Vroom......vroom, went Manu around, from one room to another with a small, brown colored dried plant seed that resembled a three-winged propeller of a helicopter. He had found it in his school campus near the creeper vine that was entwined around the small mango tree. Fascinated, as usual, he had pocketed a few of such seeds that were strewn on the ground, just to make Rupa feel jealous about his prized possession. Instead, he bumped into Bantu mama who was so pleased to see the winged fruit in Manu’s hand that he almost choked him with his tight hug.

“Oh dear, you are amazing. I wanted this plant roots only to get back in shape”, said Bantu mama. Not able to comprehend anything, Manu had a quizzical look on his face just when Rupa entered. On the other hand, Bantu mama was ecstatic, elated and so happy that he immediately led both of them to his room and switched on his computer screen for them to read his saved literature on “herbs for obesity”. One of them was the plant whose helicopter seeds Manu had got from school, under the name “Madhavilatha”, botanically known as Hiptage bengalensis.

And for a chance, after Rupa and Manu went through the impressive information, Bantu mama told them the legends associated with the same plant. “One legend tells us a story of Yayati (Yajati), the Fifth King of the Vahno Dynasty. Yayati had two wives: Devayani and Pamishtha. Devayani gave birth to the son Yadvu, and Pamishtha had a son Puru, those who started the two royal dynasties. Later three more sons were born. One day, Lord Indra invited Yayati over and inspired him to command his people into living a rightful and celibate life without any passions and physical desires. So it happened, and people wouldn’t die any more. God Indra became very concerned with this fact, since the great circle of life and death was disturbed. So he sent Asuvindumati, daughter of Kaumadeva (God of Love), to ask Yayati. The king immediately fell in love with her and wanted to marry her, however, Yayati was very old by then. So he came up to his sons and asked them to exchange their youth with his own age. All of his sons refused to do so, except for Puru, the most devoted and loving son. So Yayati took his son’s youth and happily married Asuvindumati. Very soon a daughter was born. She was named Madhavi – ‘a spring herald’. Her mother Asuvindumati returned back to the heaven, and Yayati spent another thousand years in pleasure and health, then got tired of being young and active, and returned the youth back to his son. After his death, his five sons divided their inheritance (known in history as Rajarshi Dynasty), and Madhavi grew up into a beautiful and sensual young woman. One night, she heard a whisper out of the crown of a mango tree. “Who are you?” she asked. “I’m the one who came for you, my beloved one, come to me”. Madhavi followed the whisper and was led to a mango tree. Once she touched the trunk, the tree turned into a young man, and he embraced her in his arms. The man was a human incarnation of God Pragayapati, the Creator of Life. The lovers joined together, and the time stopped for them forever. Since then, they stayed together: the beautiful strong mango, the symbol of life, and the fragrant Spring Herald, Madhavi, clinging around him. From then on, in our country, a mango fruit is considered as Creator’s blessing, and a Hiptage flower, as a symbol of sensual love and spiritual success.

One more legend says that the name Madhavi was given to the plant after Vishnu’s (Madhava) wife. Symbolically, she, the mother of the Earth, is the creeping vine, and Vishnu is a mango tree around which she clings for support.

There is another legend regarding the marriage of mango tree and Madhavilatha vines: when Rishi Kanva discovered that his adopted daughter Shakuntala had met King Dushyanta, the man of her choice, Rishi told her that he had for long been looking for a handsome mango tree referring obviously to Dushyanta and that now he would give his Madhavilatha i.e. Shakuntala to him in marriage.

Hearing these captivating legends, Rupa said that it would be a good idea to plant these two plants together in their garden, with the mango tree giving a strong support, and Hiptage vine providing fine sensual fragrance around it. Everyone nodded in agreement. Turn overleaf for more......
MIND BLOWING MADHAVILATHA

It twists, turns and spins, It is a sight that stirs
As the seed whirs!

A poet’s delight, a delicate, curvy climbing shrub, most often found wrapped around the mango tree with clusters of pink to white and yellow fragrant flowers and 3-winged, helicopter-like fruits is an exotic and a useful medicinal plant.

The Madhavilatha creeper vine is sweet with nectar, as its name derived from madhu or honey is often covered in bees. The following verse from the Sanskrit poem Māgha plays on the connection between bees: madhukaras (‘honey makers’), madhu, Madhu (here vasantha or spring season) and the Madhavilatha creeper:

मधुरया मधु-बोधिता-मधवी-मधु-समर्द्धि-समेधिता-मेधिया
मधुकरणया मुहूर्मधुमधुबन्धिता नघिताकृप्यमुञ्जगी

Madhurayā madhu-bodhita-madhavi-madhu-samrddhi-samedhita-medhayā Madhukara-aṅganayā muhur unmada-dhvari-bhṛtā nibhrīta-akṣaram ujjage

The delightful lady honey bee, her brilliance heightened by the wealth of honey offered by the mādhavi creepers that Madhu (spring) has roused is thus buzzing passionately, singing aloud a hidden syllable.

Botanical Name: Hiptage bengholensis
Family: Malpighiaceae

Common English Name: Hiptage, Helicopter Flower
Hindi: Madhavi lata, Madhu malati
Sanskrit: Madhavilatha, Atimukta, Vaasanti, Pundraka, Mandaka
Manipuri: Madhabi
Bengali: Madhabilata
Tamil: Vasanakaala malligai. Adigam, Kurukathi
Kannada: Madhavi
Malayalam: Sitampu

Where can you find me?

Due to my beautiful unique form flowers, I am cultivated as an exotic tropical ornamental. I am a fast and easy growing plant and can tolerate a wide range of conditions. My natural habitat is variable, ranging from warm temperate to tropical climates and can be found in nature in both dry and moist areas from sea level to high elevations. As a forest climber, I can tolerate shady conditions, but also can grow happily in full sun and produce more flowers in well-lit spot. I am a native of India, South-East Asia and Phillipines.
How do I look like?

I am a woody climber which takes the support of trees, especially mango trees and flowers during the spring season with beautiful fragrant flowers in trusses. I have abundant fruits with wings that resemble the propeller of a helicopter. Leaves are ovate or elliptic and leathery. I flower between March and April with fragrant white flowers on racemes. Each flower has five sepals, ovate lobes and a gland over them. Each petal is narrow from beneath and broad at the top with the margins fringed and hairy towards outside. The petals are bent backwards, with one of the petals having an attractive yellowish patch at the centre.

I fruit abundantly with three papery elliptic wings quite similar to that of a propeller of a helicopter. The middle wing is linear and slightly broader from above than the lateral two wings which are shorter. This serves as a means of dispersal and when the fruits are dried, the wind can then propel them to other places.

Ayurvedic Properties and Uses

The bark, leaves and flowers are aromatic, bitter, acrid, astringent, refrigerant, vulnerary, expectorant, cardiotonic, anti-inflammatory and insecticidal. It alleviates all the three doshas. Madhavilatha is useful in vitiating conditions of pitta, burning sensation, wounds, ulcers, cough, asthma, cardiac debility, inflammations, skin diseases, leprosy, scabies, rheumatism and hyperdipsia, insanity, hiccough and vomiting.

What are my Medicinal Uses?

- Hiptage is cultivated for medicinal purposes and holds a reputed position in Traditional Indian medicine.
- The seed kernel of Madhavilatha taken with honey checks the growth of abdomen (due to obesity).
- Vegetables curries prepared from the leaf buds of Ficus benghalensis, Madhavilatha and Nirgundi (Vitex negundo) and processed with ghee are always wholesome in intrinsic haemorrhage.

- Leaves are used in skin disorders. A handful of Madhavilatha leaves are ground and applied externally.
- Bark is used in case of rheumatoid arthritis (Amavata) and dyspnoea (Svasa).
- Madhavilatha flowers serve as a good coolant when consumed along with daily drinking water.

Play Along with Hiptage Seeds

In Greek hiptamai means “to fly”, this refers to the winged fruits of the genus Hiptage.

The Hiptage seeds resemble wings or helicopter propellers to ride the wind. When a gust of wind detaches them from the main plant, they provide an enchanting sight rapidly spinning as they rise with updrafts or float down to earth. It takes little imagination to think of them as squadrons of helicopters engaged in intricate movements. Collect the dried Hiptage seeds and enjoy a “Vroom Vroom” game of “Seed Wars”!!!