercetin 3-O- $\beta$ -D-glucopyranosyl  $(1 \rightarrow 2)$ - $\beta$ -D-galactopyranosie, hyperin. phenethyl alcohol  $\beta$ -D-xylopyranosyl (1 $\rightarrow$ 6)- $\beta$ -D-glucopyranoside, demethylalangiside [5]. The roots of A. chinense have been reported to contain (3S,4R,5S,8R,10R)-tetrahydroperezinone (2), (1S)-1methoxylacinilene C, \beta-naphthol derivatives 3 and 4, N-hydroxybenzylanabasine (racemic mixture), (2R)-N-hydroxybenzylanabasine, (2S)-N-hydroxybenzylanabasine, 2-hydroxy-N-hydroxybenzylanabasine, (2S)-2-hydroxy-N-hydroxybenzylanabasine, (2R)-2-hydroxy-N-hydroxybenzylanabasine, 8-hydroxy-3,6,9-trimethyl-7H-benzo[de]quinolin-7-one, (2S)-N-hydroxybenzylanabasine, 4,5dimethoxycanthin-6-one, lacinilene C, 7-hydroxycadalene, 2,7dihydroxycadalene, mansonone E, mansonone H, mansonone C, (1S,4R)-7,8-dihydroxycalamenene [6], (2S,7S,11S)-(8E,12Z)-2,10dihydroxypellialactone (5), (2S,4S,7S,11S)-(8E,12Z)-2,4,10-trihydroxypellialactone, (11S)-6-hydroxy-5-(11-hydroxypropan-12yl)-3,8-dimethyl-2H-chromen-2-one, (3S,4R,5S,8S,10S)-tetrahydro-(3S,4R,5S,8S,10S,11R)-12-hydroxy-tetrahydropereziperezinone, none, (5S,8R)-2-hydroxy-3,8-dimethyl-5-vinyl-5,6,7,8-tetrahydronaphthalene-1,4-dione, mansorin I, (6S,9R)-vomifoliol, (6S,9S)vomifoliol, (+)-S-dehydrovomifoliol, megastigm-5-ene-3,9-diol, (4R,9R)-megastigm-5-ene-3,9-diol, (4S,9R)-megastigm-5-ene-3,9diol, (6S,9S)-dihydrovomifoliol, 3-oxo-7,8-dihydro-α-ionol, 3-oxoα-ionol, (6Z,9S)-9-hydroxy-4,6-megastigmadien-3-one, 3-hydroxy-4-oxo-7,8-dihydro-β-ionol, 4-oxo-β-cyclo-homogeraniol, 3-oxo-αionone, 3-hydroxy-β-cyclo-homogeraniol, 3-(3'-hydroxybutyl)-2,4,4-trimethylcyclohexa-2,5-dienone, 3-hydroxy-β-damascone, 3oxo- $\beta$ -ionol, (6S,9R)-roseoside, foliasalacioside B1, eleganoside A, platanionoside G [7], (7R,8R)-threo-4,7,9,9'-tetrahydroxy-3,5,2'trimethoxy-8-O-4'-neolignan, 2-(hydroxymethyl)phenol 1-O-β-Dglucopyranose- $(1\rightarrow 6)$ -O- $\alpha$ -L-rhamnopyranoside, 2-(ethoxy-methyl)phenol 1-O-β-D-glucopyranoside [8], alanchinin (6), 7-O-βglucopyranosylsalicin, 2-(2'-cyclopentenyl)glycine, salicin 6'-O-β-D-apiofuranoside,  $6''-O-\beta$ -D-glucopyranosylhenryoside, 5β,6βdihydroxycyclohex-2-en-1-O-β-glucopyranoside, cuneataside D, 4cyclohexene-1,2,3-triol, loganic acid, 4,4'-di-O-methylellagic acid, β-glucogallin and edulilic acid [9], henryoside [4-5,9], loganic acid 8-hydroxy-3-hydroxymethyl-6,9-dimethyl-7H-[5.9]. benzo[de]isoquinoline-7-one (7), 4,5-dimethyoxycanthine-6-one, and hydroxybenzylanabasine [10]. According to Zhang et al., the compounds isolated from A. chinense exhibit neuritis inhibitory activities [6], and antiviral [6-7] and antioxidant properties [8]. Xing *et al.* reported that compound **7** showed significant cytotoxicity against NB4, A-549, SHSY5Y, PC-3 and MCF-7 cell lines [10].

**Anemone obtusiloba D.Don:** A. obtusiloba is a flowering plant of the family Ranunculaceae, native to the Himalayan and mountainous regions of Myanmar. This plant is used for treating spleen ailments, anxiety neurosis, nervous exhaustion, tension, headache, migraine, insomnia, inflammation of ovaries, painful menstruation, genitourinary infections and as an antispasmodic remedy, while the seed oil is used to cure arthritis [1,11]. The presence of triterpene saponins, obtusilobinin, obtusilobin [12], and obtusilobicinin has been reported [13]. Kaushik *et al.* reported that the ethanolic extract of the stems has significant antimicrobial activity against *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Escherichia coli* [14].

Anneslea fragrans Wall: A. fragrans (family Theaceae) grows in forests and mountains of some southeast Asian countries. In Myanmar, it is used to treat mouth and gallbladder diseases, asthma, and as a blood purifier [15]. Although no work has been done on the chemical constituents, a methylene chloride extract of leaves exhibited potent antimalarial activity on *Plasmodium falciparum* (IC<sub>50</sub> = 8.6 µg/ml) and a selectivity index (SI), i.e., a ratio of cytotoxicity on MRC5 cells to antiplasmodial activity, equal to 8 [16].

Antidesma bunius (L.) Spreng: A. bunius is a fruit tree, belonging to the family Euphorbiaceae. It is native to Southeast Asia. Leaf extract of A. bunius has been used to treat syphilis [17], whereas roots and barks are used to cure insect bites and stings [17]. Phytochemical investigations of this plant have detected the presence of dammaradienol, friedelin, epifriedelanol,  $\beta$ -sitosterol [18], corilagin, gallic acid, ferrulic acid, ellagic acid, vicinin II [19], amentoflavone [18-19], antidesoside, podocarpusflavone A, amentoflavone, byzantionoside B, (6S,9R)-roseoside [20], catechin, procyanidin B1 and procyanidin B2 [21]. A. bunius was reported to show antioxidant [22-24], antidiabetic [25-29], antimicrobial [30], pesticide [31], and cytotoxic activities [32].

Croton oblongifolius Roxb.: C. oblongifolius is a medium-sized tree, belonging to the family Euphorbiaceae. It is distributed in many parts of Myanmar as well as in other Asian countries. This plant is famous in Myanmar for its medicinal properties. The roots and barks are used to treat dyspepsia, dysentery, hepatitis, pulmonary edema, abscess, and fever. The chemical constituents of the stem bark have been intensively investigated and several compounds have been isolated: (+)isopimara-7(8),15-diene-19-oic acid [33], 11-dehydro(-)-hardwickic acid [34], crotohalimaneic acid (8), crotohalimoneic acid, 12-benzoyloxycrotohalimaneic acid [35],  $\beta$ -sitosterol, oblongifoliol [36], labda-7,12(E),14-triene, labda-7,12(E),14-triene-17-al, labda-7,12(E),14-triene-17-ol [37], labda-7,12(E),14-triene-17-oic acid [37-38], labda-12(Z),14,17-triene-18oic acid [38], 2-acetoxy-3-hydroxy-labda-8(17),12(E)-14-triene, 3acetoxy-2-hydroxy-labda-8(17),12(E)-14-triene, 2.3-dihvdroxylabda-8(17),12(E),14-triene [39], 3-hydroxycleistantha-13(17),15diene, 3,4-seco-cleistantha-4(18),13(17),15-trien-3-oic acid [40], ent-3,4-seco-17-oxo-kaur-4(19),15(16)-dien-3-oic acid (9), ent-3,4seco-kaur-4(19),16(17)-dien-3-oic [41], crotocembraneic acid (10), neocrotocembranal neocrotocembraneic acid [42], [43]. furanocembranoid 1-3, furanocembranoid 4 [44], 3,4,15,16diepoxy-cleroda-13(16),14-diene-12,17-olide, 3(3'-methoxy-5'phenylfuran-2'-yl)propan-1-ol (11) [45], methyl 15,16-epoxy-3,13(16),14-ent-clerodatrien-18,19-olide-17-carboxylate, dimethyl 15,16-epoxy-12-oxo-3,13(16), 14-ent-clerodatriene-17,18-dicarboxylate, nasimalun A, nasimalun B, levatin, (-)-hardwickiic acid, 15hydroxy-cis-ent-cleroda-3,13(E)-diene, patchoulenone [46]. crovatin [46-47], croblongifolin, nidorellol [47], oblongionoside A-F, kaempferol 3-O-β-D-(2"-O-β-D-apiofuranosyl)glucopyranoside 7-*O*-α-L-rhamnopyranoside, kaempferol 3-*O*-β-D-(2"-*O*-β-Dapiofuranosyl, 6"-O-a-L-rhamnopyranosyl)glucopyranoside 7-O-a-L-rhamnopyranoside, kaempferitrin, clerspide A, icariside F2, canthoside A, dendranthemoside A, glochidionioside D [48], stigma 5(6)-ene-3-\beta-O-(\beta-D-glucopyranoside)-20-β-ol, and β-sitosterol-3-O-β-D-glucopyranoside [49]. Athikomkulchai et al. studied the essential oil of the stem bark of C. oblongifolius and reported the presence of terpinen-4-ol (17.8%), α-guaiene (7.9%), (E)caryophyllene (7.0%), (+)-cyclosativene (5.1%), aciphyllene (4.7%), germacrene D (3.2%), myrcene (6.7%), sabinene (4.8%), γterpinene (3.4%), progostol (4.6%) and  $\alpha$ -muurolol (3.2%) as the dominant compounds [50]. Reported biological activities of this plant include cytotoxic [35,39-40,43-47], antibacterial [50], and hepatoprotective properties [51].

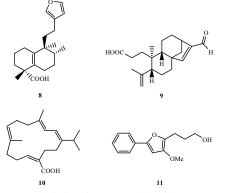


Figure 2: Some compounds isolated from Croton oblongifolius.

**Embelia tsjeriam-cottam** A. DC.: *E. tsjeriam-cottam* (family Myrsinaceae) is a rambling shrub distributed in hilly regions of Myanmar, India and Sri Lanka. The fruits of *E. tsjeriam-cottam* have striking medicinal properties. In fact, they have been used to treat various diseases as a vermifuge, carminative, stimulant, stomachic, antimalarial and wound healing remedy [11]. Moreover, the fruits are used to cure chronic bronchitis and spleen enlargement [11]. According to the literature, embelin (12) is the major active constituent of the fruits of *E. tsjeriam-cottam* [52-56] and is the only secondary metabolite reported so far. A number of important biological activities, including hepatoprotective [53,58], chemopreventive [53], cytotoxic, antimicrobial, antitubercular, antimycotic [54], antioxidant [56], and anti-inflammatory effects [57], have been attributed to the fruits.

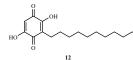


Figure 3: Embelin isolated from *Embelia tsjeriam-cottam*.

*Ficus heterophylla* L.f.: *F. heterophylla* is a rambling shrub belonging to the family Moraceae. It is typically found in humid habitats of Southeast Asia. The roots are used for the treatment of flatulence and asthma, while the leaves are used to treat dysentery [17]. So far, there is no report about the phytochemical constituents and biological activities of this plant.

Gaultheria fragrantissima Wall.: G. fragrantissima, belonging to the family Ericaceae, is an aromatic shrub which usually grows at high altitudes affected by heavy rainfall and permanent humid climate, in India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and China. It is used to treat fever, headaches, inflammatory joint disorders and back pain, and also as an antifebrile and diuretic remedy [11]. Extensive phytochemical investigations of the constituents have led to the identification of quercetin 3-galactoside, ursolic acid [59], (+)-lyoniresinol- $2\alpha$ -O- $\beta$ -L-arabinopyranoside, (+)-lyoniresinol- $2\alpha$ -O- $\beta$ -D-glucopyranoside, (-)-isolariciresinol- $2\alpha$ -O- $\beta$ -D-xylopyranoside [60], dhasingreoside, quercetin 3-O-B-D-galacturonopyranoside, quercetin 3-O-β-D-galactopyranoside, quercetin 3-O-β-Dglucuronopyranoside, quercetin 3-O-a-L-rhamnopyranoside, (-)epicatechin, gaultherin [61], salicylic acid [61-62], p-hydroxybenzoic acid, o-pyrocatechuic acid, gentisic acid, protocatechuic acid, vanillic acid, p-coumaric acid, caffeic acid, ferulic acid [62], ethyl salicylate [63], 4-hydroxy-4-methyl-2-pentanone [64], methyl sailicylate [63-68],  $\alpha$ -pinene,  $\beta$ -pinene,  $\Delta^3$ -carene, longifolene, and caryophyllene oxide [69]. Pharmacological studies have highlighted the nematicidal [63], antioxidant [70], antifungal [71], and insecticidal properties [68,72] of G. fragrantissima.

*Hydnocarpus kurzii* (King) Warb.: *H. kurzii*, (family Flacourtiaceae) is native to the tropical areas of India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. Traditional medicine practitioners use the oil extracted from the seeds of *H. kurzii* to treat different health problems such as leprosy, skin diseases, intestinal worms, indigestion, blood poisoning. The plant has also been documented as a febrifuge [1]. Even though very little work has been done on the chemical constituents, the seeds of *H. kurzii* have been reported to contain fatty acids, such as chaulmoogric, gorlic, hydnocarpic, palmitic, palmitoleic, and oleic acids [73-74]. The aqueous and organic extracts of the leaves of *H. kurzii* have showed analgesic [75], antioxidant [76-77], antimicrobial [77], thrombolytic [78], and antihyperglycemic effects [79].

Leea macrophylla Roxb.: L. macrophylla, belonging to the family Leeaceae is an herbaceous shrub widely distributed in Myanmar. It is also found in India, Nepal, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In traditional medicine the plant is used to treat such different ailments as ringworm, inflammation, wound, bleeding and pain [17]. Mahmud *et al.* reported that an ethanolic extract of the roots contains oleanolic acid, stigmasterol, and  $7\alpha$ ,28-dihydroxyoleanolic acid [80]. In several studies extracts of the plant have exhibited antioxidant [80-82,87], antimicrobial [82-83], wound healing [84], anti-inflammatory [85], anti-urolithiatic [86], neuroprotective [87], anti-nociceptive, and cytotoxic properties [88].

Leucas cephalotes Spreng.: L. cephalotes is an annual rainy-season weed, belonging to the family Lamiaceae. It grows widely in the cultivated fields of Myanmar and other Asian countries such as India and China. In traditional medicine, L. cephalotes has been recommended as a natural remedy against several diseases such as jaundice, inflammation, asthma, fever, cough, malaria, anemia, sexual weakness in male [11,89], and as an antidote. Miyaichi et al. have reported that the whole herb of L. cephalotes contains leucasdins A, B, C (13), leucastrins A, B (14), oleanolic acid, 7oxositosterol, 7-oxostigmasterol, 7a-hydroxysitosterol, 7a-hydroxystigmasterol, stigmasterol, 5-hydroxy-7,4'-dimethoxyflavone, pillion, gonzalitosin I, tricin, cosmosin, apigenin 7-O-β-D-(6-O-pcoumaroyl)glucopyranoside, anisofolin A and luteolin 4'-O-β-Dglucuronopyranoside [90]. Other phytochemical studies have shown the presence of  $\beta$ -sitosterol [91-92], its glucoside [91], (+)stigmasterol, lupeol, oleanolic acid, laballenic acid, a-terpineol, methyl dodecanoate, methyl pelargonate, 1-ethyl-5,8a-dimethyl-1,3,4,6,7,8-hexahydro- naphthalen-2-one, dihydro-cis-α-copaene-8ol, methyl myristate, 6,10,14-trimethylpentadecan-2-one, methyl

palmitate, methyl 8,11-octadecadienoic acid, linoleoyl chloride, and 6-octadecynoic acid [92]. Verma *et al.* studied the fatty acid content of all parts of *L. cephalotes* by GC/MS and reported the presence of caprylic acid, capric acid, lauric acid, azelaic acid, myristic acid, palmitic acid, palmitoleic acid, margaric acid, oleic acid, linoleic acid, linolenic acid, arachidic acid, behenic acid, tricosanoic acid, lignoceric acid, pentacosanoic acid, cerotic acid, montanic acid, melissic acid [93]. Many biological/pharmacological investigations have demonstrated that, potentially, *L. cephalotes* has many valuable applications such as anti-inflammatory [92,94-95], analgesic [94], antioxidant [96-97], antimicrobial [98-101], antifilarial [102], antifertility [103], antiplasmodial [104], hepatoprotective [105], and antidiabetic remedy [93,106].

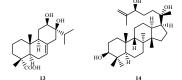


Figure 4: Some compounds isoated from Leucas cephalotes.

Millingtonia hortensis L.f.: M. hortensis, a member of the family Bignoniaceae, is widely distributed and cultivated in many Asian countries. Flowers, leaves and roots of M. hortensis are used to treat headache, heart palpitations, hypertension and diabetes in traditional medicine [89]. Phytochemical studies of this plant have reported the isolation of scutellarein-5-galactoside [107], scutellarein [107-108], acetyl oleanolic acid [108], hispidulin [108-109.1121. sitosterol [110], and trans-1-(2'hydroxyethyl)cyclohexane-1,4-diol [111]. Hase et al. isolated from the flowers crisimaritin, pectolinarigenin, apigenin 7-Oglucoronide, hispidulin 7-O-glucoside, hispidulin 7-O-glucuronide methyl ester [112], millingtonine (15) [113], salidroside, 2phenethyl rutinoside, 2-(3,4-dihydroxyphenyl)-ethyl glucoside, acteoside, p-coumaryl alcohol glucoside, isoeugenol glucoside, cornoside, racemic rengyolone, rengyoside B, rengyol, rengyoside A, isorengyol, 8-O-β-D-glucopyranosyl isorengyol, and nine cyclohexylethanoids, including four glucosides [114]. The plant has showed cytotoxic [115-116], antioxidant, hepatotoxic [117], antimicrobial [118-120], antimutagenic [121], and larvicidal activities [122-123].

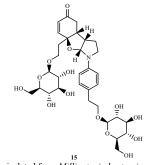


Figure 5: Millingtonine isolated from Millingtonia hortensis.

*Myrica nagi* Thunb.: *M. nagi* (family Myricaceae) has a long history in traditional medicine for curing running nose, cough, toothache, earache, asthma, diarrhoea, liver complaints, piles, epilepsy and wounds [17]. The plant grows in the Himalayan region and also in highlands of Nepal and Myanmar. Isolated constituents include myriconol (16) [124], myricanol, myricanone (17) [125-127], gallic acid, epigallocatechin 3-*O*-gallate, epigallocatechin- $(4\beta \rightarrow 8)$ -epigallocatechin 3-*O*-gallate, the hydrolysable tannin castalagin [127], 13-oxomyricanol [128], and proanthocyanidin

[129]. In pharmacological investigations the plant has showed antioxidant [130-132], analgesic [132], anti-inflammatory [132-134], antimicrobial [135], chemopreventive [136], antiasthmatic [137], antidiarrheal, gut modulatory, bronchodilatory, vasodilatory [138], and anxiolytic properties [139].

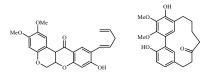


Figure 6: Some compounds isolated from *Myrica nagi*.

*Olax scandens* **Roxb.:** *O. scandens* (family Olacaceae) is a shrub widely distributed in Myanmar. As a traditional remedy, it has been used for curing fever, smallpox, measles, intestinal and liver diseases, and as a blood purifier [140]. In the few chemical investigations performed on *O. scandens* the presence of a saponin, olaxoside (18), has been reported [141]. The plant has displayed acute anti-inflammatory [141] and laxative activities [141-142], acute toxicity [142], and antimicrobial [143], antioxidant [144], and antipyretic effects [145].

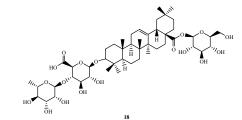


Figure 7: Olaxoside isolated from Olax scandens.

**Pimpinella heyneana Wall.:** *P. heyneana* (family Apiaceae) is a herbaceous plant rarely found in some parts of Myanmar, including the Chin State. It is used for the treatment of fever by Myanmar traditional healers; however, neither the constituents nor the biological/pharmacological properties have been investigated so far.

Pterospermum semisagittatum Buch. Ham. ex Roxb.: P. semisagittatum (Sterculiaceae) grows in India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. Traditionally, the plant has been used to treat cough, skin diseases, and headache. In addition. P. semisagittatum has been used as an antihemorrhagic and antihypnotic remedy in folk medicine [11]. Phytochemical studies have revealed the presence of megastigmane glycosides, including (Z)-4-[3'-(β-D-glucopyranosyloxy) butylidene]-3,5,5-trimethyl-2cyclohexen-1-one,  $(E)-4[3'-(\beta-D-glucopyranosyloxy)$  butylidene]-3,5,5-trimethyl-2-cyclohexen-l-one, (*E*)-4-hydroxy-4-[3'-(β-Dglucopyranosyloxy) butylidene]-3,5,5-trimethyl-2-cyclohexen-1-one [146], 10-hydroxy-4,7-megastigmadien-3-one-9-O-β-D-glucopyranoside, and 9-hydroxy-4,7-megastigmadien-3-one-10-O-β-D-glucopyranoside together with one neolignan, (7S,8R)-dihydrodehydrodiconiferyl alcohol-9'-O-β-D-glucopyranoside [147]. Biological studies were conducted on the antihyperglycemic activity of P. semisagittatum [146,148].

**Ruellia tuberosa L.:** *R. tuberosa* (family Acanthaceae) is widely distributed in tropical areas of Asian countries. It is medicinally used as an antidote in Myanmar [15]. The abundant scientific literature about *R. tuberosa* has showed the presence of *n*-tritriacontane, tritriacontan-6-one, 5-hydroxytetratriacontan-9-one [149], cirsimaritin, cirsimarin, cirsiliol 4'-glucoside, sorbifolin, pedalitin, betulin, vanillic acid, indole-3-carboxaldehyde [150], apigenin-7-*O*-glucuronide, apigenin-7-*O*-glucoside, apigenin-7-*O*-

rutinoside, luteolin-7-*O*-glucoside [151],  $\beta$ -sitosterol glucoside, 3-hydroxy-1-(4-hydroxy-3-methoxyphenyl)-2-[4-(3-hydroxy-1-(*E*)-

propenyl)-2-methoxyphenoxy] propyl-β-D-glucopyranoside, syringaresinol 4,4'-O-bis-β-D-glucopyranoside, (2*R*)-2-*O*-β-Dglucopyranosyl-2H-1,4-benzoxazin-3(4H)-one (HBOA-Glc. blepharin), syringin, roseoside, (+)-lyoniresinol 3α-O-β-Dglucopyranoside, pectolinargenin 7-O- $\beta$ -D-glucopyranoside, cistanoside F, (2R)-2-O-β-D-glucopyranosyl-4-hydroxy-2H-1,4benzoxazin-3(4H)-one (DIBOA-Glc), nepetin (6-methoxyluteolin) 7-O- $\beta$ -D-glucopyranoside, demethoxycentaureidin 7-*O*-β-Dglucopyranoside [152], acteoside (verbascoside) [152-153], isoverbascoside, nuomioside, isonuomioside, forsythoside B, paucifloside, cassifolioside, hispidulin 7-*O*-β-Dglucuronopyranoside, comanthoside B, isocassifolioside (19), hispidulin 7-*O*- $\alpha$ -L-rhamnopyranosyl-(1<sup>"</sup>→2<sup>"</sup>)-*O*- $\beta$ -Dglucuronopyranoside, pectolinaringenin 7-O-a-L-rhamnopyranosyl- $(1^{"}\rightarrow 2^{"})$ -O- $\beta$ -D-glucuronopyranoside [153], 21-methyldammar-22en-3β,18,27-triol (20) [154], campesterol, β-sitosterol, stigmasterol and lupeol [155]. Moronkola et al. studied the composition of volatile oils distilled from leaves, stems, roots, fruits, and flowers of R. tuberosa and reported that, among 109 identified constituents, (E)-phytol, tributylacetyl citrate, heptacosane, m-xylene, p-xylene, heptane, borneol, hexacosane, sexton, heneicosane, 2-methyl-2pentanol, and 1-methyl-1-cyclopentanol predominate [156]. Many studies have verified that the extracts and compounds isolated from R. tuberosa exhibit a wide spectrum of pharmacological properties in vitro and in vivo, including cytotoxic [150, 157], antioxidant [158-161], anticholinesterase [161], antimicrobial [162-164], insecticidal [164], antifertility [165], anthelmintic [166], antihyperlipidaemic, hepatoprotective [167], and antidiabetic activities [167-168].

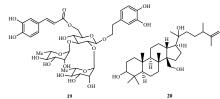
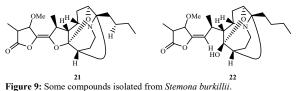


Figure 8: Some compounds isolated from Ruellia tuberosa.

*Smilax zeylanica* L.: *S. zeylanica* (Smilacaceae) is a medicinal plant widely growing in many parts of Myanmar. The plant is useful for the treatment of leprosy, skin diseases, joint pain, inflammation, and as a blood purifier [17]. Although many researchers studied the pharmacological activities of this plant, the chemical constituents of *S. zeylanica* are still undetermined. The reported biological activities of *S. zeylanica* include antioxidant [169-173], antidiabetic [173-174], cytoprotective [175], hepatoprotective [172,176], anthelmintic, analgesic [177], antipyretic, anticonvulsant [178], and pesticidal effects [179].

**Stemona burkillii Prain.:** *S. burkillii* (family Stemonaceae) is weakly climbing and produces stems up to 1 metre long from an underground tuber. Recently, the use of *S. burkillii* as a remedy against cancer has become very popular in Myanmar. Chemical investigations have resulted in the isolation of alkaloids, such as stemofoline (21), 2'-hydroxystemofoline, 11(S), 12(R)-dihydrostemofoline, and stemoburkilline (22) [180,181]. According



to Chanmahasathien *et al.*, the isolated alkaloids, especially stemofoline, show potent growth inhibitory effects against cancer KB-V1 cells in synergy with cancer chemotherapeutic agents, such as vinblastine, paclitaxel and doxorubicin [182].

Tadehagi triquetrum (L.) H. Ohashi.: T. triquetrum (family Fabaceae) is a flowering plant which grows irregularly throughout all Asian countries. It is recommended for the treatments of cough, asthma, dysentery, bloated stomach, stomachache, fever, inflammation, vomiting, anal fistula, and urinary disorders, as documented in the Myanmar traditional medicine [89]. The ethanol extract of T. triquetrum contains triquetrumones A (23), B, and C, (*R*)-triquetrumone D (24), cyclokievitone, vukovanol, aromadendrin, kaempferol, astragalin, 2-O-methyl-L-chiro-inositol, galactitol, p-hydroxycinnamic acid, ursolic acid, betulinic acid, βsitosterol, daucosterol, stigmasterol, stigmasta-5,22-dien-3-O-B-Dglucopyranoside, saccharose, docosanoic acid [183], triquetrumones E-H [184], tadehaginosin (25), and 3,4-dihydro-4-(4'-hydroxyphenyl)-5,7-dihydroxycoumarin [185]. Zhang *et al.*, in extensive investigations of this plant, has revealed the presence of various types of phenylpropanoid glucosides, including tadehaginoside (26), tadehaginoside A (27), and tadehaginoside B-I [186]. The compounds isolated from T. triquetrum were evaluated for anthelminthic [183], lipolysis [187], hypoglycemic [185-186], and antihepatotoxic activities [187].

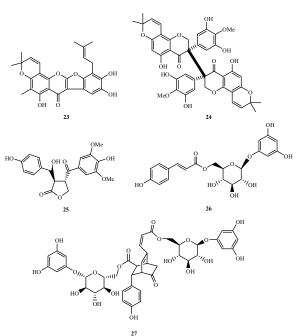


Figure 10: Some compounds isolated from *Tadehagi triquetrum*.

In conclusion, this is the first critical review about the ethnopharmacology of 20 medicinal plants which are widely distributed in the Chin State (Myanmar) and are commonly used in the local traditional medicine. We have reported the phytochemical constituents and the pharmacological/biological activities determined so far. Investigations about *Alangium chinense*, *Antidesma bunius*, *Gaultheria fragrantissima*, and *Millingtonia hortensis* have not definitely clarified the efficacy of these plants as traditional healing remedies. Analogously, although extracts and compounds isolated from *Leucas cephalotes* and *Ruellia tuberosa* have exhibited a wide spectrum of pharmacological activities *in vitro* as well as *in vivo*, the traditional use of these plants as an antidote still lacks scientific evidences. On the other hand, there are no scientific studies of the chemical and pharmacological properties

of Anneslea fragrans, Ficus heterophylla, and Pimpinella heyneana despite their ethnopharmacological uses have been documented. Limited work has been done about the chemical constituents of Anemone obtusiloba, Leea macrophylla, and Olax scandens. The biological activities of Smilax zeylanica have been investigated; however, the chemical constituents are still unknown. Instead, the chemical and pharmacological properties of Croton oblongifolius have extensively been investigated. Chemical and pharmacological analyses of Embelia tsjeriam-cottam and Hydnocarpus kurzii have mainly been focused on fruits and seeds; however, biological and phytochemical studies of other parts of these plants are still missing. Myrica nagi and Pterospermum semisagittatum are used in the Myanmar traditional medicine against many diseases, although such claims have yet no scientific evidences. Stemona burkilli is very well known in Myanmar for the treatment of cancer; therefore, this plant deserves further phytochemical and pharmacological investigations. Studies on *Tadehagi triquetrum* have revealed the presence of several bioactive compounds whose applications can further be exploited.

The collection of the ethnopharmacological information highlighted in this paper is the starting step of a long-term project aimed at the study of uninvestigated medicinal plants commonly used in the Chin State, Myanmar.

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Table 1: Common Medicinal plants growing in the Chin State of Myanmar, their therapeutical applications, and biological/pharmacological activities.

No.	Scientific Name	Family	Part Used	Therapeutical applications	Reported biological/pharmacological activities
1.	Alangium chinense (Lour.) Harms	Alangiaceae	Leaves	Piles (hemorrhoids), sedative, anthelmintic	Neuritis inhibitory activities [4], antiviral activities [6-7],
2	An ann an Admillate a D Dan	D 1	Dealer Issues	[1], muscle relaxant and analgesic agent [2]	antioxidant activities [8], and cytotoxic activity [10]
2.	Anemone obtusiloba D.Don	Ranunculaceae	seeds	Spleen disorders, arthritis and as antispastic [1,11]	Antimicrobial activity [14]
3.	Anneslea fragrans Wall	Theaceae	Whole plant	Mouth and gallbladder diseases, asthma, blood purifier [15]	Antimalarial activity [16]
4.	Antidesma bunius (L.) Spreng	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves, barks, fruits	Antidote, syphilis, insect bites and stings [17]	Antioxidant [22-24], antidiabetic [25-29], antimicrobial [30], pesticide [31], and cytotoxic activities [32]
5.	Croton oblongifolius Roxb	Euphorbiaceae	Leaves, barks, roots	Dyspepsia, dysentery, hepatitis, pulmonary edema, abscess, and fever	Cytotoxic activity [35,39-40,43-47], antibacterial activity [50], and hepatoprotective activity [51]
6.	Embelia tsjeriam-cottam A. DC	Myrsinaceae	Fruits	vermifuge, carminative, stimulants, stomachic, chronic bronchitis, splenauxe, malaria and wound healing [11]	Anti-inflammatory [57], hepatoprotective [53,58], chemopreventive [53], cytotoxic, antimicrobial, antitubercular, antimycotic [54], and antioxidant activities [56]
7.	Ficus heterophylla L.f.	Moraceae	Leaves, barks	Flatulence, asthma and dysentery [17]	No report
8.	Gaultheria fragrantissima Wall.	Ericaceae	Leaves	Fever, headaches, inflammatory joint disorders, back pain, and used as antifebrile and diuretic [11]	Nematicidal [63], antioxidant [70], antifungal [71], and insecticidal properties [68,72]
9.	Hydnocarpus kurzii (King) Warb.	Flacourtiaceae	Seeds	Leprosy, skin diseases, intestinal worms, indigestion and blood poisoning [1]	Analgesic [75], antioxidant [76-77], antimicrobial [77], thrombolytic [78] and antihyperglycemic activities [79]
10.	Leea macrophylla Roxb.	Leeaceae	Roots	Ringworm, inflammation, wound, bleeding and pain [17]	Antioxidant [81-82,87], antimicrobial [82-83], wound healing [84], anti-inflammatory [85], anti-urclithiatic [86], neuroprotective [87], anti-nociceptive and cytotoxic activities [88]
11.	Leucas cephalotes Spreng.	Lamiaceae	Whole plant	Antidote, jaundice, inflammation, asthma, fever, cough, malaria, anemia and sexual weakness in male [11,89]	Anti-inflammator [92,94-95], analgesic [94], antioxidant [96-97], antimicrobial [98-101], antifilarial [102], antifertility [103], antiplasmodial [104], hepatoprotective [105], and antidiabetes activities [93,106]
12.	Millingtonia hortensis L.f.	Bignoniaceae	Flowers, leaves and roots	Headache, heart palpitations, hypertension and diabetes [89]	Cytotoxicity [115-116], antioxidant, hepatotoxicity [117], antimicrobial activity [118-120], antimutagenic effect [121], and larvicidal activity [122-123]
13.	<i>Myrica nagi</i> Thunb.	Myricaceae	Barks	Running nose, cough, toothache, earache, asthma, diarrhoea, liver complaints, piles, epilepsy and wounds [17]	Antioxidant [130-132], analgesic [132], anti-inflammatory [132- 134], antimicrobial [135], chemopreventive effect [136], antiasthmatic [137], antidiarrheal, gut modulatory, bronchodilatory, vasodilatory activities [138], and anxiolytic effect [139]
14.	Olax scandens Roxb.	Olacaceae	Leaves and roots	fever, smallpox, measles, intestinal and liver diseases, and blood purifier [140]	
15.	Pimpinella heyneana Wall.	Apiaceae	Whole plant	Fever	No report
16.	Pterospermum semisagittatum Buch. Ham. ex Roxb.	Sterculiaceae	Whole plant	cough, skin diseases, headache and as antihemorrhagic and antihypnotic [11]	antihyperglycemic activity [146,148]
17.	Ruellia tuberosa L.	Acanthaceae	Whole plant	Antidote [15]	Cytotoxicity [150, 157], antioxidant [158-161], anticholinesterase [161], antimicrobial [162-164], insecticidal activity [164], anti- fertility [165], anthelmintic [166], antihyperlipidaemic, hearther the full and perturbise [167] 169]
18.		Smilacaceae	Leaves	Leprosy, skin diseases, joint pain, inflammation and purifying the blood [17]	hepatoprotective [167], and antidiabetic activities [167-168]. Antioxidant [169-173], antidiabetic [173-174], cytoprotective [175], hepatoprotective [172,176], anthelminites, analgesic [177], antipyretic, anticonvulsant [178], and pesticidal activities [179]
19.	Stemona burkillii Prain.	Stemonaceae	Tubers	Cancer	Cytotoxicity [182]
20.	Tadehagi triquetrum (L.) H.Ohashi	Fabaceae	Leaves and roots	cough, asthma, dysentery, bloated stomach, stomachache, fever, inflammation, vomiting, anal fistula and urinary disorders [89]	Anthelminthic [183], lipolysis [187], hypoglycemic [185-186], and antihepatotoxic activities [187]

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