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Comparative Study of Total Phenolic and Flavonoid Content and Antioxidant Potential of Various Parts *Benincasa hispida*

	
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ABSTRACT

In the present investigation, the total phenolic, flavonoid content and antioxidant potential of various part of *Benincasa hispida* were evaluated. The antioxidant potential of different extracts (ethyl acetate, ethanol and aqueous) of leaves, fruit and seeds were measured by three different scavenging assays such as DPPH, Superoxide, Nitric oxide, hydrogen peroxide and Hydroxyl radical. For total phenolic content, Folin-Ciocalteau assay was performed and determination of flavonoids was performed according to the colorimetric assay. Among all parts studied, the seed extract of *Benincasa hispida* reported the highest antioxidant capacity for scavenging activity, and also exhibited highest total phenolic and flavonoid content as compared to leaves and fruit. Hence definite and positive correlations were exhibited for parts (leaves, fruit and seed) between total phenolic and flavonoid content along with radical scavenging activity. It can be concluded that different parts of *Benincasa hispida* possess good antioxidant activity which can be utilized for the treatment of various oxidative stress disorders.

INTRODUCTION

Benincasa hispida (Wax gourd) is an important medicinal plant known for its medicinal and nutritional properties. It is a tendril climber cultivated throughout India. This plant grows annually. It has been used as a food and medicine for thousands of years in East Asia. All parts of the plant are used medicinally. This plant is creeping with branched tendrils that can climb over with the help of some support, cover fences or sprawl along the ground. Stems are thick, hairy, grooved conspicuously and lined with sharp bristles. Leaves are round, kidney-shaped with upper rough surface. These have beautiful flower of golden yellow color. Fruits contain numerous white-colored embedded seeds¹. Fruits are traditionally used to treat Cardiotonic, renal diseases, epilepsy, jaundice, dyspepsia, fever and menstrual disorders.

In ayurvedic medicines, seeds are used in the treatment of antihelminthic, anti-inflammatory demulcent, diuretic, expectorant, laxative and tonic. Fruit are diuretic, laxative, tonic. It is used in ayurvedic medicine in the treatment of epilepsy, lung disease, asthma and cough. Fruit juice is used in the treatment of insanity, epilepsy and another nervous disease. This plant has been used in the form of taila, rasayana in the siddha system of medicines. Phytochemical constituents of this plant are mannitol, triterpenoids, cucurbitin, β -sitosterin, flavonoids, glycosides, carotenes, vitamins and uronic acid².

Antioxidants are an important factor to maintain optimal cellular and human body health. Antioxidant compounds are gaining in importance due to their dual role in food and pharmaceutical industries as lipid stabilizers³.

The importance of the reactive oxygen species (ROS) has attracted increasing attention over the last decade. ROS includes free radicals such as superoxide anion radicals (O_2^-), hydroxyl radicals (OH^\cdot), hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2) and singlet oxygen (O_2) along with various forms of activated oxygen⁴⁻⁵. They are involved in various physicochemical processes and diseases such as aging⁶, cancer⁷, atherosclerosis⁸ etc. Many plants contain substantial amounts of antioxidants including vitamin C and E, carotenoids, flavonoids, polyphenols, tannins and thus can be utilized to scavenge the excess of free radicals from the human body.

Hence, owing to the strong potential of the plant and no reported data on a comparative study of different parts of *Benincasa hispida* for its antioxidant potential, the present study was performed to estimate the total phenols and flavonoids contents and antioxidant potential of various parts of *Benincasa hispida*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Collection of plant materials

Plant specimen for the present study was collected from a medicinal plant vendor. Care was taken to select healthy plant materials (Leaves, fruit and seeds). The fruit was peeled off and seeds were removed. The fruit were taken and cut into pieces, dried and then ground to powder form. Seeds were separated, raised using tap water and dried in oven at 38⁰C for 24 h. The prepared seeds were stored in a dark place at ambient temperature. The seed powder was produced using grinder mill.

Extraction

The 100 g of each powdered material was extracted with ethyl acetate, ethanol and water using soxhlet apparatus. The extract was stored in a glass bottle in refrigerated condition throughout the experiment.

Phytochemical analysis (qualitative)

Phytochemical analysis ethyl acetate, ethanol and aqueous extract was performed to identify the constituents using standard procedures as described by Sofowara, Trease and Harborne⁹⁻¹¹.

Estimation of Total phenol content

Total phenolic content was estimated using the Folin-Ciocalteu method of Yu et al.¹². Extract (100 μ L) was mixed thoroughly with 2 ml of 2% Na₂CO₃. After 2 minutes 100 μ l of Folin-Ciocalteu reagent was added to the mixture. The resulting mixture was allowed to stand at room temperature for 30 min and the absorbance was measured at 743 nm against the blank. A calibration curve was established using varying concentrations of gallic acid. The values were expressed in mg/g of sample.

Estimation of Total Flavonoid content

The determination of flavonoids was performed according to the colorimetric assay of Chang et al.¹³. To 1ml of extract, 3 ml of methanol, 0.2 ml of 1 M potassium acetate, 0.2 ml of 10% aluminium chloride and 5.6 ml of distilled water was added and left at room temperature for 30 minutes. The absorbance of the mixture was read at 415 nm using UV spectrophotometer. The calibration curve was prepared using quercetin as standard.

Determination of Total Antioxidant Capacity

The assay is based on the reduction of molybdenum (VI) to molybdenum (V) by the extract and the subsequent formation of a green phosphate Mo (V) complex at acid pH Preito et al.¹⁴. An aliquot of sample solution (100 µg/ml) was combined with reagent solution (0.6 M Sulfuric acid, 28mM Sodium Phosphate and 4mM Ammonium molybdate). The tubes were capped and incubated in a boiling water bath at 95°C for 60-90 min. The samples were then cooled at room temperature and the absorbance was measured at 695 nm against the blank in a spectrophotometer. The values were expressed as equivalents of BHT.

Evaluation of Anti-oxidant activity by radical scavenging assay

DPPH radical scavenging activity

Free radical scavenging capacity of various parts of *Benincasa hispida* was determined using DPPH¹⁵. DPPH radical scavenging activity was done by serial dilution by taking diluted methanol (1:20) as standard. 10 ml of various diluted extracts of various concentrations (100, 200 and 400 µg/ml) were added to 1 ml DPPH solution (0.004%) and incubated for 10 min at room temperature. The absorbance of test and reference standard, ascorbic acid was measured at 517 nm. The amount of DPPH scavenging was calculated by using the formula:

$$\% \text{ DPPH radical scavenging} = \frac{[(\text{Absorbance of control} - \text{Absorbance of test sample}) / (\text{Absorbance of control})] \times 100}$$

Superoxide radical scavenging activity

The superoxide radical scavenging activity was measured by the following described method¹⁶⁻¹⁸. 1 ml of each extract of various parts of *Benincasa hispida* at various concentrations (100, 200 and 400 µg/ml) were mixed with 1 ml of nitro blue tetrazolium (NBT) solution (156 mM NBT in phosphate buffer of pH 7.4) and 1 ml NADH in phosphate buffer of pH 7.4. The reaction was initiated by adding 100 µl of phenazine methosulfate (PMS) solution (60 mM PMS in phosphate buffer, pH 7.4) to the mixture. The reaction mixture was incubated at 25°C for 5 min and the absorbance was measured at 560 nm against blank sample and compared with reference standard ascorbic acid. Decreased absorbance of reaction mixture indicated increased superoxide anion scavenging activity. The percentage of inhibition of superoxide anion generation was calculated using the following formula:

$$\% \text{ inhibition} = [(\text{Absorbance of control} - \text{Absorbance of test sample}) / (\text{Absorbance of control})] \times 100$$

Nitric oxide scavenging activity

Nitric oxide scavenging activity was determined by the following method described¹⁹. Briefly, 5 mM sodium nitroprusside was prepared in phosphate-buffered saline and mixed with different concentrations of extracts of various parts of *Benincasa hispida* at (100, 200 and 400 µg/ml) followed by incubation at 25°C for 30 min. A control without the extracts but with equivalent amounts of methanol was taken. After 30 min of incubation, 1.5 ml of solution was pipetted out and diluted with 1.5 ml of Griess reagent. Absorbance of chromophore formed during diazotization of the nitrite with sulphanilamide and subsequent coupling with N-1- naphthyl ethylenediamine dihydrochloride was measured at 546 nm and percentage scavenging activity was measured with reference standard ascorbic acid.

Scavenging of hydrogen peroxide

Scavenging of hydrogen peroxide was measured by the following described method²⁰. A solution of hydrogen peroxide (40 mM) was prepared in phosphate buffer (pH 7.4). 1 ml of each extract of various parts of *Benincasa hispida* at different concentrations (100, 200 and 400 µg/ml) were added to 0.6 ml of 40 mM hydrogen peroxide solution. Absorbance of hydrogen peroxide at 230 nm was determined after 10 min against a blank containing phosphate buffer without hydrogen peroxide. The percentage scavenging of hydrogen peroxide of plant extract and reference standard ascorbic acid was calculated using the following formula:

$$\% \text{ scavenged } [\text{H}_2\text{O}_2] = [(\text{Absorbance of control} - \text{Absorbance of test sample}) / (\text{Absorbance of control})] \times 100$$

Hydroxyl radical activity

Hydroxyl radical activity was measured by the following described method²¹. 1 ml of each extract of various parts of *Benincasa hispida* at various concentrations (100, 200 and 400 µg/ml) were placed in tubes and evaporated to dryness. 1 ml of ferrous- EDTA (0.13% ferrous ammonium sulfate and 0.26% EDTA), 0.5ml of 0.018% EDTA, 1 ml of DMSO (0.85% v/v in 0.1 M phosphate buffer, pH 7.4) and 0.5 ml of freshly prepared 0.22% ascorbic acid were added to each tube. The tubes were capped tightly and heated in a water bath at 80-

90°C for 15 min. The reaction was terminated by addition of 1 ml ice cold TCA (17.5% w/v) and followed by addition of 3 ml of Nash reagent and left at room temperature for 15 min. The intensity of color formed was measured at 412 nm against the reagent blank. The percentage inhibition was compared with a reference standard ascorbic acid and test compounds.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data from the experiments were presented as mean \pm S.E.M (n=3). Student's *t*-test was used for statistical analysis. Values were considered statistically significant when $P < 0.5$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reactive oxygen species [ROS] have been implicated in several diseases like cancer, diabetes, atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease. Synthetic antioxidants such as butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT) and butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA) which are commonly used in processed foods, possessed a number of side effects which makes limited their use as antioxidant agent. In the present study the antioxidant potential of various parts of *Benincasa hispida* was performed in search of potential antioxidant agent from natural source²²⁻²³.

Phytochemical analysis (qualitative)

Phytochemical analysis of *Benincasa hispida* shows the presence of flavonoids, Saponins, terpenoids, phenolic compounds and alkaloids (Table No 1).

Total Phenol Content

The Phenolic contents present in extracts of various parts of *Benincasa hispida* were presented in Table 2. Seed shows promising results wherein the ethyl acetate shows 28.34 ± 0.67 mg/g, ethanol has 96.40 ± 0.96 mg/g and aqueous extract shows 81.48 ± 0.94 mg/g of phenolic content in seeds. The ethanolic extracts of leaves, fruit and seed have noticed higher percentage of total phenolic compounds at all tested concentrations.

Total Flavonoid Content

The Flavonoids contents present in extracts of various parts of *Benincasa hispida* were presented in Table 2. Similarly, as like phenol content, seed also shows higher concentration of flavonoid content. Ethyl acetate extract of seeds shows 17.76 ± 1.28 mg/g, Ethanol extract shows 73.81 ± 0.67 mg/g and aqueous extract shows 68.65 ± 0.47 mg/g.

The Total Antioxidant Capacity

The total antioxidant capacity was presented in Table 2. The total antioxidant capacity was measured as equivalent of BHT (mg/g of extract). The Ethyl acetate extract of seed has 124 ± 1.68 , Ethanol extract 144.16 ± 1.27 mg/g and aqueous extract 115.78 ± 1.63 mg/g.

DPPH Radical Scavenging Activity

Among the extracts tested the highest antioxidant activity was exhibited by fruit and seed extracts. In the present investigation, the ethanolic extracts of fruit and seed extract were notably, exhibited scavenging activity compared to other extracts. The values were obtained with fruit and seed are 0.40 ± 0.11 and 0.45 ± 0.15 respectively which were significant to $p < 0.5$ and are noticed at $400 \mu\text{g/ml}$ concentration of extract (Table No 3).

Super Oxide Radical Scavenging Activity

The ethanolic fruit and seed extracts reported significant scavenging activity than other extracts. The values of fruit and seed extracts which are obtained at $400 \mu\text{g/ml}$ are 0.47 ± 0.26 and $.51 \pm 0.28$ respectively, which were comparable to the reference standard (Table.3).

Nitric Oxide Scavenging Activity

Among the extracts tested fruit and seed extracts produced satisfactory results. The values of fruit and seed extracts which were obtained at $400 \mu\text{g/ml}$ concentration are 0.28 ± 0.16 and 0.54 ± 0.29 respectively (Table.3).

Scavenging of Hydrogen Peroxide

Interestingly, all the plants notably exhibited scavenging activity. However, seed is proved to possess the highest scavenging activity than others. The value of seed extract obtained at $400 \mu\text{g/ml}$ is 0.43 ± 0.21 (Table No 3).

Hydroxyl Radical Activity

The ethanolic extracts of seed, hold more scavenging activity compared to other extracts. The values which were noticed at $400 \mu\text{g/ml}$ concentration of fruit and seed extracts are 0.52 ± 0.31 and 0.55 ± 0.30 , respectively (Table No 3).

CONCLUSION

In the present investigation, the Phytochemical analysis of *Benincasa hispida* shows the presence of flavonoids, Saponins, terpenoids, phenolic compounds and alkaloids which may act as better antioxidants and have beneficial effects on many pathological conditions. It was observed that all the extracts showed concentration-dependent scavenging activity. The ethanolic seed extract of *Benincasa hispida* was reported to possess significant antioxidant activity and higher content of phenolic and flavonoids. From these findings, it can be suggested that the seeds of this plant is having an immense source of natural antioxidants and could play an important role as therapeutic agents to prevent oxidative stress and related disorders.

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Table No. 1: Qualitative Phytochemical examination of various parts of *Benincasa hispida*

S. No	Compounds	LEAVES			FRUIT			SEED		
		Ethyl acetate extract	Ethanol extract	Aqueous extract	Ethyl acetate extract	Ethanol extract	Aqueous extract	Ethyl acetate extract	Ethanol extract	Aqueous extract
1.	Flavonoids	+	+++	++	+	+++	++	+	+++	+++
2.	Terpenoids	+	+++	++	+	++	+++	+	+++	++
3.	Tannins	-	++	+	-	++	-	-	++	+
4.	Phenols	++	+++	++	++	+++	+++	++	+++	+++
5.	Cardiac glycosides	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+
6.	Amino acids	++	+++	+	++	+++	+	++	+++	+
7.	Reducing sugar	+	+++	++	+	+++	++	+	+++	++
8.	Sterols	++	+++	+++	++	+++	+++	++	+++	+++
9.	Phytosterols	+	+++	+++	+	+++	+++	+	+++	+++
10.	Saponin	++	+++	+++	++	+++	+++	++	+++	+++
11.	Carbohydrate	+++	++	++	++	+++	+	+	++	+
12.	Coumarin	-	++	+++	-	++	+++	-	++	+++
13.	Alkaloids	+	++	++	+	++	++	+	++	++

Legends: +++ -Highly present; ++ -Moderately present; + -Present; --Absent

Table No. 2: Total phenol, Flavonoid and Antioxidant level of *Benincasa hispida*

S. No.	Parameter	Concentration mg/g of extract								
		LEAVES			FRUIT			SEED		
		Ethyl acetate	Ethanol	Aqueous	Ethyl acetate	Ethanol	Aqueous	Ethyl acetate	Ethanol	Aqueous
1	Total Phenol (gallic acid/gm of extract)	21.66±1.79	89.78±0.91	81.68±0.94	23.78±1.66	92.75±0.74	80.14±0.24	28.34±0.67	96.40±0.96	81.48±0.94
2	Total Flavonoid (Quercetin/gm of extract)	14.27±1.38	70.67±0.88	68.34±0.92	16.34±1.28	71.37±0.28	64.65±0.34	17.76±1.28	73.81±0.67	68.65±0.47
3	Total Antioxidant (BHT/gm of extract)	121±1.28	142.16±1.27	114.33±1.62	122±1.78	142.78±0.47	115.28±1.28	124±1.68	144.16±1.27	115.78±1.63



Table No. 3 Antioxidant activity of various parts of Benincasa hispida

	DPPH			Super Oxide			Nitric Oxide			H2O2			Hydroxyl Radical		
	100	200	400	100	200	400	100	200	400	100	200	400	100	200	400
<i>Ethyl acetate extract</i>															
Leaves	0.12±0.14	0.20±0.16	0.25±0.21*	0.14±0.21*	0.22±0.14*	0.24±0.11*	0.11±0.1*	0.18±0.05*	0.22±0.12	0.11±0.05*	0.18±0.11*	0.20±0.18*	0.05±0.13*	0.14±0.14	0.23±0.16*
Fruits	0.20±0.21	0.25±0.24	0.32±0.22*	0.22±0.16*	0.26±0.14*	0.34±0.22*	0.22±0.12*	0.26±0.18*	0.29±0.21*	0.14±0.06*	0.17±0.10*	0.26±0.12*	0.11±0.12*	0.21±0.2*	0.27±0.20*
Seeds	0.24±0.11	0.26±0.14	0.30±0.21*	0.28±0.22	0.30±0.27*	0.32±0.29*	0.14±0.15*	0.23±0.11*	0.28±0.16*	0.21±0.16*	0.26±0.17*	0.28±0.25*	0.16±0.21*	0.28±0.22*	0.31±0.27*
<i>Ethanol extract</i>															
Leaves	0.15±0.23	0.24±0.15	0.32±0.23*	0.20±0.21*	0.24±0.14*	0.3±0.18*	0.17±0.1*	0.10±0.05*	0.20±0.12	0.15±0.03*	0.18±0.005*	0.21±0.08*	0.19±0.22*	0.27±0.14*	0.36±0.20*
Fruits	0.28±0.12	0.30±0.14*	0.40±0.11*	0.41±0.21	0.45±0.24*	0.47±0.26*	0.20±0.12*	0.26±0.15*	0.28±0.16*	0.16±0.06*	0.22±0.1*	0.34±0.12*	0.36±0.27*	0.41±0.24*	0.52±0.31*
Seeds	0.25±0.11	0.32±0.05*	0.45±0.15*	0.36±0.21*	0.46±0.20*	0.51±0.28*	0.35±0.20*	0.48±0.26*	0.54±0.29*	0.20±0.16*	0.34±0.19*	0.43±0.21*	0.28±0.21*	0.37±0.28*	0.55±0.30*
<i>Aqueous extract</i>															
Leaves	0.22±0.21	0.28±0.16	0.30±0.28	0.22±0.18*	0.29±0.14*	0.34±0.21*	0.12±0.05*	0.22±0.11*	0.26±0.14*	0.16±0.06*	0.21±0.10*	0.27±0.12*	0.17±0.14*	0.24±0.16*	0.34±0.17*
Fruits	0.25±0.06	0.32±0.14*	0.38±0.17	0.36±0.21*	0.42±0.29*	0.49±0.29*	0.20±0.15*	0.30±0.18*	0.32±0.16*	0.18±0.06*	0.28±0.1*	0.37±0.21*	0.21±0.28*	0.38±0.27*	0.48±0.29*
Seeds	0.28±0.12	0.30±0.16	0.38±0.18	0.34±0.16*	0.48±0.21*	0.54±0.27*	0.24±0.12	0.26±0.16*	0.34±0.2*	0.20±0.16*	0.32±0.19*	0.40±0.26*	0.28±0.22*	0.31±0.29*	0.51±0.32*

Values are mean±S.E.M. n=3

*significance is set at p>0.5.

Conc µg/ml