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# Online ISSN:2583-0376

http://jpps.ukaazpublications.com

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.54085/jpps.2021.1.4.1

Journal of Phytonanotechnology and Pharmaceutical Sciences



**Review Article: Open Access** 

# Prospective of family Fabaceae (Angiosperms) in green synthesis: An indication

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### **Article Info**

#### Article history

Received 3 October 2021 Revised 6 November 2021 Accepted 11 November 2021 Published Online 30 December 2021

#### Keywords

Angiosperms Fabaceae Green synthesis Nanotechnology

### **Abstract**

In current scenario, nanotechnology is an area of great interest for most of the researchers globally. Nanotechnology dealing in nano sized particles (NPs) partaking a size of 1-100 nm. These NPs are of immense potential in the fields of atomic physics, medicinal chemistry and pharmaceuticals along with their relevance in some other fields. Due to congenial methodology, time saving and eco-friendly nature, this approach is one of the most emerging strategies in biological science with multidimensional utility. Till date, many studies have been done with the objectives of green synthesis taking several plant species. Considering this, the present review study has been done to highlight the potential of the second largest family of angiosperms (dicotyledons) Fabaceae. The family Fabaceae is well distributed in India and aboard and hugely diversified. Apart from that numerous species, this family have been found to have medicinal importance based on ethnobotanical claims and recent findings. Thus, this review will provide a base work for the usefulness of many unexplored species of this family to be used in the green synthesis.

#### 1. Introduction

Enquiry and examination of nanoparticles (NPs) synthesis for their possible biological actions have been expanded many folds in the last two decades. The frequent agents of choice for the synthesis of NPs are mostly carbon and metal ions such as silver and gold (Brunner et al., 2006). The arena of nanotechnology is one of the most worked areas of modern research related to field of material science. NPs exhibit entirely novel or upgraded properties in contrast to their optimal sized counterparts. Due to congenial methodology, time saving, and eco-friendly nature NPs are one of the most emerging strategies in biological science due to its multidimensional utility (Natesh and Mohan, 1999). The metal-based NPs have a high specific surface area and a high fraction of surface atoms. These particles also have exclusive physicochemical features, viz., optical properties, catalytic activity, electronic properties, magnetic properties and antibacterial properties (Gonzales-Melendi et al., 2008). With time the NPs are getting more and more attentions with every exploration by the scientific community working in this field.

Consequently, several procedures have been established for the synthesis of metal-based NPs. Now, synthesis of NPs is being done using several methods including physical, chemical and biological systems. Every method has its advantages and drawbacks, for instance, the most popular chemical method needs less time for synthesis of large number of NPs and necessitates capping agents for size maintenance of the NPs. But usually, the synthesis and stabilization processes of NPs are commonly toxic and lead to hazardous byproducts. Hence, there is a need to develop eco-friendly protocols to generate NPs, at this point the concept of green synthesis arises which leads to the emerging attention in biological

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Copyright © 2021 Ukaaz Publications. All rights reserved. Email: ukaaz@yahoo.com; Website: www.ukaazpublications.com methods to restrict the impact of hazardous pollutants (byproducts) in the environment. Subsequently, the demand of green synthesis (green technology) has increased (Handy *et al.*, 2008a, b) and in recent past numerous biotic tactics for both intracellular and extracellular NPs production have been reported using bacteria, fungi, algae and land plants (Harris and Bali, 2008).

In case of land plants usually angiosperms are the preferred choice (Ball, 2002; Alam and Sharma, 2012; Alam *et al.*, 2019; 2021). Several families are of interest for their utility in green synthesis. Among angiosperms invariable the families of wildly growing plants have been targeted for such purposes. Families, such as Asteraceae, Fabaceae, Amaranthaceae, *etc.*, are suitable candidates for synthesis of nano-particles as not only these families are diversified, easily available but also have huge medical properties and are being used in traditional medicinal systems. In this review, the specific focus is on the family Fabaceae.

# 2. Family Fabaceae

Fabaceae family, previously known as Leguminosae is the thirdlargest family after Orchidaceae and Asteraceae with 730 genera and about 19,400 species. The largest genera are: Indigofera (> 700 species), Astragalus (>3000 species), Mimosa (> 300 species), Acacia (>1000 species), Crotalaria (>700 species) which contain around 9.4% of all flowering plant species (Mishra, 2015). This family of angiosperms comes second just after Poaceae in terms of economic gains (Borges et al., 2013). It includes annual or perennials shrubs, trees, and herbaceous plants that are easily recognized by their compound, stipulated leaves, and their fruits (legumes) (Bharti and Sharma, 2009). The Fabaceae family is widely distributed particularly in North America, Europe, Asia, and cold mountainous regions. It is also abundant in Central Asia and has a significant economic impact (Hossain et al., 2012; Al-Joboury, 2021). This large family was originated 60 million years ago and currently subdivided into three subfamilies: Cesalpinodeae (2250 species), Pappilionoideae (13800 species), and Mimisoideae (3270 species).

The species of this family have huge ecological significance as most of them able to fix atmospheric nitrogen through symbiosis, *viz.*, soybean, chickpea, and peanut which account for 20% all crops (Zheng *et al.*, 2016).

#### 2.1 Ethnobotany

Due to lesser side effects, herbal formulations are gaining escalating faith and wild plants are still explored by the villagers for ethnomedicinal purposes. Ethnobotany seems to be a relatively recent branch of study, on condition that herbs are studied carefully properly and methodically in this subject, anthropologists, linguistics, archeologists, plant geographer, ethno-botanist botanists, and phytochemists will be able to produce results of significant value (Kumar *et al.*, 2014).

Ethnobotanical studies are important to understand how these plants are used for medical purposes by traditional communities as well as to preserve folk culture (Table 1). The findings of ethnobotany investigations help to contributes to the association between modern and traditional knowledge, being a vital tool for studying the biological features of medicinal plants (Macedo *et al.*, 2020). Omondi and Omondi (2015) studied that Fabaceae family plant species show antioxidant and antimicrobial properties which were utilized at the industrial level. Mehra and De (2017) reported plants of the

Fabaceae family to have significant contents of alkaloids, tannins, steroids, terpenoids, *etc.*, which exhibit greater antioxidant activity that can be linked to the prevention of degenerative diseases such as cancer, neurological illness, and cardiovascular diseases. They also reported that the plants of the Fabaceae family inhibit natural antioxidant compound which is bioactive and can be utilized as dietary supplements in the food industry (Mehra and De, 2017).

# 2.2 Medicinal properties of Fabaceae family

Phytochemicals found in this family are categorized into two groups: primary or secondary. The primary components of phytochemical comprise sugars, amino acids, protein, and chlorophyll. The secondary components consist of terpenoids, saponins, flavonoids, and tannins. Many of these have been studied and are still being studied under natural products chemistry and phytochemistry (Shakeri *et al.*, 2012). Phenolics acids, flavonoids, triterpenes, aldehydes, and lipids have been found in the plants and seeds of legumes. It synthesizes these compounds and reserves them in a significant concentration of the vacuoles (in the case of hydrophilic compounds), resin ducts, and cuticles (Wink, 2013). These phytochemicals include a chemical complex with nitrogen that comprises amines and alkaloids (imidazole alkaloids, cyanogenic glucosides, phenylethylamine, and tryptamine derivatives.

Table 1: Some of the frequently used and widely plants of family Fabaceae for curative purpose (Alam and Sharma, 2012)

S. No	Botanical name and habit	Local name	Plant part used/medicinal uses
1.	Vachellia nilotica (L.) P.J.H.H urter & Mabb (Acacia Arabica) (Tree)	Babool	Gum, stem, branches used to treat leucorrhoea and bronchitis
2.	Cassia fistula L. (Tree)	Amaltas	Seed and fruit pulp used to cure diarrhea, malaria
3.	Tamarindus indica L. (Tree)	Imli	Leaves and fruits used to cure from intestinal worms and to stop dysentery
4.	Abrus precatorius L. (Shrub)	Ghunchu	Leaves, roots, fruits and seeds are variously used to treat fever, pain, leukoderma, bronchopneumonia, and as birth control pills
5.	Bauhinia racemosa Lam. (Tree)	Maoli	Laves are used to promote normal urination
6.	Millettia pinnata (L.) Panigrahi (Pongamia pinnata) (Small Tree)	Karanja	Seeds are used to treat arthritis and skin itching
7.	Saraca indica L. (Tree)	Ashoka	Bark is used in treatment of cystitis
8.	Butea monosperma (Lam.) Taub. (Tree)	Palas, Dhak	Flower, stem and wood used to treat worm ring, eczema, snakebite and to improve menstrual cycle
9.	Mucuna pruriens (L.) DC. (Herb)	Kiwanch	Fruits and seeds are used to improve sexual vigor, to remove weakness, dizziness, and to treat cholera
10.	Uraria picta (Jacq.) Desv. ex DC (Shrub) (Herb)	Pithwan	Leaves are used as an antidote to snake bites and to treat piles

# 2.3 Phytochemistry

Phytochemicals are a large group of chemicals that are not essential for growth but important in providing flavors, aromas, and toxins against the predators (Barbieri *et al.*, 2017). Legumes have several sources of these phytochemicals which have traditionally been used as poisons and are used currently in the pharmaceutical industry (Birben *et al.*, 2012). They have reactive oxygen species (ROS) that are highly active species that damage DNA, lipids, proteins, and carbohydrates in the cell. Members of this family Fabaceae have evolved a large family of antioxidants defenses like

polyphenols which can suppress the ROS. There are around 19,400 species in the legume family (Fabaceae). Some of these species such as *Cicer arietinum, Phaseolus vulgaris* and *Cajanus cajan* contain important nutritional components, providing protein to over 300 million people across the world. Likewise, soybean (*Glycine max*) and peanut (*Arachis hypogaea*) produce and over 35% of the world's refined vegetable oil, soybean, and peanut are also good sources of nutritional protein for the hog and poultry industries (Graham and Vance, 2003). It has also been reported that the plant of this family is a boon for effective and safe medicine due to the lack of essential oils. The plants belonging to the Fabaceae

family are found to have different phytochemical which has varied activities. Pulses are considered beneficial nontoxic grains that provide both food supplements and a wide range of medicinal applications.

# 3. Antioxidant properties

The natural antioxidants mainly consist of polyphenols like phenolic acids and flavonoids and carotenoids like carotenes and vitamins like vitamin E and vitamin C are found in the members of this family. There is a lot of interest in these antioxidants as they have medicinal uses for major diseases like cancer and cardiovascular diseases. These phenolic compounds have an aromatic ring with hydroxyl groups. Along with phenolic acids, there are high molecular weight compounds called tannins which also have phenolic groups. Along with these flavonoids, which are chemically glycosides and aglycones (Kapoor, 2015).

#### 4. Bioactive constituents

Natural antioxidants found in seeds and leaves of the members of this family, such as, vitamin E, ascorbic acid, and phenolic compounds have been shown in order to avoid the oxidative damage associated with many diseases such as diabetes, cataracts, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, atherosclerosis, arthritis, and ageing (Tariq *et al.*, 2017).

# 4.1 Phenols

The species of this family have diverse capacities to synthesize secondary metabolites, the majority of which are phenolic. More than 12000 secondary metabolites have been isolated from the medicinal plants but only around 10% of the total secondary metabolites belongs to phenolic classes (Schulte et al., 1990). Phenolics are a diverse class of physiologically active plant components. Various phenolic compounds including stilbenes, phenolic acids, lignins, coumarins, and tannins are abundant in various parts of medicinal plants (Borkataky et al., 2013). The presences of phenolic compounds in plants are responsible for several biological effects including antimicrobial, antioxidant, antiinflammatory, antihypertensive, and antimutagenic properties as well as the potential to alter the expression of the gene (John et al., 2014). Due to their significant antioxidant activities, they are also known as radical scavengers, singlet oxygen quenchers, reducing agents, and metal chelators the species of this family are good candidates for the synthesis of NPs (Handy et al., 2008a; Sahu and Saxena, 2013).

# 4.2 Flavonoids

Another major class of secondary compounds is flavonoids, a group of polyphenolic compounds, widely distributed and commonly found in this family (Tapas *et al.*, 2008). Flavonoids are glycosides that are present in leaves, stems, leaves, flowers, and bark of many species of Fabaceae (Rajeshwar *et al.*, 2005; Mohammed *et al.*, 2013). Flavonoids have been shown to have antiulcer, antiallergic, antiarthritic, anti-inflammatory, anticancer, antiarthritic, antithrombotic, protein kinase inhibition, and mitochondrial adhesion, *etc.* (Sebastian *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, they protect against cardiovascular diseases and are also known to have hepatoprotective properties (Tyler *et al.*, 1988; Ozyurt *et al.*, 2004). Because they have a wide spectrum of pharmacological actions in the human body, these are also known as nutraceuticals as NPs (Kumar *et al.*, 2013).

#### 4.3 Alkaloids

Plant derived alkaloids are often used in medicine and recreational drugs because of their pharmacological effects (Jain et al., 2019). They also act as defense response in plants. Because of their potent biological activity, several alkaloids have also been used as narcotics, stimulants, pharmaceuticals, and poisons because of their strong biological activities. The plant-derived alkaloids currently used in clinical practice that include the stimulant caffeine and nicotine, analgesic morphine, the antimalarial quinine sedative scopolamine, the anesthetic cocaine, the anticancer vinblastine, etc. These are also used as disinfectants in medicine (Shahidi et al., 1992; Shamsa et al., 2008). Gnanaraja et al. (2014) have studied the anticancerous, antimicrobial, antidiuretic, antidiabetic, and anti-inflammation activities of the secondary metabolites extracted from the Fabaceae family. The secondary metabolites like pyrrolizidine alkaloids are often found in plant extract of the Fabaceae family which exhibit different kinds of biological activities that include antitumoral, antiviral, hepatotoxic, and neuroactive properties (Gnanaraja et al., 2014). These plant extracts were used in ancient medicines for the prevention of leprosy, diarrhea, scabies, and fever (Aissaoui et al., 2014). Preliminary studies revealed the usefulness of Fabaceae species as a food resource and therapeutic level (Molares and Ladio, 2012).

#### 5. Use of phytochemicals in cancer therapy

Various plant products including saponins, minerals, vitamins, glycosides, oils, gums, biomolecules, alkaloids, flavonoids, lignans, terpenes, and other primary and secondary metabolites play an important role in either inhibiting cancer cell-activating enzymes, proteins or by activating the mechanism of DNA repair and inducing antioxidant action. As a result of their effectiveness on the proteins, enzymes, and signaling pathways, these phytochemicals have significant anticancer effects (Thakore *et al.*, 2012; Srikanth and Chen, 2016). The NPs produced with these plant extracts have shown the increase in effectiveness in cancer therapy (Geethika *et al.*, 2018)

# 6. Pharmacological activities

The phytochemistry of the various species of Fabaceae confirmed that they have different pharmacological actions and are being used in anticancer therapies, it is expected that with the combination of nanotechnology the anticancer potential will increase many folds with accurate targeting of cancerous cells. Combinatorial chemistry, isolation tests, and bioassay-guided fractionation are some of the methods used to purify active phytochemicals (Amin and Barkatullah, 2016). For this, the active extracts can be subsequently fractionated using suitable matrices and bioactivity is assessed using a range of analytical methods such as FTIR, HPLC, NMR, FTIR, and Mass spectroscopy, *etc.* (Ocho-aninatchibri *et al.*, 2010; Dar *et al.*, 2017).

# 7. Discussion

The analysis of the health facilities and plants as therapeutic agents is important not only for addressing traditional societies' medical issues but also with the knowledge of NPs synthesis can be of great use in modern medication. The wealth of family Fabaceae as healing herbs suggests a significant opportunity for the study and development of novel medicines to combat diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, *etc.*, in association with the nanotechnology

by synthesizing useful NPs. The family Fabaceae is a natural reservoir of important phytochemicals and antioxidants which have both medicinal and industrial uses (Ahmad *et al.*, 2016; Mac Alister *et al.*, 2018). Efforts are presently being undertaken to use the wealth of phytochemical from this family in green synthesis; however, very few species have been used for the synthesis of NPs and most of species are almost untouched (Aung *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, this necessitates the synergistic efforts from plant taxonomists, phytochemists and nanotechnologists to devote their efforts on various aspects of these plants in green synthesis.

# 8. Conclusion

In recent past, amazing advancement has been occurred in the development of nanotechnology. Furthermore, the expansion of nanotechnology has guided the speedy progress of profitable application which engages the utilization of a huge assortment of man-made NSPs. The employ of these organic and inorganic nanosized resources may upshot in the liberation of these noxious materials into the surroundings where the main environmental acceptors of these byproducts will be soil, sediment and biosolids from wastewater management. In such cases, green synthesis is of great importance in contemporary demand of eco-friendly approaches for healthcare and nutraceutical sectors. Plants have always been natural resources of medication with almost negligible release of hazardous byproducts. In nanotechnology, the restriction of these byproducts is a big issue that can be well addressed by the use of plant derived byproducts which are immensely important for the green synthesis. In this drive, several wildly growing members of family Fabaceae would be of great use and should be used more extensively as they are not only an aid to NPs synthesis but also a hoard of bioactive compounds. Till date, some of the members have been evaluated and used in this direction still a huge diversity of this family waiting to help the mankind.

# Acknowledgments

The author would like to express her gratitude to Professor Ina Aditya Shastri, Vice-Chancellor, Banasthali Vidyapith, Rajasthan for her support and encouragement. We are also grateful to DST for providing networking support through the FIST program at the Department of Bioscience and Biotechnology, Banasthali as well as the DBT funded Bioinformatics Center, Banasthali Vidyapith, Rajasthan, India.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest relevant to this article.

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Citation

Bhawana Sharma, Raj Shreya, Medha Jha, and Afroz Alam (2021). Prospective of family Fabaceae (Angiosperms) in green synthesis. An indication. J. Phytonanotech. Pharmaceut. Sci., 1(4):1-5. http://dx.doi.org/10.54085/jpps.2021.1.4.1