



Anaemia antidote

Old-timers of Karnataka's Soliga tribe swear by the health benefits of *anagone soppu*

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SEVENTY-FIVE-year-old Puttamma is angry at her daughter-in-law. "She's seven months pregnant and look how weak she is. I advise her to eat *anagone soppu* [*Alternanthera sessilis*] but she doesn't listen," complains Puttamma.

Her daughter-in-law has to take iron supplements every day because she is severely anaemic. "*Anagone soppu* was a regular part of our diet and we never faced such problems. It is rich in nutrients and medicinal properties. We even worked in fields during pregnancy," Puttamma recollects.

Puttamma belongs to Karnataka's Soliga community and lives in Gorasane village of Chamarajnagar district. The village is close to the Male Mahadeshwara Hills of the Western Ghats, where this aquatic plant is found in abundance from November to April. People in her village use the leaves of the plant to fight anaemia, jaundice, night blindness, piles, infertility, strengthen the nervous system and to boost hair growth. It is also recommended for lactating mothers as it is said to enhance the production of breast milk. In rural areas of South India, it is quite common for people to gift its leaves to neighbours and to pregnant women.

PHOTOGRAPHS: HARISHA R P



Prepared from *anagone soppu*, *bassaru* (left) and *soppina palya* are rich in iron, calcium, phosphorus, and vitamins C and B complex

