Asian Journal of Research in Botany

Volume 8, Issue 1, Page 14-21, 2025; Article no.AJRIB.129399

A Review on Insulin Plant (*Costus Igneus* L.) and Its Remedial Approaches

Sanket P. Shinde [a++*] and Sanika M. Kondhalkar [b#]

[a] Department of Quality Assurance Techniques, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Technological University, Maharashtra, India.

[b] Department of Pharmacognosy, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Technological University, Maharashtra, India.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: https://doi.org/10.9734/ajrib/2025/v8i1238

Open Peer Review History:
This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/129399

Review Article

Received: 02/11/2024
Accepted: 07/01/2025
Published: 13/01/2025

ABSTRACT

Costus Igneus is a medicinal plant. This plant mostly known as a decorative plant in India, *Costus igneus*, it is often called the spiral flag is a member of the Costaceae family and has become known as the "insulin plant" because of its purported capacity to increase the manufacturing of insulin considering the growing demand for natural medicines to treat diabetes mellitus and there is increasing curiosity for plant-based medicine. Alkaloids, terpenoids and flavonoids are among the many phytochemicals that have been shown to be present in *Costus igneus*. The biological characteristics of Costus are taken in this review paper. *Costus igneus* shows many pharmacological activities such as anti-diabetic, antimicrobial activity, anticancer effect, hypolipidemic activity, antioxidant activity, hepatoprotective action, adaptogen activity and the role of neuroprotection.

[++] Assistant Professor;
[#] Research Scholar;
**Corresponding author: E-mail: sankets93@gmail.com;*

Cite as: *Shinde, Sanket P., and Sanika M. Kondhalkar. 2025. "A Review on Insulin Plant (Costus Igneus L.) and Its Remedial Approaches". Asian Journal of Research in Botany 8 (1):14-21. https://doi.org/10.9734/ajrib/2025/v8i1238.*

Keywords: Costus igneus; costaceae; insulin plant; spiral flag; antidiabetic agent.

1. INTRODUCTION

Native to South and Central America, *Costus igneus* Nak (also known as Costus pictus D. Don, Costus mexicanus Liebm ex Petersen, or Costus congenitus Rowle) is sometimes referred to as a “fiery costus”, “step ladder”, “spiral flag” or “insulin plant”. This plant was brought to India from America recently as a natural remedy for diabetes. In South India, it is commonly planted as a decorative plant in gardens and may also be found growing wild in various locations (Hegde et al., 2014). It is used to treat diabetes in India. Diabetes is a common condition that affects people of all ages. There are several forms of diabetes, the most common being type 2. A combination of treatment strategies can help you manage the condition to live a healthy life and prevent complications. *Costus igneus* is used to treat diabetes all over India. This article may increase awareness about this plant.if diabetic patients will consume one leaf each day it can be maintain low blood glucose levels (Devi and Urooj, 2008). The tribal inhabitants of the Kolli Hills in the Namakkal district of Tamilnadu are known to employ the leaves of C. igneus as one of the plants that effectively treat diabetes (Elavarasi and Saravanan, 2012). Sources of C. speciosus that, in a dose-dependent manner, prevent the proliferation of many cancer cell types including liver, colon and prostate cancer cells based on studies using methanolic, ethanolic, water and ethyl acetate extracts of costus plant (El-Far et al., 2016).

A prolonged hyperglycemia level is a hallmark of diabetes mellitus, a chronic endocrino-metabolic condition that can be caused by either insufficient insulin synthesis or release by B cells (type 1 diabetes) or inefficient insulin use by the cells (type 2 diabetes). Diabetes results in changes to several biomolecules, including proteins, fats and carbohydrate which in turn induce hyperglycemia, glycosuria, hyperlipidemia and atherosclerosis. Hepatic impairments are among the additional adverse outcomes that develop as a result of persistent hyperglycemia and inflammation (Hajam et al., 2022).

Complex compounds with a broad range of biological activity and significant potential therapeutic value can be found in abundance in natural goods. One of the ancient practices that people have accepted is the use of medicinal plant extracts to treat a variety of diseases. Phytochemicals found in medicinal plants make them effective for both healing and curing human illnesses. Alkaloids and other phytochemicals such as flavonoids, coumarins, glycosides, polysaccharides, phenols, tannins and terpenoids are produced by plants as part of their regular metabolic processes. These phytochemical substances have anti-inflammatory or disease-preventive qualities. Flavonoids are widely recognized for their antioxidant properties. Flavonoids have demonstrated antimicrobial, anti-cancer and antiallergy properties. The body produces free radicals when there is an imbalance between Reactive oxygen species (ROS) and antioxidants (Khanday et al., 2019).

2. PLANT DESCRIPTION

It is a perennial plant with an erect growth habit that touches the ground and extends outward. Simple, oblong, alternating and evergreen the leaves have parallel veining and reach a maximum length of 4 to 8 inches. This tropical evergreen plant which grows in clusters from underground rootstocks is adorned with large, smooth, spiral-arranged dark green leaves with pale purple undersides. It produces stunning 1.5-inch orange flowers that resemble cones that emerge from the tops of branches during the summer months. The plant is a rhizomatous shrub, meaning that its subterranean tuberous rhizome pierces the ground. The meaty, spongy, cylindrical rhizome has a smooth, pale brown surface with a temperature range of 30-40 degrees Celsius. The plant has a pleasant odor (Kankariya et al., 2024).

2.1 Biological Source

It is composed of both dried and fresh leaves from the Costaceae family plant, *Costus Igneus* (Meléndez-Camargo et al., 2006).

2.2 Geographical Origin

Southeast Asia, especially the bigger Sunda Islands in Indonesia is *Costus igneus* natural habitat. West Bengal and other regions of India are also home to it. In southern India the plant is already being utilized as a dietary supplement to treat diabetes (Meléndez-Camargo et al., 2006).

3. TAXONOMY AND VERNACULAR NAME (El-Far et al., 2018)

Table 1. Taxonomic classification and vernacular names of Costus speciosus

Item	Name
Taxonomic classification	
Kingdom	Plantae
Subkingdom	Tracheobionta
Super division	Spermatophyta
Division	Magnoliophyta
Class	Liliopsida
Sub class	Zingiberidae
Order	Zingiberales
Family	Costaceae
Genus	Costus
Species	Speciosus
Vernacular names	
Sanskrit	Kembuka, Kebuka, Kembu
English	Crepe ginger
Hindi	Keu, Keukand, Kemuka, Kemua
Marathi	Penva, Pinnha, Kobee, Peva
Guajarati	Paskarmula, Valakdi
Bengali	Keu, Keumut
Tamil	Kostam
Assam	Tara
Kannada	Changalvakostu, Chikke
Telegu	Kashmeeramu, Cengalvakostu
Malayalam	Channakoova
Latin name	Costus speciosus
Classical name	Kebuka

4. PHYTOCHEMICAL CONSTITUENT

Alkaloids, terpenoids and flavonoids are among the many phytochemicals that have been shown to be present in *Costus igneus*. These bioactive compounds are found in the leaves, stems, rhizomes and other plant parts such as flowers.

Leaves: Among other compounds leaves include proteins, carbohydrates, alkaloids, triterpenoids, tannins, saponins and flavonoids. In addition leaves include carbohydrates and fatty acids including hexadecanoic acid, oleic acid, ethyl oleate tetradecanoic acid, 9–12 octadecanoic acid and squalene.

Stem: Stem includes the steroid component such as stigmasterol as well as the terpenoid molecule lupeol.

Rhizome: Quercetin, diosgenin, asteroidal sapogenin and other substances are found in rhizomes.

Root: Terpenoids, alkaloids, tannins and other substances are found in roots (Soni and Shrivastava, 2024).

Flower: Flavonoids, Terpenoids, Triterpenoids, Saponins, Steroids, Carbohydrates, Proteins, Glycosides, Alkaloids, Tannins.

5. GROWTH AND PROPAGATION

Spiral flags may grow in partial shade or full sun. It is frequently grown close to water and requires rich soil and lots of moisture. Clumps, cuttings or offsets or plantlets that develop beneath the flower heads can all be divided to propagate the plant. Nematodes and mites can be an issue, particularly in light, sandy soil. There are no serious illnesses affecting the plant (Gilman, 2012).

6. TRADITIONAL USES

6.1 Leaves

For a month, diabetics were encouraged by Ayurveda to incorporate leaves from the insulin plant into their daily regimen. During the first week, they were first told to chew four leaves per day—two in the morning and two in the

evening—to ensure complete mastication before to consumption. The dosage was then lowered to two leaves daily, one in the morning and one in the evening and this schedule was followed for a total of thirty days. This approach worked well for controlling blood sugar levels. Additionally, these leaves have traditionally been used to cure respiratory disorders including bronchitis and asthma, improve general health and longevity, treat skin diseases, lower fever and get rid of intestinal parasites.

6.2 Rhizome

The insulin plant's rhizome has a variety of functions and characteristics including aphrodisiac, astringent, acrid, bitter, cooling, febrifuge, depurative purgative, and expectorant effects. Burning sensations, constipation, leprosy, worm infections, skin disorders, fevers, asthma, bronchitis, inflammations and anemia are among the illnesses it helps to cure (Chetana et al., 2024).

7. PHARMACOLOGICAL ACTIVITY

Costus Igneus shows the many pharmacological activity. Such as antidiabetic, antimicrobial activity, anticancer effect, hypolipidemic activity, antioxidant activity, hepatoprotective action, adaptogen activity and the role of neuroprotection.

7.1 Antidiabetic Activity

The insulin plant has the potential to prevent diabetes. In a clinical investigation, diabetics who took one fresh leaf or one teaspoon of shade dried powder of C. igneus each day, together with other therapies, were able to effectively control their blood sugar levels (Bhatt et al., 2014). By activating beta cells. It is thought that the insulin plant's leaves stimulate the pancreatic beta cells, increasing the body's natural production of insulin.

7.2 Antimicrobial Activity

Numerous microorganisms, such as multidrug-resistant

Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria, Citrobacter species, Proteus mirabilis,
E. coli, Klebsiella pneumoniae, Staphylococcus aureus, Enterococcus faecalis and Candida albicans are susceptible to the antimicrobial activity of Methanolic Extract of the rhizomes of *Costus igneus* (Nagarajan et al., 2011).

7.3 Anticancer Activity

In vitro mammalian (HT-1080) cells were shown to have anti-proliferative and anti-cancer properties when exposed to an ethanolic extract of C. igneus leaves (Nadumane et al., 2011). Every bark extract exhibited strong anti-cancer effects on HT 29 and A549 cells (Sathuvan et al., 2012).

Fig. 1. *Costus Igneus* plant

Fig. 2. Rhizomes of *Costus igneus*

7.4 Hypolipidemic Activity

Total cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and very-low-density lipoprotein (VLDL), phospholipids and triglycerides can all be considerably lowered by using ethanolic leaf extract from *Costus igneus*. Additionally, it can raise high-density lipoprotein (HDL) levels (Kalailingam et al., 2011).

7.5 Antioxidant activity

Costus igneus leaf, stem and rhizome extracts have antioxidant properties. *Costus igneus* has a significant level of antioxidant activity. The plant's ethanolic extract had the highest level of antioxidant activity, whereas the aqueous extract displayed the lowest (Ramya and Chauhan, 2015).

7.6 Hepatoprotective Action

Liver enzymes such serum alanine aminotransferase (ALT), aspartate aminotransferase (AST) and alkaline phosphatase (ALP) can all be improved by *costus igneus* (Contreras-Zentella and Hernández-Muñoz, 2016). *Costus igneus* root powder and ethanolic extract protect rats livers against carbon tetrachloride (CCl4)-induced injury. The roots also enhanced biochemical assessments, such as serum liver enzymes, renal functions, lipid profiles and oxidative enzymes (Biman and Kamaruz, 2008). When C. speciosus ethanolic extract was given orally to wister albino rats, the same results were seen as when silymarin, a common medication with hepatoprotective properties was also used (Verma and Khosa, 2009).

7.7 Adaptogen Activity

The central and peripheral nervous systems neurotransmitters are impacted by stress, which lowers dopamine and norepinephrine levels in the brain (Padma et al., 2001). Monoamine oxidase (MAO) is essential for controlling biogenic amines, especially when it comes to blocking serotonin (5HT) release (Verma and Khosa, 2009). Stress causes norepinephrine levels to rise, which raises dopamine levels. C. speciosus extracts considerably lower the stress-induced elevations of serotonin and its metabolite 5-HIAA in brain tissues via inhibiting the stress response (Joseph and Kenneth, 1983).

7.8 The role of Neuroprotection

The neuroprotective effects of *Costus igneus* extract on the brains of female diabetic rats caused by streptozotocin. The plant extracts considerably decreased the amount of lipid peroxidation thiobarbituric acid reactive substances (TBARS) in brain tissue. Furthermore, the extract lowered the levels of antioxidative enzymes such superoxide

dismutase (SOD), catalase (CAT) and reduced glutathione (GSH). By boosting the number of glial and astrocyte cells, they showed a notable recovery from diabetes-induced brain problems (Gupta et al., 2018).

7.9 Diuretic Effect

A research compared the diuretic effect of an aqueous extract of C. pictus D. Don (doses of 100 and 200 mg/kg body weight) to that of furosemide (4 mg/kg). The study found that C. pictus had a natriuretic effect similar to furosemide. The aqueous extract increased salt and potassium clearance, similar to furosemide, indicating considerable diuresis (Thorat et al., 2024).

7.10 Hypoglycemic Activity

The ethanolic extract of *Costus igneus* (whole plant) was tested on alloxan-induced diabetic albino Wister strain rats to see how it affected blood sugar levels (Palanivel et al., 2013). Diabetic mice treated with 250 mg/kg ethanolic extract of Costus igneous showed a reduction in increased blood glucose levels (Arivu et al., 2023).

7.11 Effect of *Costus Igneus* on Learning and Memory

Diabetic rats given an ethanolic extract of *Costus igneus* demonstrated enhanced learning and memory. In a passive avoidance test, the treated rats entered the dark area faster and spent less time in the darkroom (Athilli et al., 2021). The therapy with *Costus igneus* dramatically lowered blood sugar levels in diabetic rats (Chetty et al., 2014).

7.12 Anti-Inflammatory Action

The methanolic extract of *Costus igneus* demonstrated an anti-inflammatory and strong analgesic effect in experimental rats (Srivastava et al., 2013).

8. CONCLUSION

Costus igneus is a commonly used medicinal herb. The existence of important phytochemical ingredients such as diosgenin, corsolic acid, beta-sitosterol, beta-amyrin, quercetin and others, as well as their pharmacological actions, shown that the plant has a leading capability for the production of innovative and effective medications in the future.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
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