

K U T

(Saussurea Lappa --Compositae)

Native of Kashmir, grows at altitudes from 9000 to 12000 feet. Valuable economic plant. Used both in India and China. China absorbs most of the crops. Parts used --roots.

No exact figures for export are available at present, but they are larger than the old records available, when about 7000 maunds (1 maund -- 80 lbs.) were exported annually.

This root is supposed to be the "costus" of the ancients and we have found sufficient data to believe that this is correct. At present it is used in perfumery, medicine, insecticides, etc. etc. Its use has been restricted owing to the very closed character of the trade, the monopoly being held by Kashmir, no individual trader was allowed to export any part of the plant from Kashmir. However lately some cultivation has been started in Lahul, Kangra District, Punjab and it met with considerable success. From experiments here we believe that Kut can be successfully cultivated in the middle States of the United States. The cultivation is extremely easy and the crop gathered every three years. We believe that the third year, as marking the first flowering season, is regarded as the period of full maturity. As already mentioned the extreme narrow bounds in which the kut trade is held, has not contributed much to its improvement and development. No seeds are obtainable and no roots can be exported for propagation by means of cuttings. However quite lately some seeds occasionally found their way into the adjacent localities (Lahul for instance) and cultivation on a small scale began. It is plausible to think that once the cultivation could be conducted scientifically and the quality improved as well as guaranteed for export the root will find a much wider application. Local kut has been largely adulterated and while selling for Rupees 210/- to Rs. 250/- per maund on the open market, better prices could be fetched by a high grade quality. To this effect dealers have repeatedly testified. The present price of Rupees 240/ was almost double in the pre-depression days, that is up to 1929 or even 1930. The present economic conditions of China have affected the price. An experimental plantation has been started at Urusvati with very encouraging results, Kut very often associated with birches and would do well in any place where birches grow. It stands the

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frost well, is very hardy and provided the soil is suitable, needs very little attention.

The fact that the plant has not been really cultivated thus far, and the high price it brings, make it a highly interesting plant to introduce for economic purposes into the United States.

There has been gathered all the necessary data pertaining to the cultivation of Kut and further research is being conducted.