



**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**An Exploratory Study of the Economically Important Plant- *Malva sylvestris* (L.)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Malva sylvestris* L. (common mallow), a biennial-perennial herbaceous plant, is a native to Europe, North Africa and Asia. It has a history of use as a herbal remedy. This plant is found as a weed in most parts of the world but phytomedicines can be obtained from various parts of this plant like roots, leaves, seeds and flowers for curing various ailments. This medicinal plant has high antioxidant capacity and is a source of linolenic, linoleic, palmitic and oleic acid. *Malva sylvestris* L. is considered as a weed but is an edible plant with medicinal properties and the present review deals with all the aspects of this plant.

**Key Words:** *Malva sylvestris*, Mallow, Medicinal Plant

**INTRODUCTION**

The *Malva sylvestris* L. belongs to Malvaceae and is a biennial-perennial herbaceous plant that originated in Southern Europe and Asia. It is found as a weed in most parts of the world and grows freely in fields, roadsides and on wastelands. It is known by various vernacular names such as Panirak, Mallow, Ebegumeci, Sonchal, Sotchal, Gomecotu etc.

**BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION**

*Malva sylvestris* L., has a perennial root and a juicy annual stem 2-3 feet high. The leaves are large, broadly heart shaped, soft, plaited and slightly seven lobed. Flowers of the common mallow resemble closely to that of honeysuckle (Lust, 1974). Flower petals are from deep pink to reddish or bluish purple with darker markings. Mericarps 8-12 per flower, usually glabrous, strongly reticulate veined on back; edges sharply angled but not winged. Seeds are brown to brownish green when ripe, about 2.5 millimeters long and wide, 5 to 7 millimeters in diameter.

**MEDICINAL USE OF *M. SYLVESTRIS* L.**

*Malva sylvestris* (Common mallow) has great medicinal potential. It is used in both food and medicine. It is believed that many phytomedicines can be obtained from this plant for the treatment of cough, inflammatory diseases of mucous membranes, dermatitis, stomach ache and sore throat (Kultur 2007 and Scherrer *et al.*, 2005). *Malva sylvestris* has antioxidant capacity and the leaves and petioles contain linolenic, linoleic, palmitic and oleic acids (Dalar *et al.*, 2012).

**COMMERCIAL USES**

Dyes (cream, yellow and green) can be obtained from the plant and the seed heads. A tincture obtained from flowers forms a delicate test for alkalis. A fiber can be obtained from the stem that is useful for cordage, textile and paper making.

**REVIEW OF RESEARCH WORK**

Ethnobotanical and scientific aspects of *M. sylvestris* have been successfully done by Gasparetto *et al.*, (2012). The chemical composition and antioxidant properties of *M. sylvestris* have been reported by Tabaraki *et al.*, (2011). Barros *et al.*, (2010) carried out a

comparative study of the composition in nutraceuticals and antioxidant properties of *M. sylvestris*.

### CONCLUSION

The reported uses of *M. sylvestris* make it a highly desired herb. This important medicinal plant needs conservation through plantation. The present review about *M. sylvestris* has also reported its potential use as a commercial plant and has highlighted a need for more studies.

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