

## The Ethnobotanical Knowledge on Sedge Plants in Korea (Cyperaceae)

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Sedge family is second largest family in the Korean flora with more than 240 taxa, following Aster family (about 300 taxa). Although high species diversity, a very limited number of taxa has been utilized for ethnobotanical usages. In the study, previous researches on Cyperaceae ethnobotanical information are documented and analyzed for future research directions on the taxa. A total number of seven taxa has been used for medicinal, food, and material purposes: *Carex boottiana* Hook. & Arn., *Cyperus amuricus* Maxim., *Cyperus esculentus* L., *Cyperus exaltatus* Retz., *Cyperus rotundus* L., *Eleocharis kuroguwai* Ohwi, and *Bolboschoenus maritimus* (L.) Palla. Underground parts such as tubers are used with medicinal purpose, and aboveground portions such as leaves and stems provide materials for various tools and foods for people and animals. They are all native to Korea, except *C. esculentus*, which is introduced from Mediterranean areas for anti-erosion materials. The ethnobotanical value of *C. esculentus* has been well recognized from ancient times, for example, starch grains in USA (excavations at the Mashantucket Pequot Reservation) and Tiger nut milk (Horchata de chufa in Spain). Among material sources, *C. exaltatus* has a long history in the Korean peninsula from Three Kingdoms of Korea (57 BC~668 AD). *C. rotundus* is distributed widely in Asia, Africa, Europe, and America, and utilized for medicines, food, and materials. In addition, *Eleocharis kuroguwai* is only one taxon utilized for ethnobotanical uses among fifteen *Eleocharis* Korean native species. The number of species with ethnobotanical uses is small in sedge family, but the family has long been utilized accompanying long human history. *Cyperus papyrus* L., the source of papyrus paper (Egypt in the Nile Delta), is also a member of sedge family. Sedge family has contributed to human societies in various aspects but, the cultural, botanical, ecological values of family members have been underestimated.

**Key words:** Ethnobotanical knowledge, Cyperaceae, *Cyperus*, *Eleocharis*

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