

and it is known for its sparsely distributed vegetation and small species diversity. This zone sustains more than 1000 plant species (Kumar et al. 2011).

Ladakh is quite rich in medicinal flora, and many traditional herbs have been shown to have medicinal value that can be used to prevent, alleviate or cure several human diseases (Kumar et al. 2011). These plants were identified by local residents over the years through trial and error. In due time, many of these plants were gradually added to the repositories of medicinal plants and they also became the part of the Amchi system (Mishra et al. 2009b, Bhojar et al. 2011a, b). The Amchi system is the traditional medicinal system of the cold desert Ladakh, which is basically based on the Tibetan system of medicine. This system provides treatment and relief to indigenous communities (Ballabh and Chaurasia 2011).

In recent years, consumption of herbal medicines is increasing and approximately 80% of the people in developing countries depend on these types of medicines for their primary healthcare needs (Farnsworth et al. 1985). In terms of the wealth of traditional herbal medicinal knowledge systems, India is one of the leading countries in Asia, employing a large number of plant species in Ayurveda (2000 species), Siddha (1121 species), Unani (751 species) and Tibetan (337 species) systems of medicine (Kala 2002). In Chapter 12, we have covered four indigenous plants of the Ladakh region viz. *Hippophae rhamnoides*, *Capparis spinosa*, *Dactylorhiza hatagirea* and *Inula racemosa* in terms of its vast medicinal potential.

12.2 SEA BUCKTHORN (*HIPPOPHAE RHAMNOIDES*)

Sea buckthorn (Figure 12.1) is a unique and valuable crop for cold arid regions, having the potential to play a crucial role in the sustainable development of fragile areas of cold arid deserts. The fruit and seeds are the main sources of its nutritional and medicinal values. These beneficial effects have made sea buckthorn products, especially its oil, desirable for various medicinal and cosmetics purposes. A beverage made from sea buckthorn fruit is quite popular in Indian markets and other products (like tea, jam, sauce, wine, vinegar, soap, shampoo, etc.) are gaining popularity.

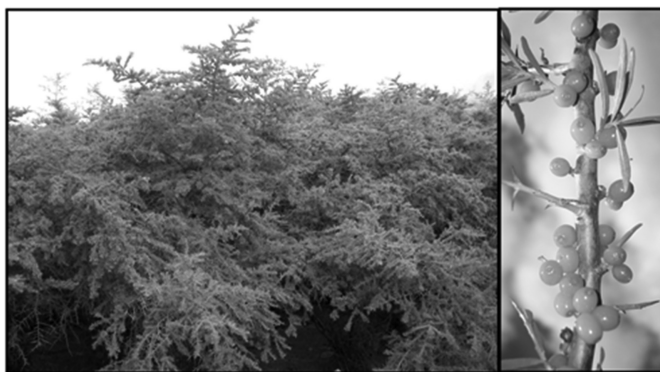


FIGURE 12.1 Sea buckthorn (the golden bush) growing wild in Ladakh.