

**Ethnobotanical research and teaching: A Case in Bulgaria.** (Oral Presentation)

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**Introduction**

Bulgarian people in rural areas have a tradition of using herbal medicine as household remedies, due partly to the scarcity of pharmaceuticals during the Soviet era. As part of a fieldwork exercise in the ethnobotany course taught at Uppsala University students carried out ethnobotanical research in different areas in Bulgaria to study and describe these traditions.

**Objectives**

To study: Plants used to treat fevers and cold; plants used to treat wounds and for pain-relief; plants grown in home gardens; plants used for magical purposes; and awareness of endangerment of medicinally used plants.

**Methods**

Our group of 16 students was divided in groups of two-three students. Each group had written a project proposal focusing on one of the study objectives, and carried out this research with the help of a Bulgarian translator, who was knowledgeable about the local flora. Three field sites had been selected to spread the students throughout the country and to prevent informant fatigue. Interviews were semi-structured and if necessary, walks were made with the informants to point out plants and collect herbarium vouchers.

**Results**

The students as a whole managed to collect an enormous amount of data in a very short time, and some groups carried out as many as 18 interviews during the 8-day field period. Results were analyzed per group and presented during a one-day seminar at Ruse University, Bulgaria.

**Conclusion**

Bulgarian villagers, mainly elderly people, rely to a great extent on the use of medicinal plants to treat common and non-threatening chronic diseases. These plants are often grown in home gardens, and less so collected in the wild. Knowledge is often based on books, and less so on maternal or paternal transmission. The people living in Roussenski Lom national park experience that most medicinally used wild plants have stayed equal or increased in abundance over the last decennium. Carrying out ethnobotanical field research can be effective and efficiently done as part of a course training ethnobotany students.

**Keywords:** Student participation, Endangered plants, Ethnobotany teaching

**Selected References**

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