

AN ETHNO BOTANICAL SURVEY OF MEDICINAL PLANTS IN DELFT,
SRI LANKA

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Siddha medicine, one of the oldest traditional medical systems, places significant emphasis on the use of medicinal plants. This study was conducted on Neduntheevu (Delft Island), a remote island in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, with the aim of identifying medicinal plants used in traditional treatments. The fieldwork commenced from August 30 to September 1, 2023, covering a range of natural habitats including dry and wet pasture lands, mixed and scrub jungles, palmyrah woodlands, coastal woodlands, coral rocks, and sandy seashore vegetation. Data were gathered through field observation, ecological mapping, and interviews with traditional healers. A total of 152 plant species were documented. These were classified based on ecological zones and their uses. These included 03 mangrove species, 15 mangrove-associated plants, 10 medicinal cacti, 08 poisonous plants, 02 invasive species, and 18 edible spinaches. Additionally, unique findings included a *Vanda* variety and a complete parasite. Additionally, 16 Economically viable medicinal plants, and 14 species used as dietary supplements. Several species were used in natural cosmetic production, such as herbal hair dyes, anti-dandruff shampoos, face packs, and eyetex, and mosquito repellents. Traditional healers on the island utilize 06 species for various remedies. Moreover, 07 dry zone edible fruits rich in vitamins and minerals were also recorded. Notably, *Vernonia zeylanica* was identified as an endemic to Sri Lanka. This study highlights the island's rich yet underutilized medicinal plant diversity and emphasizes the urgent need for conservation and sustainable use of this traditional ecological knowledge.

Key words: Medicinal plants, Delft Island, Mangrove, Siddha medicine