

Pau D'Arco (Tabebuia species)

Common Name: Lapacho.

Location: Amazon rain forest.

Description: Pau d'arco is a tropical tree that grows to a height of 100 feet. Although it is an evergreen in the Amazon rain forest, it is deciduous at higher and colder locations. The plants in the Tabebuia genus that include the various species of pau d'arco can flower in a number of colors, but the roxa (red-, magenta-, crimson-, and violet-flowering) varieties are used the most in herbal medicine. Medicinal preparations are made from the tree's dried inner bark, sustainably harvested from trees in the wild.

Properties: Pau d'arco extract is an immune stimulant and is effective against bacterial, fungal, viral, parasitic, and yeast infections. It is also considered to be an anti-inflammatory agent.

Uses: The inner lining of the bark of either the red or the purple pau d'arco tree has been used for centuries as treatment for cancer, lupus, infectious diseases, wounds, and many other health conditions. Pau d'arco tea has beneficial effects on disorders as varied as arthritis, athlete's foot, the common cold, leukemia, pain, and yeast and other fungal infections. The herb is currently being investigated for effects on cancer and candida. Traditional herbalists agree that it strengthens and balances the immune system. Benefits of pau d'arco for specific health conditions include treatment of boils, ringworm, and yeast infection, cancer, **diabetes**, gastritis and peptic ulcer; parasitic infection.

Doses: Pau d'arco is available in ointments or lotions for external use, and as teas or tinctures for internal use. Pau d'arco products frequently combine the herb with other herbs used to treat infection and/or inflammation such as garlic and goldenseal. Be sure to read labels carefully if you are sensitive to these herbs.

Warnings: High doses of pau d'arco can cause uncontrolled bleeding, nausea, and vomiting. It is much safer to use the whole bark than to take isolated lapachol. Unfortunately, inferior products containing only the outer bark and the wood are sometimes misrepresented as genuine inner bark pau d'arco. Because the pau d'arco constituent lapachol is somewhat toxic, the herb is not recommended for women who are pregnant or nursing. As of yet, there is no good evidence that pau d'arco is an effective cancer treatment, and it may interfere with the action of prescription anti-cancer drugs. You should not add it to a conventional chemotherapy regime without consulting with your physician.

Pau d'Arco Bark and Powder Profile

Also known as

Tabebuia impetiginosa, Tabebuia avellanedae, Lapacho, and Taheebo,

Introduction

One of the best known, but least understood, herbs from the Amazonian rainforest, pau d'arco is a key ingredient in the tribal medicine chest, used as whole herb to treat infections, for pain, arthritis, fever, dysentery, and some reports suggest cancer. The pau d'arco tree is a huge canopy tree that grows up to 125 feet high, with pink to violet colored flowers. Its history of use is thought to go back to the Incas,

and several tribes have been using it to make bows for centuries. Several native names in fact mean "bow stick" or "bow stem".

Constituents

Lapachol, lapachone, and isolapachone are the best studied chemical compounds in pau d'arco, although most herbal practitioners attribute the healing power of the herb to its tannins.

Parts Used

Inner bark.

Typical Preparations

Tea, tincture or encapsulation. Like cat's claw, pau d'arco tincture should be taken in water with a little lemon juice so tannins can be absorbed through the colon.

Summary

The scientific study of pau d'arco is still very preliminary. There is a great deal of practical evidence, however, that pau d'arco can be used with success to treat colds, flu, sore throat, and yeast infections, and there is laboratory evidence that the herb contains compounds that protect against tropical diseases, specifically malaria, schistosomiasis, and tropical fevers. The herb is added to ointments to treat psoriasis, and taken orally to relieve ulcers.

Precautions

Research indicates that it may interfere with blood thinning drugs. Large amounts may be toxic.