

# Commiphora wightii

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*Commiphora wightii* (**Guggal**, **Guggul** or **Mukul myrrh tree**) is a flowering plant in the family Burseraceae. The guggul plant may be found from northern Africa to central Asia, but is most common in northern India. It prefers arid and semi-arid climates and is tolerant of poor soil.

It is a shrub or small tree, reaching a maximum height of 4 m, with thin papery bark. The branches are thorny. The leaves are simple or trifoliate, the leaflets ovate, 1–5 cm long, 0.5–2.5 cm broad, irregularly toothed. It is gynodioecious, with some plants bearing bisexual and male flowers, and others with female flowers. The individual flowers are red to pink, with four small petals.

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## Traditional medicinal use

Guggul has been a key component in ancient Indian Ayurvedic system of medicine. But has become so scarce because of its overuse in its two habitats in India where its is found — Gujarat and Rajasthan that the World Conservation Union (IUCN) has enlisted it in its Red Data List of endangered species.

Guggul produces a resinous sap known as gum guggul. The extract of this gum, called gugulipid, guggulipid or guglipid, has been used in Ayurvedic medicine, a traditional Hindu medicine, for nearly 3,000 years in India.<sup>[1]</sup> The active ingredient in the extract is the steroid guggulsterone, which acts as an antagonist of the farnesoid X receptor, once believed to result in decreased cholesterol synthesis in the liver. However, several studies have been published that indicate no overall reduction in total cholesterol occurs using various dosages of guggulsterone, and levels of low-density lipoprotein ("bad cholesterol") increased in many people.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

### *Commiphora wightii*



*Commiphora wightii* resin (guggul)

### Conservation status



Data Deficient (IUCN 2.3)

### Scientific classification

Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Eudicots
(unranked):	Rosids
Order:	Sapindales
Family:	Burseraceae
Genus:	<i>Commiphora</i>
Species:	<i><b>C. wightii</b></i>

### Binomial name

***Commiphora wightii***

(Arn.) Bhandari

### Synonyms

*Commiphora mukul* (Stocks) Hook.

## Cultivation and other uses

Guggul is sought for its gummy resin, which is harvested from the plant's bark through the process of tapping. In India and Pakistan, guggul is cultivated commercially. The resin of the guggul plant, known as *gum guggulu*, has a fragrance similar to myrrh and is commonly used in incense and perfumes. It is the same product that was known in Hebrew, ancient Greek and Latin sources as bdellium.

Guggul can be purchased in a loosely packed form called Dhoop, an incense from India, which is then burned over hot coals. This produces a fragrant dense smoke. The burning coals which produce the smoke are carried around to different rooms and held in all the corners of the room for a few seconds. This is said to drive away evil spirits as well as remove the evil eye from the home and its family members.

## References

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- ↑ Szapary, PO; Wolfe, ML; Bloedon, LT; Cucchiara, AJ; Dermarderosian, AH; Cirigliano, MD; Rader, DJ (2003). "Guggulipid Ineffective for Lowering Cholesterol". *JAMA* **290** (6): 765–772. doi:10.1001/jama.290.6.765 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1001%2Fjama.290.6.765>) . PMID 12915429 (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12915429>) .
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## External links

- Kutch to house Centre's Rs 8-cr Guggal conservation project (<http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/Kutch-to-house-Centres-Rs-8cr-Guggal-conservation-project/259012/>) , D V MAHESHWARI, *Indian Express Newspapers*, January 8, 2008
- 'US study results on Gugulipid premature' (<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2003/08/24/stories/2003082400741600.htm>) , Vinson Kurian, Variety - Health, The Hindu Business Line, Thiruvananthapuram, Aug 24, 2003]
- Ancient Indian remedy 'lowers cholesterol' (<http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/south/05/03/india.ayurveda/index.html>) , May 3, 2002, CNN
- What's Gugul Good For? (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1005507,00.html>) , David Jerklie, *Time Magazine*, Aug. 25, 2003
- Flora of Pakistan: *Commiphora wightii* ([http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora\\_id=5&taxon\\_id=250063169](http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=5&taxon_id=250063169))
- Germplasm Resources Information Network: *Commiphora wightii* (<http://www.ars-grin.gov/cgi-bin/npgs/html/taxon.pl?406462>)
- Medicinal Plants of Conservation Concern: *Commiphora wightii* ([http://envis.frlht.org.in/botanical\\_search.php?txtbtname=comm&gesp=625%7CCommiphora+wightii+%28A.%29+BHANDARI](http://envis.frlht.org.in/botanical_search.php?txtbtname=comm&gesp=625%7CCommiphora+wightii+%28A.%29+BHANDARI))

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