

Topic: Ranunculaceae
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Ranunculaceae

Systematic Position

Polypetalae

Thalamiflorae

Ranales

Ranunculaceae (Buttercup family)

Distribution

The family includes about 50 genera and 2000 species (Cronquist, 1981) distributed mainly in temperate cold regions, and at high altitudes in mountains. Some members of the family are found in Arctic and Alpine regions too. The family is commonly represented by many species in the Himalayas. There are found in India about 28 genera and 190 species.



Habit

The plants are either herbs annuals or perennials. Sometimes climbing shrubs (*Clematis* sp.). The plant perennates by means of tuberous roots (*Aconitum*) which contain the reserve food material.

Roots

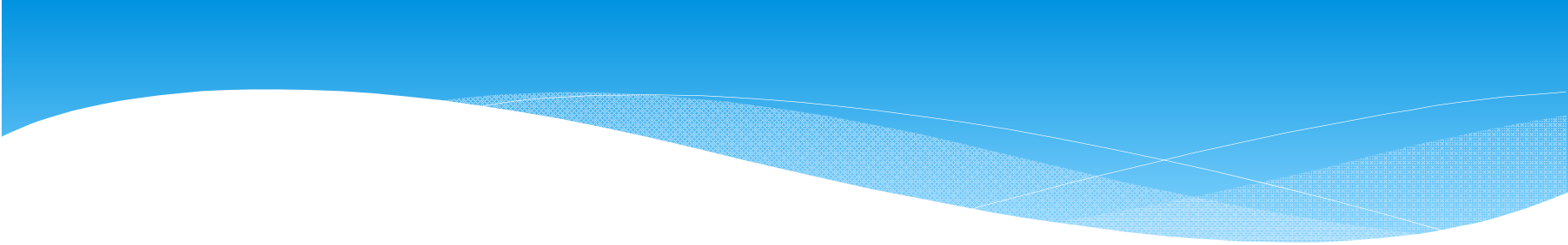
They are tap or adventitious, sometimes swelling up into small tubers.

Stem

It is mostly aerial and herbaceous, in some (*Clematis*) it is climbing, while in perennial species it is a rhizome.

Leaves

The leaves are alternate, exstipulate and more or less divided.



In some cases the leaves may be opposite or even radical. In *Clematis*, the leaves are opposite and compound. They possess twining petioles. In *Clematis aphylla* the whole leaf becomes modified into a tendril.

The leaves of *Thalictrum foliolosum* are pinnately decomposed with auricled sheaths. The leaf lamina is sometimes entire. It is narrow in some species of *Ranunculus*, however, in *Ranunculus ficaria* and *Caltha sp.*, it is cordate.

Heterophylly is found in the aquatic species of *Ranunculus*. In such cases the submerged leaves are very much dissected whereas the floating ones are simply lobed. In *Delphinium* the leaves are palmately lobed and much dissected. The leaves of *Clematis* are climbing.