



A SURVEY OF DIVERSITY OF PERENNIAL PLANTS IN THE DAULAT RAM COLLEGE CAMPUS, UNIVERSITY OF DELHI - A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT: Perennial plants growing all around us contribute to maintain a healthy environment. Many of these are of economic importance with several having medicinal value. Not many of us are, however, aware of their identity or uses. The campus of Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi, adorned with a variety of perennials was taken up for a case study. For a survey of these plants, the campus was divided into 13 distinct areas and location of plants was marked on the layout plan map. Simultaneous listing was done to indicate their scientific name, family, English name, common name, and medicinal and other uses. More than 540 plants representing about 100 species belonging to about 42 families of Angiosperms and Gymnosperms were recorded, indicating the rich phytodiversity of the campus. Interestingly, some plant species not commonly found in Delhi, such as *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, *Averrhoa carambola*, *Carissa carandas*, *Diospyros malabarica* and *Madhuca indica*, are maintained in the College. The mapping and compilation of information of perennials not only helped in documenting the rich flora of the campus but also increased the knowledge of students and faculty, particularly those without a biology background. Moreover, by this study an effort is made to clear the misperceptions on the identification of commonly confused morphologically similar plants. To the best of our knowledge, this kind of study including mapping of plants is the first attempt of any college of the University of Delhi to provide a comprehensive botanical compilation of the perennials growing in their campus. It will also serve as a guide to further additions of plants and motivate conservation of the flora.

Keywords: Daulat Ram College campus, Perennials, Identification and Location on map, Medicinal and other uses.

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Perennial plants, be they trees, shrubs or herbs, are seen growing all around us and most of us know the crucial role played by green plants in particular in maintaining a healthy environment. They are either wild growing or specifically planted as avenue trees, on roadsides, in parks and gardens for shade or as ornamentals for their beautiful flowers or lush, green foliage. We may have noticed that in Delhi and its environs some of these remain green throughout the year, while some shed their leaves and may at times appear as just dry clusters of twigs. However, with the onset of monsoon or just a few weeks prior to it, these apparently dead looking plants sprout to life and in a few weeks get profusely covered with leaves. Flowering in some of them occurs soon after, but one may notice that some trees flower only when the entire plant is almost leafless with flowers being yellow, crimson, white or not commonly, blue or violet in color. There are some trees that look apparently flowerless, but a closer look shows the presence of small, inconspicuous structures which are actually the flowers and fruits. Some of these plants, besides being used as timber, gum and resin yielding, bear edible fruits, flowers and leaves and quite

a few are known to possess medicinal properties. They have been used for years as home remedies for ailments and some are in regular use in the Ayurvedic, Unani, and Siddha systems of medicine. However, not many are aware of the identity of this diverse multitude of perennials growing round us. Although Maheshwari (1963) and Krishen (2006) independently presented comprehensive books on the biodiversity of plants in Delhi, "Flora of Delhi" and "Trees of Delhi" respectively, there is a need to have a ready reckoning system for the common man to identify plants in his/her vicinity. Therefore, it was thought worthwhile to make a survey of perennials in a small but distinct, marked out area, our place of work, Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi. This college started functioning at its present location (4, Patel Marg, University of Delhi) in 1964. Since then, several avenue trees and ornamental flowering perennials have been planted, contributing to a beautiful green campus spread over an area of about 14 acres. A systematic survey to identify the fixed perennial plants in the campus, location on a schematic map and labeling them with their botanical/scientific name, family, English and common name would be of immense use to familiarize the college fraternity and visitors with the diverse plants occurring in the campus