

The North Eastern Himalayas - The Cradle of High Altitude Therapeutic Floras

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Abstract—North East India, of which Darjeeling is also a part, comprises of seven sister states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura and one brother state of Sikkim which lie between 21 degree 34' N to 29 degree 50' N latitude and 87 degree 32' E to 97 degree 52' E longitudes covers an area of 262060 sq. km. it represents ca 8 % of the country's total geographical area. The region is endowed with diverse geosystems, ranging from mighty mountain peaks, flat lands, plateaus and river valleys. The North-east India is part of both Himalaya as well as Indo-Burma bio-diversity hotspots in the world. It forms a unique bio-geographic province encompassing major biomes recognized in the world. It has the richest reservoir of plant biodiversity in India and is one of the 'bio-diversity hotspots' of the world supporting about 50 % of India's bio-diversity. Especially, the region exhibits the richest diversity in orchids, zingibers, yams, rhododendrons, bamboos, canes, ferns and wild relatives of cultivated plants. it is also considered as cradle of 'angiosperms' as primitive plant families such as Magnoliaceae, Lauraceae, Hamamelidaceae, Degeneriaceae, Tetracentraceae, and Lardizabalaceae are well represented here. About 50 % of the total 17500 flowering plants in India hail from the region and 40 % of them are endemic quite unique to the region.