

**Doon Watch Nature Series for Dehradun Live Hindustan Times  
by Sanjay Sondhi**

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Yumberries!

Lip smackin', finger lickin' good! From as far back as my memory can take me, eating wild fruit, directly off trees or bushes has always given me great pleasure. No fertiliser, no pesticides, naturally ripened, as sweet as honey, as tasty as "bought" fruit can never be.

As summer marches forth, many different kinds of wild fruit seem to pop up everywhere. My favourite remains the Yellow Himalayan Raspberry (*Rubus ellipticus*). This bush has small berries which are green when raw, but yellowish-orange when ripe. The berries grow on a bush that can be as high as a few meters above the ground. While numerous wild berries grow throughout the Himalayas, most of these grow at higher altitudes. The Yellow Himalayan Raspberry grows as low as 600 m, and can be seen in forest on the outskirts of Dehradun, as I found out during a recent visit to Chauki Dhaulas, beyond the shooting range.



Popping these fresh berries into my mouth gives me a guilt complex-I'm stealing from the birds! Along every path that I ventured forth, the lowest fruits had already been plucked. For me to get to them to the remaining berries was hazardous! Thorns adorn this bush-in fact a close look at this bush will reveal that the branches are covered with fine purple coloured hair. This hair is soft, and harmless. However,

along with this hair are small down-curved thorns on its branches. These thorns point in the right direction as far as the bush is concerned, but in the most deadly position for anyone wanting to partake its fruit. Reaching out with your hands to pluck the fruit, and the purplish hairs caress you harmlessly. On the way out, the sharp thorns ensnare you, and rip out parts of your skin, as though saying "No pain, no gain! If you really want to eat some of my tasty fruit, you gotta feel the pain!" On plucking the fruit, the fleshy part of the berry just crumbles into your hand. Pop them into your mouth; sweet, juicy and yummy!

The Yellow Himalayan Raspberry spreads easily and quickly-its seeds are dispersed by birds, who love the fruit, and a cut shoot will grow too. Though native to India, I was surprised to learn that the bush has spread rapidly to other parts of the world, and in fact is listed as one of the world's 100 worst invasive species by the IUCN! Too bad its invaded other countries; as far as I am concerned, I love its fruit, and will continue to steal from the birds!

Feedback on this column is welcome at [sanjay.sondhi1@gmail.com](mailto:sanjay.sondhi1@gmail.com)

Making a difference: We are so used to drinking synthetic drinks-calling for a Coke or Pepsi comes so naturally to us. Why don't you drink natural juices made from wild fruit-they are healthier, and tastier. During a recent trip to Mussoorie, Anchal, my wife collected a whole lot of rhododendron flowers which had fallen to the ground. After washing the flowers, she put the wet flowers in a mixer and crushed them. Using the resulting crush, she boiled the mashed flowers in water, added sugar and lo behold, we were left with a delicious rhododendron squash, that we are still drinking today!

Photograph caption: Yellow Himalayan Raspberry

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