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Seabuckthorn Plantation in the Cold Desert

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Why in News

The **Himachal Pradesh government** has decided to start **planting seabuckthorn in the cold desert areas** of the state.



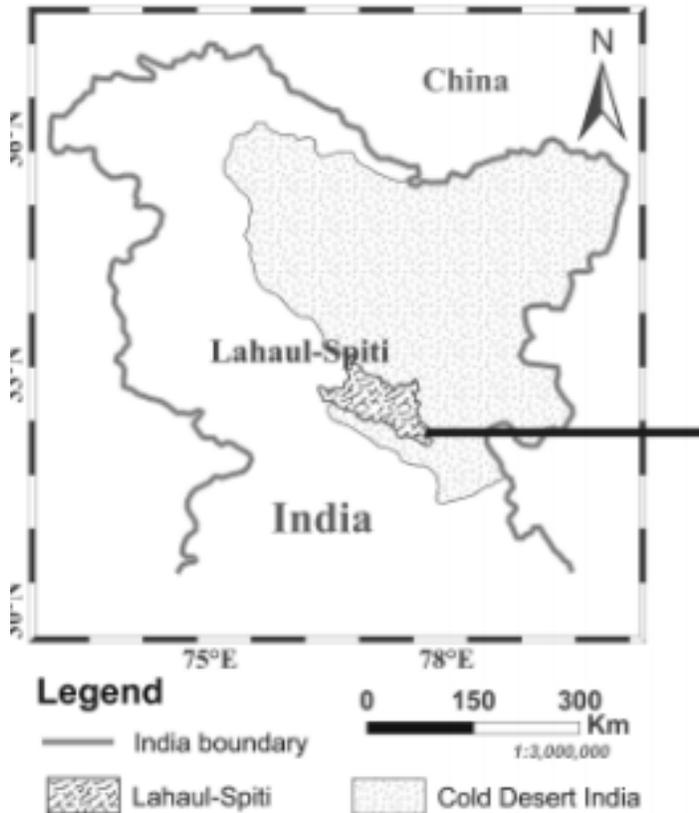
Key Points

- **About Seabuckthorn:**
 - It's a **shrub** which produces an **orange-yellow coloured edible berry**.
 - In India, it is found **above the tree line in the Himalayan region**, generally in **dry areas** such as the **cold deserts of Ladakh and Spiti**.
 - In Himachal Pradesh, it is locally called **chharma** and **grows in the wild** in Lahaul and Spiti and parts of Kinnaur.
 - A major part is covered by this plant in **Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh**.

- The Seabuckthorn Plantation has many **Ecological, Medicinal and Economical benefits.**
 - **Ecological Benefits:**
 - Seabuckthorn is a **soil-binding plant** which **prevents soil-erosion, checks siltation in rivers** and helps **preserve floral biodiversity.**
 - In the Lahaul valley, where willow trees are dying in large numbers due to pest attack, this hardy shrub is a good alternative for protecting the local ecology.
 - Grows well in dry regions and becomes much more important especially in the light of reduced water flow from Himalayan glaciers.
 - **Medicinal Benefits:**
 - As a folk medicine, seabuckthorn has been widely used for **treating stomach, heart and skin problems.**
 - Its fruit and leaves are **rich in vitamins, carotenoids and omega fatty acids** and it can help troops in acclimatising to high-altitude.
 - In the last few decades, scientific research worldwide has backed many of its traditional uses.
 - **Economical Benefits:**
 - Seabuckthorn also has commercial value, as it is used in **making juices, jams, nutritional capsules** etc.
 - It is an important source of fuelwood and fodder.
 - However, **wild Seabuckthorn cannot sustainably supply raw material** to the industry, and the **plant needs to be cultivated** on a large scale as is being done in China.

Cold Desert in India

- The Cold Desert of India is situated in the Himalayas and **stretches from Ladakh in the north to Kinnaur (in the state of Himachal Pradesh)** in the south.
- The region has **harsh climatic conditions** such as very low rainfall and very high elevation (ranging from 3000 – 5000m Above Sea Level)] that adds to the **coldness** in its environment.
- Blizzards, snowstorms and avalanches are common.
- The soil is not very fertile and the climatic conditions allow very short growing seasons making it a bare landscape.
- Water resources are minimal and comprise glacier-fed streams.



Tree Line

- The tree line is the edge of the habitat at which trees are capable of growing. It is found **at high elevations and high latitudes.**
- Beyond the tree line, trees cannot tolerate the environmental conditions (usually cold temperatures, extreme snowpack, or associated lack of available moisture).

Source: IE