

***Cymbopogon schoenanthus*
Spreng. Graminae (Poaceae)**



Compiled by Dr. Salima Benhouhou

■ **Morphological description**

A perennial grass, forming dense tussocks at the base and numerous erect 60-80 cm. stems. The leaves are linear, tough and strongly curved. The inflorescence is contracted at the base, becomes looser towards the end and is protected by a distinctive spathe. Each spike contains a single flower. Between the spikes, several characteristic small whitish hairs appear. The roots have a pleasant aromatic smell. Flowering takes place in the spring, usually March and April.

■ **Geographical distribution**

Local: Well represented in the Algerian Sahara.

Regional: North Africa.

Global: It is widely distributed from the tropical region through North Africa and Asia.

■ **Ecology**

It grows in arid regions with a low rainfall (around 100-150 mm. per year). This plant is found on the gravelly-sandy soils of non-saline wadi beds as well as on the gravelly-stony soils of djebels.

■ **Status**

According to the IUCN criteria this species falls into the "C" category.

The main threat is overgrazing with a negative impact on its regeneration near settlement.

The plant is not threatened and appears on the floristic list of several protected sites listed by the

***Cymbopogon schoenanthus* Spreng.**

Andropogon laniger Desf. , *Andropogonschoenanthus* L.

Cymbopogon: from kymbe, boat, and pogon, beard, referring to the flower spike's appearance;

schoenanthus: from the Greek scheinos, rope, rush-like stems

Arabic: el lemad, idjhir

Berber: tébarém

English: camel's hay, camel grass

French: schoenanthé officinale, herbe à chameau, paille de la Mecque

UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre and Man and Biosphere (MAB).

■ **Part used**

The flowers; the stems with leaves on; and the entire plant. It is collected in the spring and prepared as an infusion and a decoction, and taken by mouth.

■ **Constituents**

Essential citrus oil, tannins, glucoside, flavonols, piperitone, limonene.

Pharmacological action and toxicity

Molluscicidal and insecticidal activity.

A search on its toxicity appears negative.

■ **Pharmacopeias**

Not relevant for this species.

■ **Pharmaceutical products**

It is one ingredient of a cream that helps prevent skin problems and protect against environmental damage. The brand is HydraFluid Cream and is sold in the USA.

Oil extract from this plant is an ingredient of Epsom Lemongrass Bath Salts, and Grapefruit Calendula Botanical Bath Salts. These are products of a brand of Botanical Bath Salts by the Splash company.

■ **Traditional medicine and local knowledge**

It is used for anorexia; it is astringent, carminative,

diuretic, emmenagogic, febrifugal, gastralgic, rheumatismal and sudorific.

It is also used as a poultice to cure dromedary wounds.

In the Djanet area, the plant is particularly appreciated for its medicinal values and is well known to bring back the appetite. It is taken as a diuretic (infusion); it cures intestinal troubles and food poisoning (decoction) and helps digestion.

The young leaves are eaten with a salad or cooked with meat. It is also drunk instead of tea. It is a much appreciated pasture. *Cymbopogon schoenanthus* straw was used in the Sahara to fill mattresses. In the Haouz region of Morocco, an infusion of the flowers and the whole plant is febrifugal, diuretic, antirheumatismal and antigastralgic.

In Egypt, similar uses are reported: febrifuge, antirheumatic, poultices for camel wounds. It is also thought to be emmenagogic, astringent, carminative and sudorific.

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Relevant to the plant and its uses

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