ISSN: 2322 - 0902 (P)
ISSN: 2322 - 0910 (O)

International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research

Review Article

# *ASTAVARGA* (EIGHT) MEDICINAL PLANTS IN AYURVEDA

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**Article info**

**Article History:**
Received: 03-07-2025
Accepted: 10-08-2025
Published: 15-09-2025

**KEYWORDS:**
*Astavarga*, Ayurvedic, Medicinal plants.

**ABSTRACT**

*Astavarga* refers to a group of eight potent medicinal plants used in Ayurveda, an ancient Indian system of medicine. These plants are renowned for their therapeutic properties and are commonly utilized in various Ayurvedic formulations to promote health and treat specific ailments. The *Astavarga* group indeed holds immense significance in traditional Ayurvedic medicine due to its therapeutic properties. These plants have been valued for their medicinal benefits, such as enhancing vitality, bolstering the immune system, and promoting cellular regeneration. Given their importance and the threat of endangerment faced by many of these species, conservation efforts are crucial. Protecting and cultivating these plants can ensure their sustainability for future generations and maintain the availability of essential ingredients for Ayurvedic formulations. Creating awareness among the public about the significance of these medicinal plants could lead to increased demand and subsequently encourage cultivation initiatives. Moreover, integrating modern agricultural practices with traditional knowledge can aid in cultivating these plants effectively while preserving their medicinal properties. Efforts to protect and propagate these species could involve collaboration between conservationists, herbalists, farmers, and governmental organizations. This collective effort can not only help in preserving biodiversity but also maintain the heritage and efficacy of Ayurvedic medicine.

## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, which means "life" in Sanskrit and "science" or "knowledge" in *Veda*, is a "science of long life" that has been practiced in India since the prehistoric era. By re-establishing equilibrium between the body, mind, and spirit, Ayurveda seeks to preserve and extend a person's life by utilizing the natural laws of nature. [1] Numerous *Rishis* and *Saints,* including *Aswani Kumars*, *Atreya, Bhardwaja*, *Dhanwantri*, *Charak*, *Sushrut*, and many more, have enhanced Ayurveda, which is the study of life. When *Ashwani Kumars*, who were widely known as Ayurvedic miracle healers, observed *Rishi Chyavan's* old, frail, and malnourished body during the early stages of Ayurveda's creation, they decided to use Ayurvedic medicine to bring him back to life.

*Maharishi Bhrigu*, a renowned astrologer whose predictions remain accurate to this day, is the ancestor of *Rishi Chyavan*. Consequently, *Ashwani Kumars* developed a mixture of eight distinct plants that magically restored *Rishi Chyavan's* physique; this concoction became known as *Chyavanprash. Astavarga* is the collective name for these eight plants.[1,2]

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https://doi.org/10.47070/ijapr.v13i8.3812



**Table 1: Members of *Astavarga* Plants**

| S.No | Sanskrit Name | Botanical Name | Family | References |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | *Kakoli* | *Roscoea purpurea* Smith | Zingiberaceae | 3 |
| 2. | *Kshirakakoli* | *Lilium polyphyllum* D. Don | Liliaceae | 4 |
| 3. | *Jeevak* | *Crepidium acuminatum* (D. Wear) Szlach | Orchidaceae | 4 |
| 4. | *Rishbhak* | *Malaxis muscifera* (Lind) Kuntze | Orchidaceae | 4 |
| 5. | *Meda* | *Polygonatum verticillatum* (Linn.) | Liliaceae | 5-6 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. | *Mahameda* | *Polygonatum cirrhifolium* (Wall.) Royle | Liliaceae | 4 |
| 7. | *Riddhi* | *Habenaria intermedia* D. Wear | Orchidaceae | 4 |
| 8. | *Vriddhi* | *Habenaria edgeworthii* Hook.f. ex Collett | Orchidaceae | 4 |

**Table 2: Morphological description of *Astavarga* plants**

| S.No | Botanical Name | Family | Habit | Flowering-Fruiting Period | References |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | *Roscoea purpurea* Smith | Zingiberaceae | Herb, erect. Stem leafy, elongated. Leaves at the time of flower 5-6, lanceolate. Flowers few in a sessile spike. Corolla tube not longer than calyx; limb purple, rarely pale lilac or white. Lip broad, deeply bifid. | June-July | 7 |
| 2. | *Lilium polyphyllum* D. Don | Liliaceae | A perennial herb upto 60-120cm in height. Erect, slender, hollow, leafy. Leaves- sessile, alternate or nearly opposite or whorled, 7-12.5cm long and 5-12mm broad. Flowers- pendulous, 10-12cm in diameter. Fruits- 2-3cm long, oblong, three angled, erect, coriaceous, loculicidal, 3-lobed capsule. Seed- numerous, circular, brown in colour. | June-July | 7,8 |
| 3. | *Crepidium acuminatum* (D. Wear) Szlach | Orchidaceae | Terrestrial, up to 30cm tall. Leaves 3 or more, ovate, acute or acuminate, margins undulate, lower one with sheathing base. Inflorescence laxly many-flowered. Flowers yellowish-green to purple, with purple tinge near the centre. Bracts lanceolate. Sepals oblong; the laterals broad and oblong, 3-5-nerved; dorsal shorter than the laterals, 1-3-nerved, subacute. Petals longer than sepals, linear, 3-nerved. Lip shield shaped, narrowly ovate, slightly convex, tip notched or bilobulate; auricles straight and slightly overlapping. Column with rounded arms. | July-August | 7 |
| 4. | *Malaxis muscifera* (Lindl) Kuntze | Orchidaceae | Terrestrial. subopposite, orbicular-ovate Leaves 2, unequal, to ovate-lanceolate, obtuse or subacute, sheathing or shortly petioled. Inflorescence laxly flowered, ebracteate, far exceeding the leaves. Flowers yellowish-green, c. 3mm across. Bracts shorter than the ovary, lanceolate. Sepals subequal, oblong-lanceolate, subacute. Petals shorter than the sepals, linear. Lip fleshy broadly ovate, acute, with a beak, without auricles; side-lobes obscure, convex thickened. Column fleshy, sessile. | July-September | 7 |
| 5. | *Polygonatum verticillatum* (Linn.) | Liliaceae | Herbs; rhizomes tuber-like. Stem erect, angled, glabrous. Leaves in whorls of 3-6, sub-sessile, narrowly elliptic-lanceolate, acute to acuminate. Inflorescence 1-2 flowered; perianth pale-yellow, contracted in middle; filaments papillose; berries red. | July-August | 7 |
| 6. | *Polygonatum cirrhifolium* | Liliaceae | Herb, up to 2m tall. Leaves in whorls of 3-6, rarely a few alternate in proximal part | June-August | 7 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (Wall.) Royle | | of stem, sessile, narrowly linear, apex usually cirrhose (coiled) at initial stage. Perianth white, greenish, or pale purple. | | |
| 7. | *Habenaria intermedia* D. Wear | Orchidaceae | Terrestrial. Stem up to 50cm tall. Leaves scattered, ovate-oblong. Inflorescence 2-6-flowered. Flowers white or greenish-white. Bracts leaf-like, broadly lanceolate, acuminate, equalling or exceeding the ovary. Sepals persistent, acuminate, 5-7-nerved, tip reflexed. Petals white, equalling the dorsal sepal, 5-nerved. Lip 3-lobed, longer than sepals, side-lobes deeply pectinate with filiform segments; mid-lobe linear; spur 5-6 cm, stout, exceeding the ovary, tapering towards the apex, more or less curved. | July-August | 7 |
| 8. | *Habenaria edgeworthii* Hook.f. ex Collett | Orchidaceae | Terrestrial, up to 40cm tall, stout, leafy. Leaves ovate or oblong-lanceolate, acute or acuminate. Inflorescence spike 10-25cm long, many-flowered. Flowers crowded, deflexed in bud. Bracts shorter than the ovary. Sepals green, pubescent; the dorsal erect, broadly ovate or suborbicular, concave; laterals longer, deflexed. Petals yellow, erect, obliquely triangular, from the broad base, apex curved inwards and forming a hood with the dorsal sepal. Lip yellow, longer than the lateral sepals. Spur about twice the length of the ovary, yellowish-green, curving upwards with tip curved down. | July-August | 7 |

**Indication of the *Astavarga* Plant Drug as per Ayurvedic Lexicons**

***Kakoli* (*Roscoea purpurea* Smith)**

| S.No | Indications | DN[11] | KN[13] | BN[14] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | *Daha* | + | + | + |
| 2. | *Jwara* | + | + | + |
| 3. | *Raktapitta* | - | + | + |
| 4. | *Rajayakshma* | + | + | + |
| 5. | *Shukrajanana* | + | - | + |
| 6. | *Vrishya* | - | + | - |

***Kshirakakoli (Lilium polyphyllum* D. Don)**

| S.No | Indications | DN[11] | KN[13] | BN[14] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | *Basti Shodhaka* | + | - | - |
| 2. | *Daha* | - | + | + |
| 3. | *Hridya Roga* | + | - | - |
| 4. | *Jwara* | + | + | + |
| 5. | *Kasa* | + | - | - |
| 6. | *Rakta Vikara* | + | - | - |
| 7. | *Raktapitta* | - | + | + |
| 8. | *Rajayakshma* | + | + | + |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. | *Ruchya* | + | - | - |
| 10. | *Swasa Roga* | + | - | - |
| 11. | *Shukrajanana* | - | - | + |
| 12. | *Vrishya* | + | + | - |

***Jeevak (Crepidium acuminatum* (D. Wear) Szlach)**

| S.No | Indications | DN[11] | MN[12] | KN[13] | BN[14] | RN[15] | NA | PN[16] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *Balya* | - | + | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2 | *Bala Roga* | - | - | - | - | + | - | - |
| 3 | *Daha* | + | + | + | + | + | - | - |
| 4 | *Jwara* | + | - | - | - | + | - | - |
| 5 | *Karshya* | - | - | - | + | - | - | - |
| 6 | *Kasa* | - | + | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7 | *Shukrjanana* | - | + | + | + | - | - | - |
| 8 | *Raktapitta* | + | - | + | - | + | - | - |
| 9 | *Rajayakshma* | + | + | + | + | + | - | - |
| 10 | *Rakta Vikara* | - | - | - | + | - | - | - |
| 11 | *Rasayana* | - | - | - | - | - | - | + |
| 12 | *Vrishya* | - | - | - | - | - | - | + |

***Rishbhak (Malaxis muscifera*(Lind) Kuntze)**

| S.No | Indication | DN[11] | KN[13] | BN[14] | PN[16] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | *Daha* | + | + | + | - |
| 2. | *Jwara* | + | - | _ | - |
| 3. | *Karshya* | - | - | + | - |
| 4. | *Rakta Dosha* | + | - | + | - |
| 5. | *Raktapitta* | - | + | _ | - |
| 6. | *Rajayakshma* | + | + | + | - |
| 7. | *Shukrjanana* | + | + | + | - |

***Meda (Polygonatum verticillatum* (Linn.)**

| S.No | Indications | DN[11] | MN[12] | KN[13] | BN[14] | RN[15] | NA | PN[16] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | *Daha* | + | - | - | - | + | - | - |
| 2. | *Jwara* | + | - | - | + | + | - | - |
| 3. | *Kasa* | - | - | - | - | + | - | - |
| 4. | *Stanya Roga* | - | + | - | - | - | - | - |
| 5. | *Stanyajanana* | - | - | + | - | - | - | - |
| 6. | *Shukrajanana* | - | - | + | - | - | - | - |
| 7. | *Rakta Vikara* | - | - | - | + | - | - | - |
| 8. | *Rasayana* | - | - | - | - | - | - | + |
| 9. | *Raktapitta* | - | - | + | - | - | - | - |
| 10. | *Rajayakshma* | + | - | + | - | + | - | - |
| 11. | *Vrishya* | - | + | - | + | - | - | + |

***Mahameda (Polygonatum cirrhifolium* (Wall.) Royle)**

| S.No | Indications | DN[11] | MN[12] | KN[13] | BN[14] | RN[15] | NA | PN[16] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | *Daha* | + | - | - | - | + | - | - |
| 2. | *Jwara* | + | - | - | + | + | - | - |
| 3. | *Rakta Vikara* | - | - | - | + | - | - | - |
| 4. | *Rasayana* | - | - | - | - | - | - | + |
| 5. | *Raktapitta* | + | + | + | - | + | - | - |
| 6. | *Rajayakshma* | + | + | + | - | + | - | - |
| 7. | *Stanyajanana* | - | - | + | - | - | - | - |
| 8. | *Shukrajanana* | - | - | + | - | - | - | - |
| 9. | *Vata Shamaka* | + | - | - | + | - | - | - |
| 10. | *Vatapitta Shamaka* | - | - | + | - | - | - | + |
| 11. | *Vrishya* | - | - | - | - | - | - | + |

***Riddhi (Habenaria intermedia* D. Wear)**

| S.No | Indications | DN[11] | MN[12] | KN[13] | BN[14] | RN[15] | NA | PN[16] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *Balya* | - | + | + | - | - | - | - |
| 2 | *Jwara* | + | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3 | *Murchaa* | - | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| 4 | *Kushta* | - | - | - | - | + | - | - |
| 5 | *Krimi Roga* | - | - | - | - | + | - | - |
| 6 | *Shukrjanana* | + | + | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7 | *Raktapitta* | - | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| 8 | *Rakta Vikara* | + | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 9 | *Rajayakshma* | + | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 10 | *Rasayana* | - | - | - | - | - | - | + |
| 11 | *Tridosha Shamaka* | - | + | + | + | - | - | - |
| 12 | *Vrishya* | - | - | - | - | - | - | + |

***Vriddhi (Habenaria edgeworthii* Hook.f. ex Collett)**

| S.No | Indications | DN[11] | MN[12] | KN[13] | BN[14] | RN[15] | NA | PN[16] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | *Kasa* | - | + | + | + | - | - | - |
| 2 | *Jwara* | + | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3 | *Kapha Shamaka* | - | - | - | - | + | - | - |
| 4 | *Kushta* | - | - | - | - | + | - | - |
| 5 | *Krimi Roga* | - | - | - | - | + | - | - |
| 6 | *Shukrajanana* | + | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7 | *Rakta Vikara* | + | + | - | - | - | - | - |
| 8 | *Raktapitta* | - | - | + | - | - | - | - |
| 9 | *Rajayakshma* | + | + | + | + | - | - | - |
| 10 | *Rasayana* | - | - | - | - | - | - | + |
| 11 | *Vrishya* | - | + | + | + | - | - | + |

**Indication:** D.N (Dhanvantri Nighantu), M.N (Madanpal Nighantu), K.N (Kaidev Nighantu), B.N (Bhavaprakash Nighantu), R.N (Raj Nighantu), N.A (Nighantu Adarsh), P.N (Priya Nighantu)

**Table 3: Part used and Formulations of *Astavarga* Plants**

| S.No | Botanical Name | Part Used | Formulation | References |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | *Roscoea purpurea* Smith | Rhizome | *Astavarga churna, Chyavanprashrasayan, Vachaditaila, Chitrakaditaila, Mahakalyan ghrita, Mahamayura ghrita, Jivaniya ghrita, Nagabala sarpi, Vajikaran ghrita, Brahini gutika, and Jivaniyagana churna* | 4, 29 |
| 2. | *Lilium polyphyllum* D. Don | Bulb | *Astavarga churna, Chyavanprashrasayan, Vachaditaila, Mahakalyan ghrita, Mahamayura ghrita, Jivaniya ghrita, Vajikaran ghrita, Brahini gutika,* and *Jivaniyagana churna* | 4, 30 |
| 3. | *Crepidium acuminatum* (D. Wear) Szlach | Pseudobulb | *Astavarga churna, Chyavanprashrasayan, Vachaditaila, Chitrakaditaila, Mahakalyan ghrita, Mahamayura ghrita, Mahapadma taila, Jivaniya ghrita, Vajikaran ghrita, Brahini gutika,* and *Himvana agada* | 34, 24 |
| 4. | *Malaxis muscifera* (Lindl) Kuntze | Pseudobulb | *Astavarga churna, Chyavanprashrasayan, Chitrakaditaila, Mahakalyan ghrita, Mahamayura ghrita, Mahapadma taila, Jivaniya ghrita, Vajikaran ghrita,* and *Himvana agada* | 27, 24 |
| 5. | *Polygonatum verticillatum* (Linn.) | Rhizome | *Astavarga churna, Chyavanprashrasayan, Vachaditaila, Chitrakaditaila, Mahakalyan ghrita, Mahamayura ghrita, Jivaniya ghrita, Vajikaran ghrita, Brahini gutika,* and *Indrokta rasayan* | 35, 36 |
| 6. | *Polygonatum cirrhifolium* (Wall.) Royle | Rhizome | *Astavarga churna, Chyavanprashrasayan, Vachaditaila, Chitrakaditaila, Mahakalyan ghrita, Mahamayura ghrita,* and *Indrokta rasayan* | 37, 38 |
| 7. | *Habenaria intermedia* D. Wear | Tubers | *Vachadi* oil, *Vajikaran ghrita, Astavarga churna, Chyavanprashrasayan* | 24 |
| 8. | *Habenaria edgeworthii* Hook.f. ex Collett | Tubers | *Astavarga churna, Chyavanprashrasayan, Mahamayura ghrita* | 33, 39 |

**Table 4: Substitutes of *Astavarga* Plants**

| S.No | Botanical Name | Substitutes | References |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | *Roscoea purpurea* Smith | *Aswagandha* (*Withania somnifera* (Linn.) Dunal) and *Kali musali* (*Curculigo orchioides* Gaertn) | 42, 25 |
| 2. | *Lilium polyphyllum* D. Don | *Aswagandha* (*Withania somnifera* (Linn.) Dunal), *Safed musali* (*Chlorophytum arundinaceum* Baker), *Fritillaria roylei* Hook. *Fritillaria oxypetala* D.Don. | 43, 25 |
| 3. | *Crepidium acuminatum* (D. Wear) Szlach | *Vidarikand* (*Pueraria tuberosa* (Wild.) DC), *Safedbehmen* (*Centaurea behen* Linn.) and *Guduchi* (*Tinospora cordifolia* (Willd.) Miers, *Malaxis cylindrostachya* (Lindl.) Kuntze and *Malaxis mackinnoni* (Duthie) Ames) | 43, 25 |
| 4. | *Malaxis muscifera* (Lindl) Kuntze | *Vidarikand* (*Pueraria tuberosa* (Wild.) DC) and *Lal behmen* (*Centaurium roxburghii* (D.Don) Druce | 43 |
| 5. | *Polygonatum verticillatum* (Linn.) | *Satavari* (*Asparagus racemosus* Willd), *Salam mishri* (*Eulophia campestris* Wall.) | 43 |
| 6. | *Polygonatum cirrhifolium* (Wall.) Royle | *Satavari* (*Asparagus racemosus* Willd), *Nagbala* (*Sida veronicifolia* Lam.), *Shakakul mishri* (*Polygonatum multiflorum* (L.) All.) and *Prasarani* (*Paederia foetida* L.) | 43 |
| 7. | *Habenaria intermedia* D. Wear | *Varahikand* (*Tacca integrifolia* Ker Gawl.), *Bala* (*Sida cordifolia* Linn.), *Chiriya musali* (*Asparagus filicinus* Buch.-Ham. ex D.Don) | 43 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8. | *Habenaria edgeworthii* Hook.f. ex Collett | *Varahikand* (*Tacca integrifolia* Ker Gawl.), *Salam panja* (*Dactylorhiza hatagirea* (D.Don) Soo) and *Maha bala* (*Sida acuta* Burm.f.). *Habenaria griffithii* Hook.f. | 43 |

**Table 5: Status of *Astavarga* Plants**

| S.No | Botanical Name | Status | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | *Roscoea purpurea* Smith | Commonly available | 32, 41 |
| 2. | *Lilium polyphyllum* D. Don | Endangered | 40 |
| 3. | *Crepidium acuminatum* (D. Wear) Szlach | Rare | 40 |
| 4. | *Malaxis muscifera* (Lindl) Kuntze | Rare, threatened | 40 |
| 5. | *Polygonatum verticillatum* (Linn.) | Threatened | 40 |
| 6. | *Polygonatum cirrhifolium* (Wall.) Royle | Rare | 40 |
| 7. | *Habenaria intermedia* D. Wear | Commonly available | 40 |
| 8. | *Habenaria edgeworthii* Hook.f. ex Collett | Rare | 40 |

## CONCLUSION

The industry and Ayurvedic practitioners have a strong need for *Astavarga* plants. These plants are currently gathered from the wild during certain seasons. Such careless gathering has put these plants' survival in jeopardy. In-situ conservation of the genetic resource is of utmost importance. Ex-situ conservation is required in as many locations as feasible. For farmers to engage in large-scale cultivation, the methods for propagation and cultivation must be standardized. This lessens the strain on the natural wild population by allowing the industry to buy raw materials from farmers. To control the trade, the government and non-governmental organizations should devise a plan.

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**Cite this article as:**
Santosh Kumar Tamta, Vikram Singh Bagari. Astavarga (Eight) Medicinal Plants in Ayurveda. International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma Research. 2025;13(8):99-106.
https://doi.org/10.47070/ijapr.v13i8.3812
***Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared***

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