

Catuaba (*Erythroxylum catuaba*)

Location: This herb is located in Brazil in the rain forest areas.

Description: For medicinal purposes, the bark of this herb is used.

Properties: Catuaba is known for its aphrodisiac qualities.

Uses: Use catuaba to treat impotence, prostatitis, and HIV/AIDS.

Doses: This herb is available in tincture form and should be mixed with lemon juice to increase its acidity and thus make it more productive.

Family: **Erythroxylaceae**

Genus: **Erythroxylum**

Species: **Catuaba**

Synonyms: **None**

Other Species: **Erythroxylum vacciniifolium, Trichilia catigua, Juniperus brasiliensis, Eriotheca candolleana, Anemopaegma mirandum**

Common Names: **Catuaba, cataguá, chuchuhuasha, tatuaba, pau de reposta, caramuru, piratançara, angelim-rosa, catiguá**

Part Used: **Bark, root**

**Erythroxylum catuaba** is a vigorous-growing, small tree that produces yellow and orange flowers and small, dark yellow, oval-shaped, inedible fruit. It grows in the northern part of Brazil in Amazonas, Para, Pernambuco, Bahia, Maranhao, and Alagoas. This **catuaba** tree belongs to the family Erythroxylaceae, whose principal genus, Erythroxylum, contains several species that are sources of cocaine. **Catuaba**, however, contains none of the active cocaine alkaloids.

**Catuaba** has a long history of use in herbal medicine as an aphrodisiac. The Tupi Indians in Brazil first discovered the aphrodisiac qualities of the plant and over the last few centuries they have composed many songs praising its wonders and abilities. Indigenous and local peoples have used catuaba for generations. It is the most famous of all Brazilian aphrodisiac plants. In the Brazilian state of Minas there is a saying, "*Until a father reaches 60, the son is his; after that, the son is catuaba's!*"

Initially they found the herb helped to enhance libido, then they noticed its other numerous beneficial qualities: relieving pain and fatigue, controlling nervousness, improving memory, helping with depression, among others.

In Brazilian herbal medicine today, catuaba is considered a central nervous system stimulant with aphrodisiac properties. A bark decoction is commonly used for sexual impotency, agitation, nervousness, nerve pain and weakness, poor memory or forgetfulness, and sexual weakness.

Catuaba functions as a stimulant of the nervous system, above all when one deals with functional impotence of the male genital organs. It is an innocent aphrodisiac, used without any ill effects at all. In Brazil it is regarded as an aphrodisiac with "proven efficacy" and, in addition to treating impotence, it is employed for many types of nervous conditions including insomnia, hypochondria, and pain related to the central nervous system (*such as sciatica and neuralgia*).

In European herbal medicine catuaba is considered an aphrodisiac and a brain and nerve stimulant. A bark tea is used for sexual weakness, impotence, nervous debility, and exhaustion. Herbalists and health practitioners in the United States use catuaba in much the same way: as a tonic for genital function, as a central nervous system stimulant, for sexual impotence, general exhaustion and fatigue, insomnia related to hypertension, agitation, and poor memory.

According to **Michael van Straten**, noted British author and researcher of medicinal plants, catuaba is beneficial to men and women as an aphrodisiac, but "it is in the area of male impotence that the most striking results have been reported" and "there is no evidence of side effects, even after long-term use."

Clinical studies on catuaba also have shown results related to its antibacterial and antiviral properties. A 1992 study indicated that an extract of catuaba (*Erythroxylum catuaba*) was effective in protecting mice from lethal infections of *Escherichia coli* and *Staphylococcus aureus*, in addition to **inhibiting HIV significantly**. The study found that the pathway of catuaba's anti-HIV activity stemmed (at least partially) from the inhibition of HIV absorption into cells, and suggested that catuaba had potential against opportunistic infections in HIV patients. A U.S. patent was granted (in 2002) to a group of Brazilian researchers for a catuaba bark extract (*Trichilia catigua*). Its patent refers to animal studies it conducted that reported that it relieved pain and relaxed and dilated blood vessels in rats, rabbits and guinea pigs.

To date, no toxicity studies have been done on catuaba - but its long history of use in Brazil has reported no toxicity or ill effects. In fact, according to **Dr. Meira Penna**, the only side-effects are beneficial - erotic dreams and increased sexual desire! While no clinical research has validated the traditional use of catuaba as an aphrodisiac, it continues to be used widely for its ability to enhance sexual drive and increase libido in both men and women.

**Traditional Preparation:** Generally in Brazil, a standard infusion (bark tea) and an alcohol tincture are employed. Recommended usage is reported to be 1-3 cups of an infusion daily, or 2-3 ml of a standard alcohol tincture twice daily.

### **Also known as**

Trichilia catigua, Anemopegma mirandum, angelim-rosa, caramuru, catagu, catigu, catigua, chuchuhuasha, pau de reposta, or tatuaba.

### **Introduction**

Catuaba (pronounced kot-chew-BAH) is a smaller flowering tree of the Amazon jungle related to the coca plant but producing none of the alkaloids found in cocaine. It bears orange and yellow flowers that produce a yellowish-brown, inedible fruit. The Tupi tribe in northern Brazil discovered the aphrodisiac qualities of catuaba several hundred years ago. Trading the herb throughout South America, the Tupis have made catuaba the most popular of all the Amazonian aphrodisiac plants. Its use is so prevalent as an aphrodisiac in Brazil that there is a popular saying that goes until a father is 60, the son is his: after that the son is Catuaba.

### **Constituents**

Some varieties of catuaba contain yohimbine. The antibacterial constituent of the herb is cinchonain. Also contained are fatty acids, phytosterols, and antioxidant flavonoids.

### **Parts Used**

Bark.

### **Typical Preparations**

Catuaba is used in capsules, teas, and tinctures.

### **Summary**

The native peoples of the Amazon who use catuaba combine it with muira puama, allowing the mixture to stand in warm water overnight to make an amber medicinal infusion. There is laboratory evidence that catuaba enhances male sexual performance by increasing the brain's sensitivity to dopamine, making the sex act more pleasurable, as well as by vasodilation, enhancing erectile strength. The aphrodisiac qualities are said to be beneficial not only to men, but women as well. In 2002, a Brazilian company was awarded a patent for an HIV prevention formula based on an extract of the herb, although research is still in progress. Catuaba is also said to help in calming nerves, reducing anxiety, and help to overcome general exhaustion and fatigue.

### **Precautions**

No toxicity studies have been done at this time but the long history of use in Brazil shows no reported ill effects.