

UK survey finds 28,000 plant species for medical use

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By Agence France-Presse

More than 28,000 species of plants around the world have a medical use but poor documentation means people are not making the most of the health benefits, according to a survey released on Thursday.



Despite their potential, just 16 percent of the plants Kew, seen in 2016 during a plant DNA extraction process, recorded as being for medical use are cited in regulatory publications. (AFP/File / by Maureen COFFLARD / MANILA BULLETIN)

Britain's Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in London recorded 28,187 species in its latest annual survey and said it was probably a "very conservative figure."

New plants discovered over the past year include nine species of a climbing vine used in the treatment of Parkinson's disease, the survey found.

"The report is highlighting the huge potential that there is for plants, in areas like diabetes and malaria," said Monique Simmonds, deputy director of science at the world-famous botanical group.

The report said two plants, artemisinin and quinine, are "among the most important weapons" against malaria, which killed over 400,000 people in 2015.

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Kew's expansive gardens in west London and vast botanic collections, containing over 8.5 million items, are listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The institution's second annual "State of the World's Plants" report involved 128 scientists from 12 countries, who since the first survey have discovered 1,730 new plant species.

They include five new species of *Manihot* found in Brazil, seven new *Aspalathus* plants used for making South African rooibos tea, and a new parsnip species uncovered in Turkey.