



## The Meaning and Utilization of Plants in Wedding Ceremonies: An Ethnobotanical Study of the Community in Sungai Deras Village, East Air Hangat District, Kerinci

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**Abstract:** This study is qualitative research with a descriptive design focusing on ethnobotanical analysis within the traditional wedding ceremonies of the Kerinci community, particularly in Sungai Deras Village. The primary objective of this study is to classify and inventory the diversity and types of flora utilized in wedding rituals at the research site. It aims to document the plant species involved in traditional wedding practices in Sungai Deras Village and to thoroughly analyze the philosophical semantics of their use as representations of local wisdom. The research methodology employs purposive sampling to select key informants, consisting of traditional leaders, religious figures, and community representatives. Data were collected through direct observation of the rituals, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal five main plant components (betel leaf, areca nut, gambier, lime, and tobacco) that collectively shape the ethical pillars of the ceremony. Betel leaf (*Piper betle*) represents purity of intention and communication; areca nut (*Areca catechu* L.) symbolizes dignity and hopes for prosperity; gambier (*Uncaria gambir*) reflects kinship solidarity; lime (calcium/lime, functioning as a component supporting *D. aromatica*) signifies customary foundations and noble values; and tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum* L.) conveys social approval from cultural authorities. The use of these plants does not contradict Islamic teachings the predominant religion of the community and its traditional leaders because it aligns with the principle "adat basandi syara', syara' basandi kitabullah."

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## INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage and customary traditions transmitted across generations are not static entities. As explained by Mufidah et al. (2021), although authenticity is often considered a key benchmark, real conditions in the field show that traditions undergo a dynamic process of adaptation.

Over time, intercultural interactions and societal development give rise to new cultural variations whose existence is closely tied to the environmental and geographical characteristics in which the culture evolves. This phenomenon affirms that culture is not

merely “inherited” but continually “lives” and adapts to the context of its supporting community.

Within Indonesia’s ethnic diversity, the relationship between humans and nature is clearly reflected through the use of local flora. Plants play a vital role not only as biological resources but also as essential elements in various religious and customary rituals (Huda et al., 2022; Hulyati & Ardinis Arbain, 2014; Lubis et al., 2023; Mukarromah et al., 2024). The diversity of plant species used in these rituals represents the richness of symbolism and philosophical meaning that varies across regions (Fatimah Millenia Fauziah, 2022; Putri et al., 2015), making ethnobotany an important entry point for understanding the local wisdom values of a community.

Kerinci Regency is widely known as a region that still upholds ancestral traditions amid the wave of modernization (Manik, 2021; Mukhlis et al., 2025; Tomi Apra Santosa et al., 2025). One of the most sacred and consistently practiced cultural manifestations is the traditional wedding ceremony. For the Kerinci community, marriage carries broad sociological dimensions. It is not only a ceremonial celebration but also an institution that regulates the rights and obligations of husband and wife, affirms kinship status, and governs inheritance laws and demographic structures within social life.

Specifically, the local wisdom in utilizing plants is strongly reflected in the wedding practices of the people of Sungai Deras Village, Kerinci Regency. A series of traditional wedding ceremonies including *letak tando* (ngantok paletauk), marriage announcement (ngimbou uha janti), *ijab kabul*, and *ngantar laki* (ngantauk) incorporates various plant elements available in the surrounding environment. Plant use is particularly crucial in the *ijab kabul* ceremony, where a set of betel and areca nut arranged in a golden container is presented as a symbol of the couple’s request for their parents’ blessing. Each plant used in the ritual is believed to hold specific philosophical meanings that reflect the hopes and noble values of the local community.

Although ethnobotanical studies related to wedding rituals have been widely conducted in Indonesia for example, Fadil et al. (2022) identified 35 plant species used in Javanese wedding ceremonies in South Jakarta, Ramadhani et al. (2021) reported 20 species used in Tamiang traditional weddings, and Angela et al. (2022) identified 4 species used in Tanjung Pauh Kerinci wedding rituals similar research in Sungai Deras Village has not yet been documented scientifically. Considering that every region has distinct interpretations and uses of plant species, research in this area is urgently needed. Therefore, this study aims to inventory the plant species utilized and analyze in depth the philosophical meanings behind their use in the traditional wedding ceremonies of the Sungai Deras Village community, Kerinci Regency.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to describe the ethnobotanical diversity found in the traditional wedding ceremonies of Sungai Deras Village, Kerinci Regency. The selection of research subjects was carried out using a purposive sampling technique referring to Creswell (2015), involving six key informants consisting of two traditional leaders, two religious leaders, and two community figures.

Data collection was conducted through two primary techniques, namely direct observation to examine the implementation of the wedding rituals and face-to-face interviews. The interview instrument was designed to explore in-depth information regarding the types of plants used along with the philosophical meanings associated with

them. The research procedure began with field observation to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how the wedding traditions are carried out in the study area.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the ethnobotanical study of the wedding ceremony conducted in Sungai Deras Village, located in Kerinci Regency, can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1. List of Plant Species Used in the Wedding Ceremony in Sungai Deras Village, Kerinci.**

<b>Nama Lokal/Umum</b>	<b>Nama Ilmiah</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Makna</b>
Betel Leaf (Sihaih)	<i>Piper betle</i>	Piperaceae	Represents the purity of the couple's intention to build a lawful household based on religious and customary values. It also functions as a medium of communication bridging both families, symbolizing humility and openness in welcoming guests and relatives.
Areca Nut (Pinau)	<i>Areca catechu L</i>	Arecaceae	An affirmation that both families are welcomed sincerely and with proper respect, while also emphasizing hopes for prosperity and harmony in married life.
Gambier (Gambou)	<i>Uncaria gambir</i>	Rubiaceae	Gambier represents the aspect of togetherness and solidarity involving the entire extended family (both the male and female lineages) in the ceremony.
Lime (Kapu Sihaih)	<i>Calcium/Lime (Fungsi Ritual D. aromatica)</i>	Mineral/Dipterocarpaceae	Lime symbolizes the way of life of the community that upholds tradition and noble values. It serves as a customary pillar that supports the values represented by Betel

			Leaf, Areca Nut, and Gambier.
Tobacco (Tabakai)	<i>Nicotiana tabacum L.</i>	Solanaceae	Tobacco ensures that the marriage receives social approval from the Nenek Mamak structure, which represents the chain of cultural authority inherited from the ancestors.

**Discussion**

Based on interviews conducted with community leaders, traditional leaders, and religious figures in Sungai Deras Village, Kerinci, data were obtained regarding the plants utilized in the wedding ceremony, specifically those belonging to the category of offering plants. In scientific terms, the use of these plants carries meanings derived from their biological and chemical properties. Offering plants represent a form of respect from the community toward the *depati nenek mamak* (customary elders) of Kerinci Regency. The plants include Betel Leaf (*Piper betle L.*), Areca Nut (*Areca catechu L.*), Gambier (*Uncaria gambir L.*), Tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum L.*), and Lime (Calcium/Lime, used for ritual functions of *D. aromatica*). These plants are arranged in a special container known as a *Carano*, which serves as a ceremonial vessel for betel offerings during the wedding procession. The purpose of presenting these plants is to express apologies for any mistakes committed by the male or female family line (*anak jantan* or *anak batino*) toward the elders. Such mistakes may include improper speech such as insulting the *depati nenek mamak*, or errors related to livelihood activities such as rice field management, farming, or handling inherited property.

Each component of the betel set also holds specific symbolic meanings: Areca Nut represents maturity and readiness, Lime symbolizes sincerity, purity, and the expectation of fulfilling responsibilities promptly, Tobacco signifies the complexity of social issues that must be resolved wisely, and Gambier represents the need for endurance and perseverance when addressing problems.

According to community interviews, the wedding procession in Sungai Deras Village begins with a series of pre-nuptial stages intended to formalize commitments, assess readiness, and establish structured communication between both families. These stages mark the transition from private negotiations to communal acknowledgment. The first stage is *Letak Tando*, locally known as *Ngantok Paletaok*. *Ngantok* generally includes the processes of introduction, proposal, and engagement. Its cultural function is the placement of a symbolic sign or seal of initial commitment between the groom’s and bride’s families. This sign, usually in the form of a valuable item, serves as a guarantee of mutual sincerity, indicating that the intention to marry has been formally acknowledged within customary law. This stage acts as a methodological requirement that must be completed before proceeding to the next step.

Following the placement of the initial commitment through *Letak Tando*, the next stage is *Ngimbou Uha Janti*, which translates to “announcing the marriage” to the

customary hierarchy and broader community. This process is not a simple verbal announcement; it involves a structured ritual communication. *Ngimbou Uha Janti* requires the use of *Parno Adat* (customary phrases) delivered by selected representatives from the family.

The *Ijab Kabul* (marriage contract) in Islamic law has flexible scheduling within the customary framework of Sungai Deras. Based on observed practices, the marriage contract may take place one or two days before the wedding reception at the bride's house or even on the morning before the reception, depending on the agreement between families. This flexibility reflects the accommodation between fulfilling religious obligations and arranging customary ceremonies that require the presence of extended family members. In this sacred moment, the local wisdom embodied in the use of plants plays a vital role. The requirement for these plants becomes understandable, as it is closely tied to traditional practices passed down through generations practices that reflect cultural values despite the acculturation with Islamic teachings embedded within them

## KESIMPULAN

The wedding ceremony in Sungai Deras Village incorporates four plant species. Academically, the offering known as *Sekapur Sirih* comprising Sirih (*Piper betle* L.), Pinang (*Areca catechu* L.), Gambir (*Uncaria gambir* L.), Tembakau (*Nicotiana tabacum* L.), and lime material (functionally Calcium/Lime symbolically aligned with *D. aromatica*) constitutes key botanical elements within the Kerinci customary ritual. The application of these plant materials is centered on the *Ijab Kabul* ceremony.

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