

Pyrus pashia

[Synonyms : *Pyrus kumaoni*, *Pyrus variolosa*]

WILD HIMALAYAN PEAR is a thorny deciduous tree. Native from the Himalayas to western China and Myanmar (Burma), it has small, dark-veined, pink fading to white flowers with many stamens.

It is also known as Indian wild pear, *Kainth* (Punjabi), *Mahal mol* (Hindi), Pashia pear, *Passi* (Nepalese), and *Shegal* (Punjabi).

The small, irregularly pitted and brownish dotted, black fruit perish shortly after maturity and they tend to become sweet when over-ripe.

Pashia is a Nepalese name for this species.

Locally the sweet-tasting over-ripe fruit are eaten both fresh and dried especially by children (who some authorities claim can gorge themselves). It is understood that although their extreme perishability has precluded attempts to sell them fresh, at the turn of the 20th and 21st Centuries interest in the viability of their commercial dehydration seems to be emerging.

Sheep and goats are said to graze happily on the foliage but it appears to be less palatable for other livestock. Many wild animals compete for the fruit including birds, squirrels and bears.

The lightweight and very hard, reddish-brown wood has been used for making small agricultural tools, walking sticks, combs and tobacco pipes – and has also been burnt as fuel.

The trees are said to be a familiar sight on terraced hillsides in northern India. Some of the hill farmers there have cultivated it as hedging and have also used the wood for fencing. Experts note too that the tree is invaluable for grafting pears, apples and other fruit species from the same family (*Rosaceae*).