

Sea buckthorn cultivation in Himachal Pradesh

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In news : Recently, the state government of Himachal Pradesh has decided to start planting sea buckthorn in the cold desert areas of the state in the current year

Key updates

- The Seabuckthorn Association of India wants the forest departments of various Himalayan states/UTs to plant sea buckthorn on arid and marginal lands using compensatory afforestation or CAMPA funds.
- The Union Ministry of environment, forest and climate change asked these states to submit proposals for taking up such plantations, “especially in the light of reduced water flow from Himalayan glaciers and its impact on ecology”
- As announced by the Himachal Pradesh CM, seabuckthorn will be planted on 250 hectares in the state over the next five years.

About Seabuckthorn [*Hippophae rhamnoides.*])

- Seabuckthorn is a shrub which produces an orange-yellow coloured edible berry.
- In Himachal Pradesh, it is locally called **chharma** and grows in the wild in Lahaul and Spiti and parts of Kinnaur.
- They also have the unique characteristic of remaining intact on the shrub throughout the winter months despite the subzero temperature.
- They can grow between 2 and 4 m high (between 7 and 13 ft).
- It has a rough, brown or black bark and a thick, grayish-green crown.

- It is dioecious, meaning that the male and female flowers grow on different shrubs

Where can we find Sea Buckthorn in India?

- In India, it is found above the tree line in the Himalayan region, generally in dry areas such as the cold deserts of Ladakh and Spiti.
- According to the Seabuckthorn Association of India, around 15,000 hectares in Himachal, Ladakh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh are covered by this plant.

Benefits of Seabuckthorn

Medicinal benefits:

- Seabuckthorn has been widely used for treating stomach, heart and skin problems
- Its fruit and leaves are rich in vitamins, carotenoids and omega fatty acids, among other substances, and it can help troops in acclimatising to high-altitude

Ecological benefits:

- It is a soil-binding plant which prevents soil-erosion, checks siltation in rivers and helps preserve floral biodiversity
- It is also a source of fuelwood and fodder
- In the Lahaul valley, where willow trees are dying in large numbers due to pest attack, this hardy shrub is a good alternative for protecting the local ecology

Commercial value:

- It is used in making juices, jams, nutritional capsules etc.