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Hemidesmus indicus

[Synonyms : *Hemidesmus wallichii*, *Periploca indica*]

INDIAN SARSAPARILLA is a twining, creeping or climbing perennial. Native to south-eastern Asia, southern India and to Malaysia, it has very small, deep purple flowers that are green outside.

It is also known as *Ananta* (Sanskrit), *Anantamul* (Bengali and Marathi), Brown sarsaparilla, *Durivel* (Gujarati), *Gadisughandi* (Telugu), *Hemidesmus*, *Iramusu* (Singhalese), *Magrabu* (Hindi), *Muttavapulagamu* (Telugu), *Nannari* (Malaylam and Tamil), *Pseudosarsa*, and *Sogdeberingida* (Kannada).

Indicus means ‘means ‘of or from India or the East Indies or the Far East’.

Locally the leaves are chewed as refreshment.

Medicinally, the root was once recommended for the treatment of rheumatism, venereal diseases and skin diseases, but it is no longer used in Western medicine. In India it has been used to treat fever, venereal disease (particularly syphilis), rheumatism, appetite loss, scorpion stings and snake bites. It has also provided a local remedy there for easing children’s sore mouths.