

AQUATIC PLANTS AND WEEDS IN ASSAM: INDIGENOUS RESOURCES FOR LIVESTOCK & FISH

PRIYANKA PATRA* | MONUHAR PEGU**

This leaflet highlights how indigenous communities in Assam turn aquatic weeds and uncultivated plants into valuable resources. These “weeds” support nutrition, biodiversity, livestock feed, and natural farming - showcasing a sustainable, low-input approach rooted in traditional wisdom.

Alligator Weed (কুকুৰাঠেঙীয়া) – an uncultivated yet widely used aquatic plant in rural Assam, known for enhancing milk in livestock and serving as both fodder and leafy vegetable. It remains a key part of traditional food and farming systems.

Greater Duckweed (সৰু পুনি)
A protein-rich aquatic plant (30-40% dry weight) used as feed for fish like Grass Carp and Tilapia. It improves water quality and oxygen levels. Regular harvesting keeps it in check.

Water Spinach (কলমৌ শাক) – a nutrient-rich aquatic green loved in Northeast Indian cuisine, valued for its medicinal uses, water-purifying ability, and as natural feed for herbivorous fish like Grass Carp

Black Taro (ক'লা কচু) thriving by the water's edge—a wild, iron-rich delicacy rooted in Assam's wetlands and kitchens

White Taro (বগা কচু)
A wild Colocasia with pale stems, used in traditional dishes and pig feed. Similar to Black Taro. Larger cultivated types, called Tapio, include Maan, Bhog, and Nol Kosu.

Pontederia vaginalis (কনা/ভাত মেটেকা)
– a wild aquatic herb of Assam's deep water paddy fields, valued for its medicinal properties, livestock fodder, and as a leafy green in traditional dishes. Even its flowers find a place in local recipes, reflecting its deep roots in rural food culture.

* priyanka@wassan.org

** monuhar@wassan.org

www.wassan.org



Zizaniopsis miliacea (শুহি) – a wild paddy lookalike found in deepwater fields with Bau Dhan, known for its coarse, infertile grains (Mota Dhan) used as natural fodder. More than a weed, it's a living symbol of rice heritage and ecological balance in Assam's wetlands.

IN A GLANCE

- **Taro** (*Colocasia esculenta*)
- **Water lettuce** (*Pistia stratiotes*)
- **Pontederia vaginalis** (*Monochoria vaginalis*)
- **Greater Duckweed** (*Spirodela polyrhiza*)
- **Water Spinach / Morning Glory** (*Ipomoea aquatica*)
- **Alligator Weed** (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*)

Our heartfelt gratitude to the **MISING COMMUNITY MEMBERS** for generously sharing their indigenous knowledge with us.



Elytrigia Repens (শেবালি ঘাহ) – it is a perennial grass commonly found in marshes/wetland area or lowland. It tolerates water logging and several as a green fodder for cattle.

YOU CALL IT A WEED— VILLAGERS SEE ITS VALUE.

WEED AS FEED AND FODDER !!

Uncultivated plants blur the line between weed and resource. What may seem useless to some is a treasure to others. These floating and submerged greens are widely used for **fish and livestock feed**, **compost**, and even **traditional herbal remedies**.



Hymenachne Amplexicaulis (দলঘাহ) – a flood-tolerant wetland grass, key fodder for cattle during floods and grown alongside deep water paddy like Bau Dhan.

Assam's wetlands host rich aquatic plants, herbs, and weeds. Indigenous communities use **age-old knowledge** to turn these into **valuable resources** for nutrition, biodiversity, and livestock care. Their **low-input practices align closely with Natural Farming** principles.