

SHATAVARI (*ASPARAGUS RACEMOSUS*)

THE HERBAL WONDER

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SHATAVARI (*Asparagus racemosus* Wild) is a perennial plant, and is considered to be native to the Indian Subcontinent. Over the decades, it has been honoured as “Queen of Herbs” owing to its considerable Ayurvedic potential, making it immensely useful for the management of a range of human health-related issues. The ayurvedic potential is primarily attributed to a range of diverse bioactive components, including carboxylic acids, alkaloids, polycyclic hydrocarbons, flavonoids, isoflavones, dihydrophenanthrene derivatives, furan derivatives, essential oils, sterols, and steroidal saponins. These bioactive compounds remain distributed throughout the plant body, especially in rhizomes, and are known to influence several functions, including colour development, flavour, and protective defence against UV radiation. In addition, shatavarin IV — a sarsapogenin — has gained attention and popularity over the recent decades owing to its immense beneficial potential for female reproductive health, such as fertility, libido, and hormonal homeostasis.

Considering the abovementioned potential, the Ministry of AYUSH, India, has launched a programme “Shatavari – For Better Health” on 6 February 2025. The programme was launched by Shri Prataprao Jadhav (Minister of State, AYUSH) along with key NMPB (National Medicinal Plants Board) officials. The fundamental objectives of the campaign encompass: 1) promoting public awareness regarding the medicinal benefits of Shatavari, particularly for women’s health, 2) encouraging cultivation and sustainable management of Shatavari, and 3) aligning with India’s broader health goals (like the *Panch Pran goal for a developed India*). Therefore, it may go a long way in improving human health in general and female health in particular, contributing towards a healthier society.

Shatavari: Traditional Roots & Taxonomic Botanical Identity

Asparagus belongs to the genus *Asparagus* and is a perennial flowering herb. It grows to 100-150 cm with a stout stem. The plant’s root is indeterminate and fascicular. They are primarily dioecious but may also be sometimes monoecious, with

bell-shaped flowers. It mainly grows in subtropical and tropical regions, particularly in the Himalayas up to an altitude of 1500 metres. It thrives in a range of environments, including loamy soils, well-drained sandy soil, and semi-shaded to open forest environments. For the purpose of propagation, either seeds or root tubers may be used, and it takes around 18-24 months before plants mature for harvesting and downstream processing to derive useful products. *Asparagus* has ecological significance as it helps stabilise soil owing to its deep root system, supporting regional biodiversity, and contributing to the sustainable production of herbal medicine.

Health Benefits Supported by Tradition & Emerging Science

According to recent studies entitled, “A comprehensive review on role of phytoconstituents from the roots of *Asparagus racemosus* (Queen of Herbs)” published in journal *Phytomedicine Plus* and “Neuro-nutraceutical potential of *Asparagus racemosus*: A review” published in journal *Neurochemistry International*, *Asparagus racemosus* possess a spectrum of bioactive compounds with beneficial effects, such as shatavarins I-V (antioxytocic, immunomodulator), sarasapogenin, anthocyanin (immunomodulator, antioxidant, blood cholesterol reducer), immunoside (immunomodulator), cyanidin glycosides (anti-protozoal), phytoecdysteroids (antimicrobial), glycoside-AR-4 (anti-protozoal), asparagamine A (antioxytocic, antitumor), diosgenin (hepato-protector, antitumor) and racemofuran (antioxidant).

Asparagus racemosus Life Cycle

