

## Today's Important Topic for UPSC CSE Aspirants (Silver Cockscomb)

### Inside Story of the News (Silver cockscomb & Soligas):

#### About Silver cockscomb:

- **Silver cockscomb is a beautiful but troublesome weed.**
- **If left unchecked, it can spread quickly and suppress the growth of other crops, affecting their yield.**
- **It also attracts insects, caterpillars, worms, and moths that can harm crops.**
- **In Karnataka's Chamarajanagara district, silver cockscomb is referred to as anne soppu.**
- **For the Soligas, known for their traditional knowledge of ecology, silver cockscomb is a nutritious leafy green vegetable that grows well even on fallow land and in drought-like conditions.**
- **Silver cockscomb is also known as lagos spinach, the weed belongs to the Amaranthaceae family, which includes economically important plants like spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*), beetroot and quinoa.**
- **The plant is known as *Celosia argentea* in scientific lexicon, kurdu in Marathi and pannai keerai in Tamil.**
- **Silver cockscomb is a short-lived 50-60 cm-tall plant that bears simple, spirally arranged leaves around the stem with pinkish or silky white flowers.**
- **Since it grows widely on farmlands across the country, most farmers use the plant as fodder.**
- **But like the Soliga tribe, some communities also consume it as a leafy vegetable.**
- **The women of the Soliga tribe collect edible leaves and young shoots of silver cockscomb to prepare a mash called massanne, which is eaten just before the monsoon (April to June) to help lower the body's heat and reduce stomach burn, which often stems from indigestion.**
- **She uses silver cockscomb to prepare ullsoppu sambar, which her family relishes with roti or rice and ragi balls. The Soliga community also uses the leaves and young shoots of the plant for preparing a side dish called palya, cooked with either field beans, chickpeas, cowpea or pigeon peas (see recipes).**
- **Its stem and root extracts provide protection against microbial pathogens.**
- **Silver cockscomb leaves are high in nutrients such as beta-carotene and folic acids, and have "medium" levels of vitamin E, calcium, and iron.**
- **Although it is of the same family as spinach, it does not pose the same risk to kidneys. Spinach leaves are high in calcium, oxalates, vitamin K and potassium, which can impair kidney function and lead to formation of kidney stones.**
- **In comparison, silver cockscomb leaves have lower levels of oxalic acid (0.2 per cent) and phytic acid (0.12 per cent).**
- **The plant is frequently used in traditional Chinese and Indian medicine for treating eye diseases and ulcers.**
- **The seed contains an edible oil that is beneficial for treating conditions such as bloodshot eyes and cataracts.**
- **Communities in these regions use it as a wild vegetable, for fodder and in medicine.**

- Believed to have originated in tropical Africa, according to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK, silver cockscomb grows abundantly in South and Southeast Asia, Latin America and parts of the US and Australia.

#### **About Soligas:**

- **Soligas are an indigenous tribe of Karnataka, inhabiting the peripheral forest areas near Biligiri Rangana Hills and Male Mahadeshwara in Chamarajnar district.**
- **Traditionally they have been dependent on the forests for their livelihood.**
- **The Soligas are also called the children of bamboo because the word is believed to mean that they originated from bamboo.**
- When the government declared the forests they live in a protected reserve, the Soligas created history by becoming the first tribal community living inside the core area of a tiger reserve in India to get their forest rights officially recognized by the court of law.
- In the earliest account of the tribe, Scottish traveler-physician Francis Buchanan-Hamilton described the Soligas as “somewhat shy”.
- In the podus (settlements) near Biligiri Rangana Hills, the sight of Soliga women shying away from outsiders is common.
- **Soligas people have always feared naadu-jana (town people).**
- **The Soligas are dependent on hunting and shifting agriculture traditionally.**
- The Soligas are known for their intimate knowledge of the forests and judicious use of medicinal plants and non-timber forest produce like honey, gooseberry, lichen, tubers, etc.
- They are extremely good at identifying animals through pug marks and smells.
- But the Soligas were evicted and relocated, after the forests near BR Hills, as the Biligiri Rangana Hills are known, were declared a wildlife sanctuary under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.

**Source :** <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/food/green-promise-silver-cockscomb-isn-t-a-troublesome-weed-for-karnataka-s-soliga-tribe-90593>

; <http://www.flowersofindia.net/catalog/slides/Silver%20Cockscomb.html>

& <https://scroll.in/article/896580/how-a-tribe-in-karnataka-fought-and-won-a-legal-battle-to-stay-in-a-tiger-reserve>