

# Ethnobotanical Investigation of Traditional Medicinal Plants Used to Protect Honey Bee Pests and Predators

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**Abstract:** Our country has rich flora with different plants having use in the health care system based on indigenous knowledge. In this study, plants of traditional medicinal plants used in study area were investigated. A totally 146 informants (age $\geq$ 25) were selected to collect information on medicinal plant use from three sampled districts. Of these, 15 key informants were selected purposely based on recommendation by local elders and authorities. Ethnobotanical data were gathered using semi-structured questionnaires, field observations and group discussions with traditional medicine practitioners. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Jaccard's similarity index, informant consensus factor, fidelity level and preference ranking were computed. Ethnomedicinal use of 34 plant species distributed in 21 genera and 16 families was documented. Highest number of species (3) was under family Asteraceae and myrtaceae. Habit wise, 50% were Trees followed by shrubs (29.4%), herbs (14.7%) and climbers (5.8%). The most widely used ways of applying plant materials to protect honey bee pests and predators were cutting the leaves and smearing around hive stand and hive entrance (47.6%), smoking (5.7%), cover hives stand with (7.6), put on hives (2.85) and planting around hives (4.76). Ants, lizards, beetles and snakes had the highest ICF value ( $>90$ ). Therefore, biochemical profiles of plant species used to protect pests and predators with high ICF should be investigated for screening of the active ingredients.

**Keywords:** Ethnobotany, Indigenous Knowledge, Informant Consensus Factor, Honey Bee

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## 1. Introduction

Ethnobotany is the study of the relationship between people and plants for their use as medicines, food, shelter, clothing, fuel, fodder and other house hold purposes [12, 15]. In our country shows that about 887 plant species are reported to be utilized in the different traditional medicine [4]. Expansion of agricultural lands, urbanization, plant resources are dwindling at an alarming rate, suggesting the rapid loss of medicinal plants occurred. Ethnobotanical studies are often significant in revealing locally important plant species especially for the discovery of new drugs [17]. Despite the agro-ecological and cultural diversity of the country, the documentation of medicinal plants and associated indigenous knowledge appears incomplete [9, 16]. There is no documented study is found from West Arsi and East Shewa zones of Oromia. This suggests that there is a gap about

Ethnobotanical data on medicinal plants from various parts of Ethiopia, although we have rich and diverse ethno linguistic groups throughout the country [3, 13]. Detailed information could only be obtained when studies are taking place in the different areas of the country to include places where little or no Ethnobotanical explorations have been made [11]. Among rural communities of East Shewa and West Arsi zone as would be the case elsewhere, traditional medication is believed to be an important health care system, which mainly involves the use of locally available medicinal plants. However, such knowledge and practices may be threatened due to anthropogenic and other natural factors. Thus, concerted Ethnobotanical research plays a vital role to draw information on plants and indigenous knowledge for conservation and sustainable utilization. Honeybee, *Apis Mellifera L.*, is considered as an essential organism to the agricultural sector due to its role in pollination and alleviation of poverty in rural areas. Many pests and

predators attack honey bee colonies causing severe damages and economic losses. Using chemical methods to control these pests and Predators causes some negative effects on honeybees and contaminates their products, while using available indigenous knowledge and biological control agents is promising and has no serious hazards [1]. Decline of honey bee populations is great concern around the world because of pests, predators and diseases [11]. Traditional medicinal plants are used to protect Predators, insects and fungi [6]. It is well known that in East Shewa and West Arsi, many pests and predators of honey bee colonies cause decreases in honey bee products and productivity. This study is, therefore, designed to collect, identify and document traditional medicinal plants that are used by local people for the protection of honey bees pests and predators in the study area.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Survey and Selection of Study Sites

The study was conducted in selected districts of West Arsi and East Shewa zone. Based on beekeeping potential of the area, three districts; Kofale, Wando Genet and Dodola were selected from West Arsi zone. From East shewa zone, Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha district was selected. The districts were selected based on the availability of medicine practitioners and altitudinal variation between districts.

### 2.2. Data Collection

Totally, 146 respondents (aged  $\geq 25$ ) and 5 key informants (traditional healers) were selected from each district. The key informants were selected by purposive sampling based on the information gathered from the local people while other respondents were selected randomly. Data collection was under taken using interviews, group discussions and field observations being guided by key informants. Data collected during the study include the local names of the plants they use to treat pests and predators, pests and predators treated, part(s) of plants used, methods of gathering, methods of preparation of remedies, route of administration of remedies, application of the remedies, dosage and side effects of the treatment, use of the plants other than medicine, types of threat and conservation problems and plant habit and habitat.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed by using descriptive statistical, Jaccard's similarity index (JI), Informant consensus factor (ICF), Fidelity level (FL), preference ranking. Percentage and frequency were used to summarize Ethnobotanical data.

#### 2.3.1. Jaccard's Similarity Index (JI)

Jaccard's similarity index was calculated to compare similarity between districts of different altitude with regard to knowledge on medicinal plants.

$$JI = \frac{c}{a+b+c}$$

Where, JI is the Jaccard similarity index, 'c' is the number of species shared by the study sites, 'a' is the number of species in study site A only and, 'b' is the number of species in study site B only. The JI values range between 0 and 1, where a value of 1 indicates complete similarity.

#### 2.3.2. Informant Consensus Factor (ICF)

Informant consensus factor was calculated for categories of ailments to identify the agreements of the informants on the reported cures using the formula used by ICF was calculated as follows: number of use citations for each ailment (nur) minus the number of species used (nt) for that ailment, divided by the number of use citations for each ailment minus one [14].

$$ICF = (n_{ur} - n_t) / (n_{ur} - 1)$$

#### 2.3.3. Fidelity Level (FL)

The fidelity level, the percentage of informants claiming the use of a certain plant for the same major purpose, is calculated for the most frequently reported ailments using the following equation [14].

$$FL(\%) = \frac{NP}{N} \times 100$$

Where, Np is the number of informants that claim the use of a plant species to treat a particular pest and predator, and N is the number of informants that use the plants as a medicine to treat any given pests and predators.

#### 2.3.4. Preference Ranking

Preference ranking is used to compare the most effective medicinal plants used by the community to treat the particular pests and predators. Preference ranking was conducted for six most important medicinal plants [14]. For this, five informants were selected from each district to identify the best preferred medicinal plant species for treatment of the honey bee pests and predators. Each informant was provided with six medicinal plant used being paper tagged. Then they were asked to assign the highest value (6) for the most preferred species against the illness and the lowest value (1) for the least preferred plant and in accordance of their order for the remaining ones.

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1. Socio-Demographic of the Respondents

Based on the degree of responsibilities to care for honey bee health and assumed accumulation of medicinal plant knowledge of the community, respondents were categorized into four age classes. Age distribution of the informants showed that the majority (61.6%) are between 45 and 60 years of age followed by 31-45 (21.9%), 18-30 (6.2%) and >60 (10.3%). Marriage wise, 95.9% of the respondents were married, whereas 4.2% of them were unmarried. The majority (44.6%) of respondents had no formal education; whereas 32.2, 6.2 and 1.4% of them had elementary school, high school and college level educations, respectively.

Majority of the respondents 98.6% were males and only 1.4% were females. From the participants 69.9% were Muslims and 29.4% Christians.

### 3.2. Ethnomedicinal Plant Species Used by People of the Study Areas

From the study area, a total of 34 kinds of medicinal plants used to protect various honey bee predators and pests were collected. These plants are from 16 families and 21 genera. Out of these plants, 17 species (50%) were utilized to control ants, spiders, snakes, lizards, and beetles, whereas 14 species (41.1%) and 3 species (8.82%) were noted to treat only ants and honey badger, respectively. This implies that local communities in the districts of Kofale, Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha, Wando and Dodola use traditional medicine derived from plants. Asteraceae and Myrtaceae were two families with three species each. Other families each have a single or double species (Table 1).

When comparing the number of reported medicinal plant species throughout the investigated districts, Jaccard's Similarity Index (JI) was computed to determine how similar they were. In accordance with the findings, respondents from Kofale (2450masl) and Dodola (1950masl) reported the same two species (*Hagenia abyssinica* and *Syzygium guineense*) with a JI value of 0.25. The same two species, with a JI value of 0.25, were reported by respondents from Adami Tulu (1558masl) and Wando (1750masl). The difference between these two districts may be the result of environmental variations. For instance, the altitudes of Kofale (2450masl) and Dodola (1950masl) differ from one another, and the way that information about medicinal plants was shared between residents of the two districts varied. In other words, there may not be much environmental overlap between these two districts. The majority of medicinal plant species (35.2%)

were harvested from the wild, followed by home gardens (26.4%), highways (14.7%), agricultural fields (11.7%), and live fences (11.7%). The fact that so many different species of medicinal plants were found growing wild suggests that conserving medicinal plants in the research region should be possible. Various districts of the study area reported using specific plants more frequently than others as medicinal plants to ward against various honeybee pests and predators. *Syzygium guineense*, according to 55% of respondents, is used to defend honey bee colonies against ants, spiders, lizards and snakes. *Eucalyptus globules*, *Hagenia abyssinica* and *Rutachalepensis* are employed against ants by 50% of respondents. Similarly, 53% of respondents said *Acacia bussei* and *Croton macrostachyus* help to keep out lizards, snakes, and ants. On the other side, according to 40% of respondents, *Vernonia amygdalina* is used to prevent ants, while 29% of respondents stated *Ziziphus mucronata* protects honeybee colonies from ants, spiders, and beetles, and 30% of respondents said *Dovyalis abyssinica* avoids honey badgers.

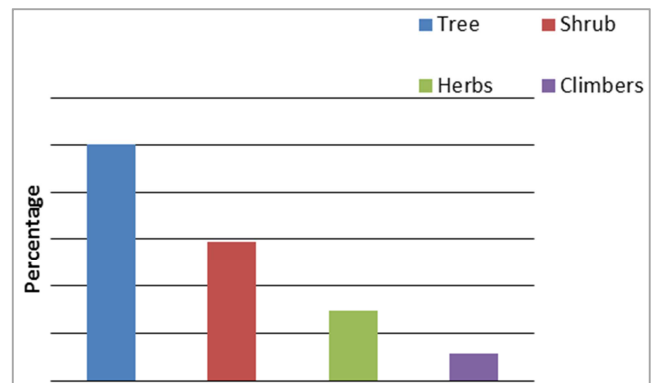


Figure 1. Percentage share of different medicinal plants.

Table 1. Medicinal plants cited most by informants.

Botanical Name of Medicinal Plants	Family name	No. of Informants	Percentage	Districts
<i>Syzygium guineense</i>	Myrtaceae	55	55.0	Kofale
<i>Acacia Bussei</i>	Fabaceae	53	53.0	Kofale
<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i> Labill	Myrtaceae	50	50.0	kofale
<i>Ensete ventricosum</i> (Welw)	Musaceae	45	45.0	kofale
<i>Hagenia abyssinica</i>	Rosaceae	42	42.0	Dodola
<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i>	Myrtaceae	45	40.0	Dodola
<i>Vernonia amygdalina</i> Dell	Asteraceae	40	40.0	Dodola
<i>Olea europaea</i> L.	Oleaceae	37	37.0	Dodola
<i>Capsicum annuum</i> L.	Solanaceae	34	34.0	Dodola
<i>Vernonia auriculifera</i>	Asteraceae	31	31.0	Dodola
<i>Ziziphus mucronata</i>	Rhamnaceae	29	29.0	Dodola
<i>Dovyalis abyssinica</i> (A. Rich) Warb	Salicaceae	30	30.0	Dodola
<i>Schinus molle</i> L.	Anacardiaceae	50	50	wando
<i>Rutachalepensis</i> L.	Rutaceae	45	45	Wando
<i>Alo macrocarpa</i> Tod	Aloaceae	35	35.0	A/Tulu
<i>Croton macrostachyus</i> L.	Euphorbiaceae	30	30.0	A/Tulu
<i>Justicia schimperiana</i> (Hochst.)	Acanthaceae	25	25.0	A/Tulu

Among the 34 therapeutic plants discovered, trees make up the majority, followed by shrubs, herbs, and climbers (Figure 1). This demonstrates that in the study area, trees and shrubs are the most commonly used medicinal plants. This

could be as a result of these trees and shrubs being more prevalent in the research areas than herbs and climbers. Research on the medicinal plants of the Ada'a District, east Shewa zone, also reported the relatively high number of trees

and shrubs used for medicinal purposes [2].

### 3.3. Plant Parts Used to Protects Honey Bee Pests and Predators, Methods of Preparation and Conditions

Despite reports of many plant parts, the leaf, followed by the stem, the whole portion, the seed, and the root, were the most frequently used plant components for remedy concoctions (Table 2). There were additional reports of other plant components, such as berries and bulbs (Table 2). This outcome is in line with some earlier research works carried out across the nation [5-7, 10].

Table 2. Plant parts used for traditional medicine preparations.

Plantparts	Total responses	% of total
Leaf	75	51.3
Stem	25	17.12
Wholeparts	20	13.6
Root	11	7.53

Plantparts	Total responses	% of total
Seed	6	4.10
Fruit	5	3.42
Bulb	4	2.73
Total	146	100

### 3.4. Ways of Applying Plant Remedies

The prepared traditional medicines are applied in a number of methods among which cutting the leaves and smear under hive stand and hive entrance (47.6%), put the leaves in front of hives (19.04%), cover hive stands (7.60%), smoking (5.7%), Cleaning by fresh leaves and smear by fresh leaves all parts of the hives (6.6%), cover hive stands (7.6), planting around hives as fence (3.80%) and put on the hives (2.85%) were mentioned. In this study, cutting the leaves and smearing the hive stands and hive entrance accounts for the largest percentage (Table 3).

Table 3. Ways of applying the plant remedies used to protect honey bee pests and predators.

No.	Ways of Applying plant materials	Total Responses	Percentage (%)
1	Cutting the leaves & smear hive stand & hive entrance	50	47.6
2	Put the leaves in front of hives	20	19.04
3	Cutting the stem & put in the hive	2	1.90
4	Planting around hives	5	4.76
5	Put on	3	2.85
6	Smoking	6	5.73.8
7	Planting around hives as fence	4	3.8
8	Cleaning by fresh leaves smear by fresh leaves all parts of the hives	7	6.6
9	Cover hive stands	8	7.6
	Total	105	100

### 3.5. Informant Consensus Factor (ICF) and Fidelity Level

Honey bee pests and predators of the study area have been grouped into different categories based on the site of incidence of the pests and predators, condition of the pests and predators as well as treatment resemblance of the disease by the local people. Analysis of ICF showed that values ranged from 0.85 to 0.98 for the pests and predators categories (Table 4). Of the pests and predators categories, ants, beetles and honey badger had the highest ICF value suggesting the common occurrence of these problems and agreement of the people on their remedy. It has been shown that medicinal plants that are effective in repelling certain pests and predators and well known by the community members have higher ICF values.

Table 4. Informant Consensus Factor (ICF).

Disease categories	Nt	Nur	ICF
Ants	8	98	0.92

Disease categories	Nt	Nur	ICF
Lizards	11	95	0.89
Beetles	2	20	0.94
Spiders	9	90	0.91
Snakes	10	65	0.85
Honeybadger	2	16	0.93

Fidelity level (FL) is an index which shows the specificity of a given plant to effectively treat a particular pests and predators of honeybees. Fidelity level was then calculated for some commonly used medicinal plants to treat pests and predators/ailments. Result showed that *Schinusmolle L*, *Eucalyptusglobules*, *Rutachalepensisand Crotonmacrostachyus* had the highest FL followed by *Acaciabussei*, *Hageniaabyssinica*, *Oleaeuropea*, *Vernonia amygdalina* and *Aloemacrocampa* (Table 5). The medicinal plants that are widely used by the local people to treat one or very few cases have higher FL values than those that are less popular [4, 8-9]. High FL could also be an indication of efficiency of the reported plant to treat specific pests and predators.

Table 5. Fidelity index of some medicinal plants.

Botanical Name of Medicinal Plants	Examples of Pests treated	Np	N	FL	FL%
<i>Schinus molleL</i> , <i>Eucalyptus globules</i> <i>Croton macrostachyus</i>	Ants	46	50	0.92	92
<i>Acacia bussei</i> , <i>Hagenia abyssinica</i> , <i>olea europea</i>	Lizards	41	45	0.91	91
<i>Syzgiumguineense</i>	Spiders	40	45	0.88	88
<i>Vernonia amygdalina</i> & <i>Aloe macrocarpa</i>	Snakes	35	41	0.62	85
<i>Hageniaabyssinica</i>	Beetles	22	35	0.81	81
<i>Dovyalis abyssinica</i>	Honey badger	20	30	0.66	66

Where, Np is the number of informants that claim the use of a plant species to treat a particular pests and predators, and N is the number of informants that use the plants as a medicine to treat any given disease.

### 3.6. Preference Ranking

When there are different species prescribed for the same health problem, people show preference of one over the other. Preference ranking of six medicinal plants that were reported

for protecting ants was conducted after selecting ten key informants. The informants were asked to compare the given medicinal plants based on their efficacy and to give the highest number (6) for the medicinal plant which they think is most effective in protecting ants and the lowest number (1) for the least effective plant in ants. *Rutachalepensis* scored 46 and ranked first indicating that it is the most effective in treating pests and predators followed by *Eucalyptus globulus* and the least effective was *Syzygium guineense* (Table 6).

Table 6. Preference ranking of medicinal plants used for protecting ants.

List of medicinal Plants	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	Total	Rank
<i>Rutachalepensis</i>	4	6	5	2	4	5	4	6	4	6	46	1st
<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i>	6	5	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	44	2nd
<i>Croton macrostachyus</i>	5	4	6	3	7	2	6	3	3	1	40	3rd
<i>Hagenia abyssinica</i>	6	2	2	3	5	4	6	3	5	1	37	4th
<i>Eucalyptus camudelencis</i>	3	3	3	8	2	3	1	2	3	3	31	5th
<i>Syzygium guineense</i>	2	2	4	2	1	4	4	2	1	3	25	6th

Key:-R=informant

The major uses of plants reported were for fire wood.

### 3.7. Transfer of Knowledge on the Use of Medicinal Plants

Traditional healers also keep their knowledge on medicinal plants for the sake of securing means of income and a cultural belief that telling information may make plants in effective to cure the pests and predators/ailments. Similar findings were reported elsewhere [1, 2, 12, 18, 19]. However, it was recognized that Ethnobotanical knowledge on uses of some medicinal plants is transmitted orally to one or few family members to use in secrecy. They disclose their knowledge on medicinal plants at old age by the time when they most probably die before teaching the details of medicinal plants or when they are too old to walk to the field to show the plants in their habitats.

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study was conducted in Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha, Dodola, Kofale, Wando and Dugda Districts, with the objective of documenting Ethnomedicinal plants and indigenous knowledge on their use for medicine. 146 respondents have participated in this study as respondents. Data on medicinal plants use were collected through semi-structured interviews, field observation, and group discussion and guided field walk. Totally 34 medicinal plant species used to protect honey bee pest and predators were documented. The majority of medicinal plant species (35.2%) were harvested from the wild, home gardens (26.4%), highways (14.7%), agricultural fields (11.7%), and live fences (11.7%). *Syzygium guineense*, according to 55% of respondents, is used to defend honey bee colonies against ants, spiders, lizards, and snakes. *Eucalyptus globules*, *Hagenia abyssinica* and *Ruta chalepensis* are used against ants by 50% of respondents. Similarly, 53% of respondents said *Acacia bussei* and *Croton macrostachyus* help to keep

out lizards, snakes, and ants. The prepared traditional medicines are applied in number of methods, among which cutting the leaves and smear under hive stand and hive entrance (47.6%) and putting the leaves in front of hives (19.04%) are the major ones. The major threats to medicinal plants and the associated knowledge in the study area are fire wood collection, charcoal production, agricultural expansion, uses of plants for construction and using plants for fencing and furniture.

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded: 1) In order to conserve medicinal plants and preserve indigenous knowledge, local people should be aware of cultivating medicinal plants in their home gardens mixing with crops and as live fences, 2) Encourage the local herbal medicine practitioners to enhance the use of traditional medicine through licensing and other incentives, 3) Attention should be given to standardization of measurement and hygiene of the medicines made from plants by training both the healers and other members of the local community, 4) Biochemical profiles of plant species used for diseases categories of high ICF should be investigated for screening of the active ingredients.

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