



Power of the Amazon

by Chris Kilham

According to natives of the Amazon, when Tupan, the most powerful of all the Gods, decided to create man and woman and an environment in which they could thrive, he assembled the other gods and goddesses and sought their assistance. Jaci, the goddess of the moon, offered her help to Tupan. “I will teach the people how to grow seeds for food.

While many beneficial plants are steeped in myth and legend, few are as widely known and consumed among the natives of the Amazon river basin as *catuaba*, *Erthyroxylum catuaba*. Revered as an enhancer of both libido and sexual potency, *catuaba* is a tree which grows widely across the northern Amazon. This most famous of all reputed aphrodisiac Amazonian plants is the subject of numerous indigenous songs, and the harvesting of *catuaba* bark (the part used for sexual enhancement) has become big business throughout Brazil.

In January of this year, I and two others went on a mission to the Brazilian Amazon to investigate *catuaba* as it is har-

vested and used by the indigenous people of that region. We possessed complementary skills. My work involves researching and photographing indigenous native uses of plants around the world. My wife Shahannah, whose previous career as a marine mammal researcher put her on the ocean for three years, was our videographer. The third member, Bernie Peixoto, was born and raised in that region, speaks ten native languages fluently, and also holds a Ph.D in anthropology. We were a small, but capable group.

Entering Brazil through Manaus, we made contact with Antonio Matas, the most famous herbalist

in that area. Antonio described to us numerous instances in which the use of *catuaba* had resulted in renewed sexual potency in men, and revived or enhanced libido in both men and women. Antonio also introduced us to a man named Sívao, the primary dealer of *catuaba* in the entire sprawling Manaus region. From Sívao we learned that *catuaba* was increasing in popularity every month, and had become one of the most sought after and widely used beneficial plants in northern Brazil, due to its effectiveness.

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After our meetings in Manaus, we headed down the Amazon river where we stayed with Ipixuna and Crinicoru Indians in floating houses right on the river itself. With the guidance of an outdoorsman named

Geronimo and a fisherman named Jose', we hiked into the forest, saw *catuaba* trees growing, and witnessed the harvesting and sale of the bark. In addition, we were led to two elderly women shamans, who described to us the sex-enhancing and restorative virtues of *catuaba*.

While space doesn't permit an explanation of all that we saw and learned, we discovered during the course of our travels that while *catuaba* is used by almost all middle-aged men, it is also popular among couples of all ages for its enhancement of libido. More often than not, *catuaba* is used with *muiira puama*. We

asked repeatedly why this was so, and each time we were told that the combination of the two plants results in significantly greater sexual enhancement than can be obtained by using either herb by itself. Most of the people with whom we spoke use *catuaba* personally, and they expressed great enthusiasm for *catuaba*'s sex-enhancing properties.

Throughout history, people have sought to enhance their libido and improve sexual potency. *Catuaba*, a common tree growing widely across the Amazon river basin, has centuries of safe, effective use as a sex-enhancer. As more people become aware of the botanical treasures of the rainforest, *catuaba* is destined to become popular and widely used in this culture as well. ■

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