

## Potential of botanicals for the management of forest insect pests of India, an overview

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### ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the botanicals evaluated against forest insect pests of India and presents the impact of neem and other plant products against major forest insect pests. Various neem products were found effective in field condition against many forest insect pests like the rohiya defoliator, *Patialus tecomella*, the babul defoliator, *Taragama siva*, the desert locust *Schistocerca gregaria*, the babul whitefly *Acauldaleyrodes rachipora*, the spiralling whitefly, *Aleurodicus dispersus* and the teak defoliators *Hyblaea puera* and *Paliga machaeralis* etc. Neem oil and neem oil based formulations were used to contain the populations build up of *A. dispersus* on roadside plantations of *Bauhinia. variegata* and *Michelia champaca*. Neem cake, pongam cake and VAM were commonly applied in combination for the management of sucking pests on seedlings. Other than neem about 58 plant species were reported to have pest management properties on forest insect pests. In these plants, mostly crude extracts were reported to have different type of pest management properties in laboratory condition against defoliating pests. Not much work has been carried out on other group of insects like sap suckers, wood borers, gall inducers etc. Extractives of different parts of *Capparis decidua* were found to possess aphidicidal principles against three species of aphids viz., *Aphis gossypii*, *Lipaphis erysimi* and *Mysus persicae*. Plant products other than neem were not practically used much for pest control. It is recommended to have national, regional and international coordinated effort to exploit botanicals that are more potent as an integral component of pest management in different cropping systems including forestry.

**Key words:** Botanicals, forest insect pests, pest management

### INTRODUCTION

The use of synthetic pesticides during the last half century has often been careless and indiscriminate which resulted in malicious effects on the environment and leads to “ecological backlash” (Sundararaj, 1997). Concern about this has led to a surge of research into alternative pest control technologies. One of the efforts is the development of botanical insecticides as a novel and safer alternative strategy. Botanical insecticides, which contain plant extracts as active components, are safer as well as environmentally friendlier than synthetic insecticides. Use of these chemicals of plant origin, commonly called ‘botanicals’ or ‘phytochemicals’ have attracted particular attention because of their specificity to insect pests, their biodegradable nature and their potential for commercial application (Bishop and Thronton,

1997; Shukla *et al.*, 2000). These materials have been, since time immemorial, reported to be devoid of the various disadvantages, which are associated with the use of synthetics. Bioactivity of plant-based compounds is well documented in literature and is a subject of increasing importance. Knowledge of the toxic plants, their toxic principles and their biological activity is of paramount importance not only to enable them to be utilized as natural pest control agents and replace the commercial synthetic pesticides but also to enable us to understand the nature of their toxicity to non-targeted animals. The efficient use of such renewable natural resources is becoming increasingly important worldwide. There is no doubt that many plant secondary metabolites affect insect behaviour, development and reproduction. Characterization and identification of these

substances is an important first step in understanding the effect of plants on insect life. The botanicals thus obtained offer better compatibility with other biological pest control agents than that of the synthetics and this has brought them to sudden prominence in pest management programme.

### **Neem- A potential source of biopesticide**

Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) products are known in use in India from time immemorial against noxious insects. Because of its legendary insect repellent and medicinal properties, it being identified as “the most promising of all plants” and at the present moment it is the source of most promising pesticides. More than 100 protolimonoids, limonoids or tetranortriterpenoids and some nonterpenoid constituents have been isolated from various parts of neem (Koul *et al.*, 1990). From the neem seed extract alone, over 57 components have been isolated and identified (Jacobson, 1988). It is now well established that azadirachtin, the most important phagorepellent of neem kernels protects plants against insect attack. Bernays and Chapman (1977) indicated azadirachtin as the most potent antifeedant against insects like *Locusta migratoria migratorioides* and *Schistocerca gregaria*. It exhibits strong antifeedant activity against locusts as well as growth inhibiting properties (Rembold *et al.*, 1980). Neem kernel extracts or their oil repel insects, act as antifeedant, cause growth disruption, deformities or mortality and impairing egg production (Sieber and Rembold, 1983). The review offer further evidence for the impact of neem products against the major forest insect pests of India. The control of forest pests like poplar defoliator, *Pygaera cupreata* (Bhandari *et al.*, 1988), babul defoliator, *Taragama siva* (Sundararaj *et al.*, 1995), the rohida defoliator, *Patialus tecomella* (Sundararaj and Murugesan, 1995), the babul whitefly, *Acaudaleyrodes rachipora* (Sundararaj *et al.*, 1995; 1996, Sundararaj, 1999a, b), the teak defoliators, *Eutectona machaeralis* and *Hyblaea puera* (Kulkarni *et al.*, 1996; Remadevi and Raja Muthukrishnan, 1988; Murugan *et al.*, 1999; Sree *et al.*, 2008) using different neem products have been tested and found useful. Dubey and Sundararaj (2004) demonstrated neem oil as effective like that of commercial neem

formulations and Chlorpyrifos in containing the nymphal populations of *A. disperses* infesting trees of *Michelia champaca* and *B. variegata*.

Neem seed kernel suspension as effective repellent against the polyphagous desert locust *Schistocerca gregaria* was demonstrated (Pradhan and Jotwani, 1971; Singh, 1985; Sundararaj *et al.*, 1985). Ramarethinam *et al.* (2002) reported insecticidal property of azadirachtin against *Eurema hecabe* on *Cassia fistula*, Ambika *et al.* (2007) recommended neem seed oil against *Pemphilia morosalis* on *Jatropha* and Murugesan *et al.* (2008) recommended nimbicidin against *Carryedon serratus* infesting seeds of many forest trees. The application of neem cake alone or in combination with other seed cakes and VAM was recommended to control whiteflies in nurseries (Sundararaj, 2010). As the neem products proved its practical utility, they are recommended for large-scale application in forestry.

### **Other plant products**

A perusal of literature revealed that other than neem about 58 plant species were reported to have pest management properties on forest insect pests (Table 1). Mostly crude extracts were found to have different type of pest management properties in laboratory condition against defoliating pests of teak, poplar, subabul, bamboo etc., without identifying the active principles in the plant products. Defoliating insects were mostly used as test insects except the report of Sharma *et al.* (1992) who reported insecticidal properties of 15 plant oils against the sap sucking psyllid *Heteropsylla cubana*. Similarly extractives of different parts of *Capparis decidua* were found to possess aphidicidal principles against three species of aphids viz., *Aphis gossypii* on marwar teak (*Tecomella undulata*), *Lipaphis erysimi* on mustard (*Brassica campestris*) and *Mysus persicae* on cabbage (*Brassica oleracea*) (Table 2). The order of aphidicidal potential of extract is root > seed > stem bark > branch > wood. These plant products are probable sources of some biologically active agents for pest management for the future. Although the potential of various plant species in pest management has been demonstrated, the plants

**Table 1.** Plant products other than neem reported to have pest management properties against tree pests of India

Tree species	No. of plant species reported	Nature of plant products	Pest species and their nature	Effects	Reference
<i>Acacia nilotica</i>	1	Leaf powder: 1	<b>Seed feeders:</b> <i>Bruchidius</i> sp., and <i>Caryedon serratus</i>	Insecticidal	Murugesan <i>et al.</i> , 2008
<i>Ailanthus</i> sp.	3	Leaf extract: 3	<b>Defoliator:</b> <i>Atteva fabriciella</i>	Antifeedant	Ahmed <i>et al.</i> , 1991;
<i>Bambusa balcooa</i> <i>Bamboo</i> spp	6	Leaf extract: 6 Flower extract: 2	<b>Defoliator:</b> <i>Crypsitya coclesalis</i>	Antifeedant	Kulkarni and Joshi, 1998; Kulkarni and Joshi <i>et al.</i> , 1999; 2003
<i>Dalbergia sissoo</i>	5	Leaf extract: 5	<b>Termites</b>	Resistant to degradation Antifeedant	Borthakur and Gogoi, 2009
<i>Feronia elephantum</i>	1	Leaf extract: 1	<b>Defoliator:</b> <i>Plecoptera reflexa</i>	Antifeedant	Kulkarni <i>et al.</i> , 1997b, Meshram, 2000
<i>Gmelina arborea</i>	1	Plant oil: 1	<b>Defoliator:</b> <i>Papilio demolius</i>	Antifeedant	Meshram <i>et al.</i> , 1996
<i>Leucaena leucocephala</i>	15	Plant oil: 15	<b>Defoliators:</b> <i>Calopepla leayana</i> <i>Eupterote geminata</i>	Antifeedant	Singh and Sushilkumar. 1998
<i>Pongamia pinnata</i>	2	Leaf extract: 2	<b>Sap sucker:</b> <i>Heteropsylla cubana</i>	Insecticidal	Sharma <i>et al.</i> , 1992
<i>Poplar</i> spp.	3	Bark extract: 1 Leaf extract: 2 Root extract: 1	<b>Defoliator:</b> <i>Clostera cupreata</i>	Growth inhibition	Deepa and Remadevi, 2007a
<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	1	Leaf powder: 1	<b>Defoliator:</b> <i>Clostera cupreata</i>	Antifeedant	Ahmad <i>et al.</i> , 1997
<i>Tectona grandis</i>	36	Bark extract: 5 Leaf extract: 27 Seed extract: 4 Seed oil: 1 Tuber extract: 1 Wood extract: 1	<b>Seed feeder:</b> <i>Bruchidius</i> sp., and <i>Caryedon serratus</i>	Insecticidal	Murugesan <i>et al.</i> , 2008
			<b>Defoliators:</b> <i>Hyblaea puera</i>	Antifeedant	Sundararaj <i>et al.</i> , 2004; Ramana <i>et al.</i> , 2004; Deepa and Remadevi, 2005; Senthil Nathan and Sehoon, 2006; Ramana and Himavathi, 2006; Ramana <i>et al.</i> , 2007
			<i>Paliga machaerolis</i>	Growth inhibition Insecticidal Larvicidal Ovicidal	Deepa and Remadevi, 2007b Krishnakumar <i>et al.</i> , 2011 Javaregowda and Naik, 2006; Ramana, 2005 Meshram, 1995; Kulkarni <i>et al.</i> , 1997a; Murugesan <i>et al.</i> , 2003 ; Sundararaj <i>et al.</i> , 2004; Durairaj, 2009
				Antifeedant	Sree <i>et al.</i> , 2008
				Growth inhibition	

have not been exploited commercially (Srinivasan, 2012) and as of now except neem other botanicals are not practically used in pest control. Geden (2012) is of the view that further research on blends of essential oils with other botanicals and improved formulations and delivery systems could lead to substantial improvements in the performance of botanicals.

In conclusion synthetic insecticides have been used to contain insect populations since the inception of green revolution with the significant increase in crop production. However, the consequent pollution jeopardizes the agricultural as well as forestry business. In this context, plant products are preferred over synthetic chemicals as they are non-

**Table 2.** Efficacy of extracts of *Capparis decidua* on different species of aphids.

Aphid species	Host Plant	Method of application	Mortality (%) over control with 1% extracts of different parts of <i>Capparis decidua</i> at 48 hrs				
			Seed	Wood	Branch	Bark	Root
<i>Aphis gossypii</i>	<i>Tecomella undulata</i>	Dipping	94.85	91.20	70.28	97.24	100.00
		Spraying	90.00	80.00	60.00	84.66	100.00
<i>Lipaphis erysimi</i>	<i>Brassicca compestris</i>	Dipping	96.64	90.00	73.32	96.64	100.00
		Spraying	93.33	80.00	66.66	80.00	100.00
<i>Mysus persicae</i>	<i>Brassicca oleracea</i>	Dipping	93.33	92.10	76.64	98.20	100.00
		Spraying	90.00	90.00	73.33	76.66	100.00
CD (P= 0.05%)			5.76	4.86	6.12	8.04	NS

persistent and are compatible. Over 2,000 plant species have been reported to possess pesticidal activity but only a handful of pest control products directly obtained from plants are in use. Botanicals used as insecticides presently constitute 1% of the world insecticide market and in Indian market it is less than 1%. To enjoy widespread use, plant based products must demonstrate efficacy that is competitive with existing chemicals and must remain within the reach of resource limited farmers in the developing countries. Besides, there is a need for promoting the use of plant products in the insect pest management programs. Undoubtedly, neem compared to other plant products can boost the biopesticide industry if ventures of its commercial production and village industry are set up so that its neem products are available to the reach of planting community all round the year. Besides with the recent spell of research on botanicals, it is recommended to have national, regional and international coordinated effort to exploit botanicals as an integral component of pest management in different cropping systems including forestry.

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