

4.2 = WILD EDIBLE PLANTS OR HERBAL MEDICINE? PRELIMINARY ETHNOBOTANICAL INVESTIGATION ON ASTERACEAE IN TBK OF SARDINIA ISLAND, ITALY

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This research is a result of a preliminary ethnobotanical investigation carried out in Sardinia Island, Italy. Due to its geographic isolation and the Mediterranean climate, Sardinian flora includes a high number of taxa (2408), with several endemic species (14,4%) (1, 2). Since there is a well-established culture on the consumption of wild edible plants in this territory, it is interesting to evaluate folk uses and cultural relevance of such species in order to obtain a rational organization of the Traditional Botanical Knowledge (TBK) of the Sardinian inhabitants (3, 4). An ethnobotanical investigation on spontaneous plants used as "*alimenta urgentia*" (phytoalimurgy) was performed and compared with therapeutic purposes.

This investigation was carried out through semi-structured interviews with the local population integrated with a literature review (5, 6, 7, 8, 9), focusing specifically on the *Asteraceae* family. For each species, vernacular name, preparation of the edible parts and folk uses as medicine were specified. Results showed that the most cited Tribes were *Cichorieae* (52%) followed by *Cardueae* (35%). Moreover, among all the edible plants 87% were consumed raw, and 67% cooked. In particular, among the raw preparations 88% of the species were preferably prepared as salad, instead 32% of the cooked vegetables were used as soup's ingredient. About 63% of the species had also a folk use as medicine, of which 76% was prepared as decoction and 72% as infusion.

In conclusion, this study can be considered as a preliminary step for a future broad-spectrum research performed in different subregions of the Island, bound to the valorization of edible plants. Moreover, the subsequent goal would be to analyze the species from a phytochemical and biomolecular point of view. This approach could give more information about the chemical composition and biological activity of the extracts, in order to validate the traditional health beneficial effects. Nevertheless, the research of molecular markers would contribute to the valorization and characterization of the species under study (10).

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