

MEDICINAL PLANTS USED AS A BEVERAGE COLORANT BY THE LOCAL POPULATION ALONG THE NORTHERN BLACK SEA COAST

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Introduction: Traditionally, Bulgarians use medicinal plants to color drinks. Most often colored homemade wines and spirits drinks.

Materials and Methods: The study was conducted using the face-to-face questionnaire method. Survey participants were randomly selected. They are of different age groups, ethnicity, gender, education and employment.

Results: A total of 709 locals from 32 settlements - 8 cities and 24 villages located along the North Black Sea coast participated in this study. Of the 709 people surveyed, 353 (49.78%) answered that they use medicinal plants to color drinks. From the study we found that the local population uses 35 species of medicinal plants belonging to 29 genera and 19 families to color drinks. This includes medicinal plants typical for the area, species from other floristic regions of Bulgaria, alien species and cultivated plants. The most commonly used staining plants are: *Morus sp.*, *Quercus sp.*, *Cotinus cogygrina Scop.* Some more interesting and not traditional types of medicinal plants are also used, such as: *Mahonia aquifolium* (Pursh) Nutt., *Diospyros lotus L.*, *Phytolacca americana L.*

Conclusion: The prevalent use of medicinal plants from the local flora confirms the fact that Northern Black Sea coast residents have retained the traditional knowledge of medicinal plant application. At the same time, the use of medicinal plants, alien to the Bulgarian flora, shows the impact of globalization and socio-cultural development, even with the use of herbal products today.

Keywords: *medicinal plants, coloring of beverages, Northern Black Sea coast*