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Unexploited and underutilized wild edible fruits of Western Ghats in Southern India.

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Fruits play predominant role in the diet. Several health based statistical reports highlight the importance of consumption of fruits as they tend to contain broad-spectrum essential nutrients including phenolic antioxidants that impart protective role against several diseases. Western Ghats, one among eight "hottest hot-spots" of biodiversity in world harbor many wild, unexploited and minor fruits which are edible and unfamiliar to large proportion of the global population. Wild edible fruits are important source of food and income for rural communities. Wild fruits are therapeutic in nature and used to treat wide array of diseases including chronic diseases. In the last three decades, increased urbanization and deforestation for agricultural land use has led to destruction of valuable plant species including fruit yielding plants. As a result, substantial decrease in the consumption and utilization of wild edible fruits has been noticed. The present article describes 45 fruits that are edible and prominent in the Western Ghats region of Southern India. Detailed information on nutrient composition of these minor fruits is provided, as consumed by tribal and rural communities.

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