

# **Plants Used in Mexican Traditional Medicine**

## **Their Application and Effects In Traditional Healing Practices**

Text by

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# Acknowledgements

- We would like to thank Ms Sarah Schoofield, of *México Desconocido* magazine, for her generous permission to use the beautiful photographs, drawings and maps, which have appeared in various publications of that magazine.
- The majority of the photos, drawings, and maps presented here are the work of photographers, artists and scientists including: Abigaíl Aguilar-MS, Lorenzo Armendáriz, Salatiel Barragán, Robert Bye-PhD, André Cabroler, Rafael Doniz, Ignacio Guevara, Franz Mahler, Ruben Morante, Oscar Pastor Ojeda, Manuel Sarmiento, Nicolás Triedo and Santiago Xolapa.

# Disclaimer

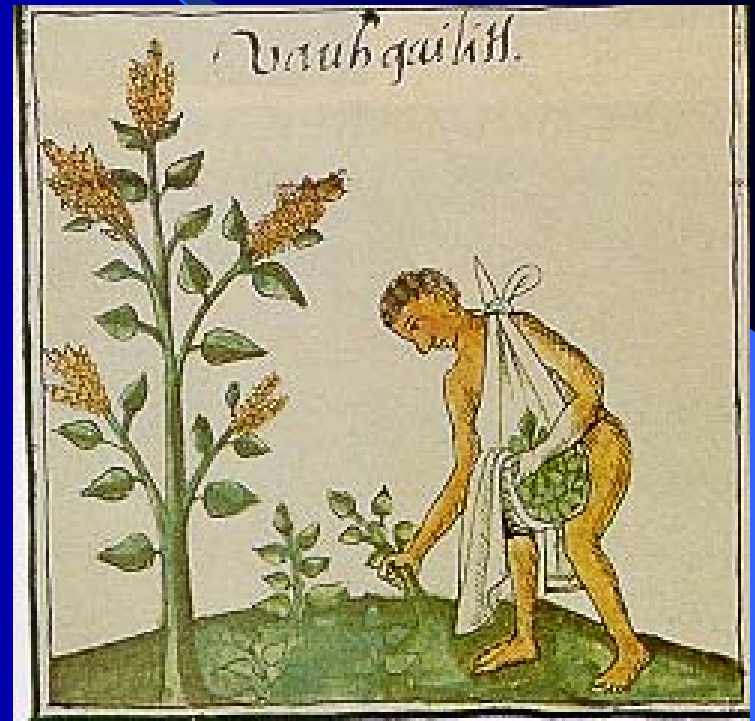
- This presentation is not intended to promote any plant to be used for therapeutic purposes.
- It is merely a compilation of herbal use by Mexican Traditional Medicine.
- Very few of these plants have ever been studied in depth, so little is known about their efficacy or possible side effects.
- **Warning:** Do not self-medicate with any herb. Consult your health provider first.

# Introduction

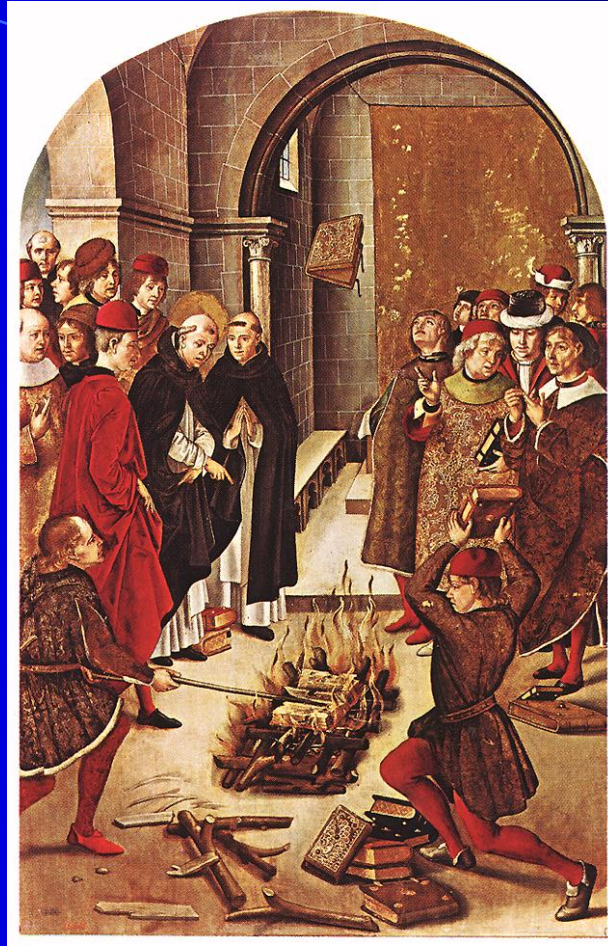
- Mexico has a rich tradition of herbal use that predates the European conquest by many centuries
- Mexico's medicinal herbal repertoire is one of the world's most diverse and contains various native plants, as well as many other species introduced from diverse parts of the globe
- Approximately 3,000 to 5,000 plants (both native and introduced) are currently used medicinally by 52 different ethnicities throughout the country

# Medicinal Plants in Mexico

- The Aztec civilization of Mexico was the only one in the New World to record the use of medicinal herbs
- They did so in “codices” or catalogues that showed drawings of the plants



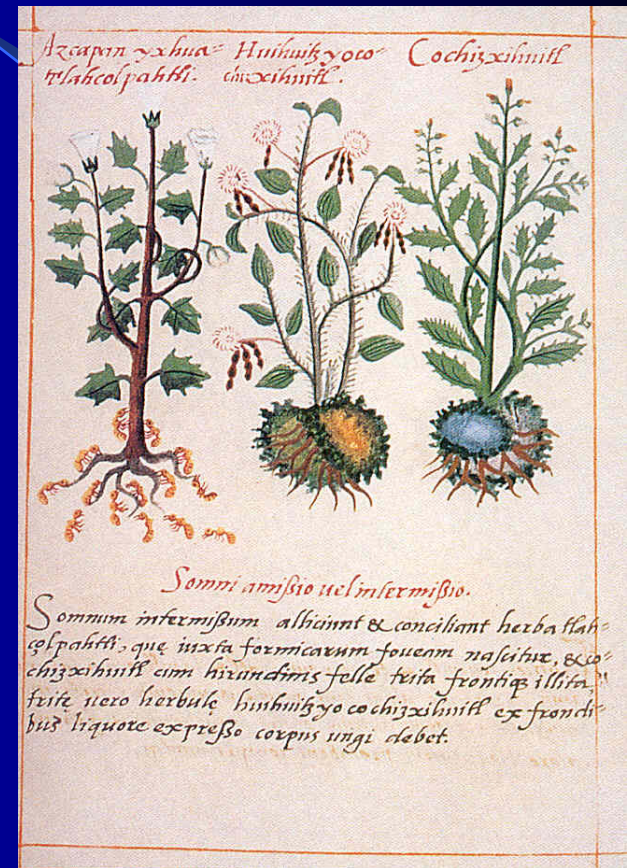
Courtesy of México Desconocido magazine



Codices containing information about Aztec medicinal plants were considered “heretical”, and burned by Spanish missionaries

# Codices

- A few missionaries had the vision of recuperating at least a small portion of this knowledge and reconstructing two codices
- One was written, both in Latin and Náhuatl (the Aztec language) and known as the De La Cruz-Badiano Codex
- It became the first bilingual publication of the New World (1552)



Courtesy of México Desconocido magazine

# Codices

- These codices were taken to Italy and forgotten for more than 300 years
- They were “rediscovered” until the twentieth century
- Some of the plants pictured in the codices are still used in the same way today.



Courtesy of México Desconocido magazine



# México's great biodiversity

- Mexico's rugged landscape includes a great diversity of plants, animals and fungi
- Unfortunately, very few Mexican plants have ever been studied in detail regarding their medicinal potential
- Deforestation, ill-planned urban expansion, uncontrolled livestock grazing, and desertification are currently threatening Mexico's natural resources, including the survival of various medicinal plants

# Mexico has a rich diversity of medicinal plants



Map courtesy of México Desconocido magazine



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido magazine*

Some medicinal plants may have a mystical significance  
in Mexican traditional healing practices



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido magazine*

The peyote cactus has been used for centuries  
in various religious ceremonies



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido magazine*

Medicinal plants are used in various types of healing practices throughout Mexico



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido magazine*

Traditional healers view some plants as  
important spiritual entities



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido magazine*

Drying herbs in the traditional way

# The Marketplace

- In Mexico, marketplaces are important areas of sale and distribution for medicinal herbs
- Since before Columbus, markets have provided medicinal plants to people, as well as advice from vendors and healers on how to use them
- Whether to instill or break a magic spell, or for direct medicinal purposes to cure a specific disease, herbs are still very important in the lives of millions of people





*Courtesy of México Desconocido magazine*

## Aztec marketplace



Mercado de Sonora  
con sus amuletos y  
toda clase de objetos  
no solo cura los  
males físicos sino  
el mal de amores.

*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido magazine*

## Modern market in Mexico City

# Medicinal Plants in Mexico

Traditional Uses and Applications

# **Achiote, Annato**

## ***Bixa orellana* - Bixaceae**

- **Measles (ground seeds applied to bath)**
- **Buccal sores (seeds steeped in water, as rinse)**
- **Condiment and food coloring**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido magazine*

# Ahuehuate, Sabino

*Taxodium mucronatum* - Taxodiaceae

- Burns (bark decoction, poultice)
- Diarrhea (leaf infusion, as tea)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido magazine*

# Ahuehuete tree



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido magazine*

# Ailé, Birch

*Alnus arguta* - Betulaceae

- **Fever**
- **Inflammation**
- **As a poultice to wash wounds**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Alamo** *Platanus lindeliana*

## Platanaceae

- **Colds (ground leaves with oil applied topically as poultice)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

- **Fractures**
- **Headache**



# **Anís** *Tagetes lucida* Cav.

## **Asteraceae**

- **Carminative, digestive**
- **Inflammatory, fever**
- **“Empacho” (Stomach upset)**
- **Avoid in pregnancy**
- **Unrelated to European or Star Anise**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Añil, Indigo *Indigofera suffruticosa* Fabaceae

- Urinary problems
- Constipation
- Mange
- Syphilis



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

**Anona** *Anona reticulata*  
Anonaceae

- **Boils (leaf infusion as a wash)**
- **Diarrhea (bark decoction as tea)**

# Árnica del país, Falsa árnica

*Heterotheca inuloides* - Asteraceae

- Bruises, contusions (topically)
- Tea as gargles for sore throat
- Potentially toxic, avoid internal use
- Avoid in pregnancy and lactation
- Not to be confused with European arnica, with which it shares some of its applications



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# “Azafrán”, Zacatlaxcale

*Cuscuta spp.*- Convolvulaceae

- **Parasitic plant**
- **Purgative internally**
- **Fright (“susto”)**  
(plant decoction, as bath)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Baja tripa

*Rivina humilis* - Phytolaccaceae

- “Aire” (Wind)
- “Espanto” (Fright)
- Rash (prickly heat)
- Branch decoction  
applied externally as  
body wash



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Baiborín

*Kallstroema grandiflora* - Zygophyllaceae

- **Fatigue**
- **Fever**
- **Body pains**
- **Mange**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Barbasco, Cabeza de negro** *Dioscorea spp.* - Dioscoreaceae

- **Body aches**
- **Menstrual problems**
- **Progesterone source**
- **Rheumatism, aches  
(rhizome steeped in  
alcohol, as a rub)**
- **Male contraceptive**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*



# Barquilla

*Rhoeo discolor* - Commelinaceae

- **Fungal infections:**  
**roasted leaves, topical**
- **Vaginal infections:**  
**leaf infusion douche**
- **Measles (leaf  
infusion, orally)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Batamote *Baccharis glutinosa*

## Asteraceae

- Alopecia
- Stomach ache
- Mange
- Foot odor



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Bayetilla** *Hamelia patens*

## **Rubiaceae**

- **Anti inflammatory**
- **Boils (stem decoction, externally)**
- **Pain relief (topical)**
- **Yellow fever (leaf infusion as tea)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Berro** *Nasturtium acuatium* Brassicaceae

- **Goiter (iodide )**
- **Kidney pain**
- **Stomach inflammation (raw)**
- **Tuberculosis (infusion)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Bretónica** *Lepechinia caulescens* Lamiaceae

- **Diarrhea**
- **Dysentery (stem decoction)**
- **Gastritis (topical)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Cabezona, Chapúz

## *Helenium mexicanum* - Asteraceae

- **Colds (pulverized flowerheads as stornutatories; to promote sneezing)**
- **Toxic if ingested**
- **Avoid use**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Cacaloxóchitl** *Plumeria rubra* Apocynaceae

## **External application:**

- **Gonorrhoea**
- **Warts**
- **Wounds (minor)**
- **Drastic purgative**
- **Avoid internally**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Cahuayote** *Gonolobus niger* Asclepiadaceae

- **Gonorrhoea (root decoction)**
- **Efficacy unknown**
- **Avoid during pregnancy and lactation**



# **Calaguala** *Phlebodium aureum* Polypodiaceae

- **Tea made from stem**
- **Diarrhea**
- **Gastric ulcers**
- **Kidney pain**
- **Efficacy unknown**
- **Avoid in pregnancy**

# **Calderona** *Galphimia glauca* Malpighiaceae

- **Boils (external application)**
- **Vaginal infections**
- **Wounds**
- **Avoid in pregnancy**

# **Candelilla** *Euphorbia antisiphilitica* Euphorbiaceae

- **Used against venereal disease (syphilis)**
- **Cathartic (purgative)**
- **Toothache**
- **Headache**
- **Avoid in pregnancy and lactation**

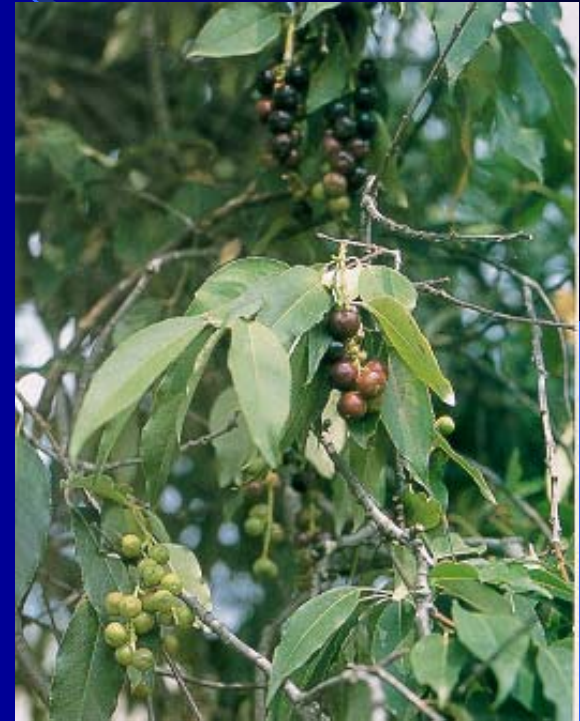


*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Capulín *Prunus serotina*

## Rosaceae

- Coughs (children)
- Decoction of stems and leaves taken as infusion (tea)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Cedro** *Cedrela odorata*

## **Meliaceae**

- **Colic**
- **Epilepsy (bark decoction as tea)**
- **Fever**
- **Gall bladder**
- **Toothache (leaf tea)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Ceiba** *Ceiba pentandra*

## **Bombacaceae**

- **Anti inflammatory**
- **Boils**
- **Insect bites**
- **Mange**
- **Bark and leaf decoctions as poultices**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Chabacal** *Salvia lavanduloides* Lamiaceae

- **Bronchitis**
- **Colds**
- **Coughs**
- **Avoid in pregnancy**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Chaca *Bursera simaruba*

## Burseraceae

- **Fever (leaf infusion)**
- **Leaves boiled in water to make a bath**
- **Leaves applied on soles of feet**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*



# Chalahuite *Inga jinicuil*

## Fabaceae

- **Dysentery**  
(bark decoction)
- **Stomach upset**  
(“empacho”)  
bark decoction
- **Flower infusion taken**  
**for tachycardia**  
(“latido”)

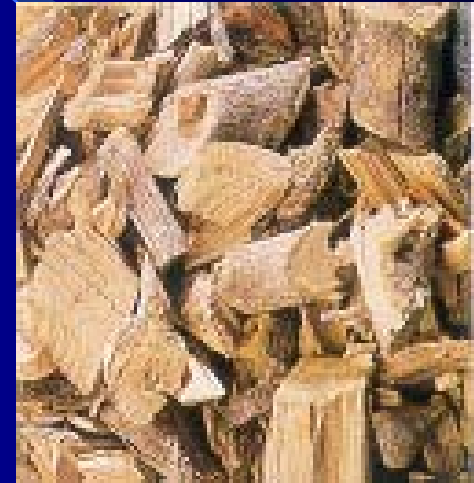


*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Chaparro amargoso

## *Castela tortuosa*-Simaroubiaceae

- Amoebic dysentery
- Avoid during pregnancy/  
lactation
- Shrublands in northern México



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Chapuliztle** *Dodonaea viscosa* Sapindaceae

- **Colic (leaf infusion)**
- **Fever (bark decoction)**
- **Gout ( leaf infusion)**
- **Ground leaves applied to scabs and wounds**
- **Scalp problems**
- **Venereal disease**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Chaya** *Cnidoscolus chayamansa* Euphorbiaceae

- **Boils (latex topically)**
- **Diabetes**
- **Kidney pain**
- **Obesity (capsules)**



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# **Chicalote** *Argemone mexicana*, *A. sanguinea* Papaveraceae

- **Papaverine**
- **hypnotic**
- **Post-part. bleeding**
- **Toothache**
- **Alopecia (hair loss)**
- **Kidney pain**
- **Seeds are toxic**



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# **Chicozapote** *Achras zapota* Zapotaceae

- **Ingestion of more than 10 seeds can be toxic**

# **Chicura** *Franseria ambrosioides* Asteraceae

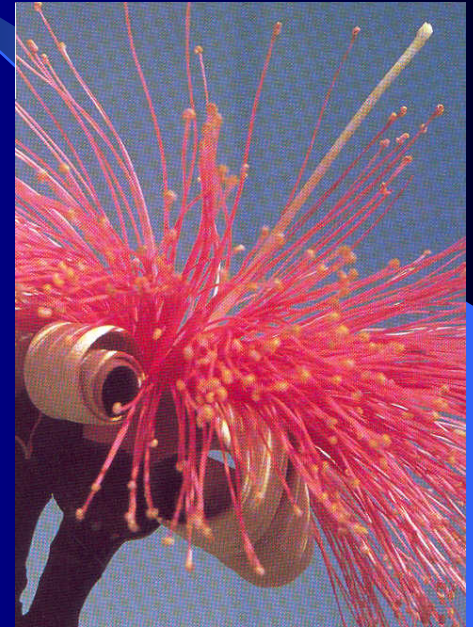
- **Promotes labor**
- **Given near parturition**
- **External application to treat scorpion stings**
- **Avoid in pregnancy and lactation**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Chigüisa *Pseudobombax ellipticum* Bombacaceae

- **Asthma**
- **Colds**
- **Coughs flower infusion taken as tea**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*



# Chipilín *Crotalaria incana*

## Fabaceae

- Urinary bladder “coldness”
- May contain cyanogenic glycosides
- May contain pyrrolizidine alkaloids
- Avoid in pregnancy



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Cholla, Cardenche, Coyonoxtle

## *Opuntia imbricata* - Cactaceae

- Tea taken to treat asthma
- Tea used against diarrhea (plant contains tannins)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Chote, Turi** *Parmentiera edulis* Bignoniaceae

- **Diabetes (root decoction as tea)**
- **Earache**
- **Urinary problems (fruit and branch infusion)**
- **Respiratory ailments (flower, fruit and root infusion)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Codo de fraile, Yóyotl

*Thevetia thevetioides* - Apocynaceae

- Boils and hemorrhoids (topically)
- “Weight loss” (seed)
- Alkaloids (thevetine)
- Very toxic, avoid all internal use



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Cojón de toro

*Stemmadenia donnell-smithi*

Apocynaceae

- **Bruises, wounds (leaf decoction externally as poultice)**
- **Mosquito bites (latex applied topically)**
- **Avoid internally**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Cola de caballo** *Equisetum arvense* Equisetaceae

- **Arthritis and rheumatism**
- **Diuretic**
- **Urinary problems**
- **Only the sterile branches are used**
- **Some species are thiaminase inhibitors**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Cola de venado

*Erigeron karwinskianus* - Asteraceae

- **Dysentery**
- **Kidney pain**  
(stem decoction)
- **Sores (wash)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Contrayerba

*Dorstenia contrajerba* - Moraceae

- Snakebite
- Vaginal hemorrhage
- Venereal disease (root decoction as tea)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*



# Cordón de San Antonio

*Hyptis stellulata* - Lamiaceae

- Earache
- Indigestion
- “Pasmo”
- Rheumatism
- Skin infections
- Avoid in pregnancy



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Cordon de San Francisco

*Salvia leucantha* - Lamiaceae

- **Fright (espanto)**
- **To reconstitute women after birth (leaf infusion)**
- **Avoid in pregnancy**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Cosáhui, Mamelique, Crameria** *Krameria grayi* - Krameriaceae

- **Diarrhea**
- **Skin antiseptic**
- **Diabetes**
- **Alopecia**
- **Loose teeth**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Cuachalalate o Axocopaque**

*Amphypteringium adstringens* -  
Julianaceae

- **Circulatory ailments,  
mixed with sassparilla**
- **Gastritis, peptic ulcers**
- **Vaginal infections  
(topical)**
- **Bark decoction or  
maceration**

# **Cuatecomate, Guaje**

## *Crescentia cujete* - Bignoniaceae

- **Alopecia (leaf infusion)**
- **Diarrhea (leaf infusion)**
- **Expectorant (fruit pulp)**
- **Liver ailments (fruit pulp)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Cucharitas** *Acacia cochliacantha* Fabaceae

- **Diarrhea**
- **Stomach ache**
- **Urinary bladder**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Cuitlacoche** *Ustilago maydis*

- **This a fungus, not a green plant**
- **Parasite of corncobs**
- **Eaten as a delicacy**
- **May contain alkaloids that stimulate uterus**
- **Avoid in pregnancy**

# Culantrillo de pozo, Palmita

*Adiantum capillus-veneris* Pteridaceae

- Leaf infusion as a tea
- Emmenagogue (promotes menstruation)
- Fright (susto)
- Kidney stones
- May cause abortion
- Avoid in pregnancy and lactation



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*



# **Cundeamor** *Momordica charantia* Cucurbitaceae

- **Diabetes (fruit and leaves)**
- **Anthelmintic**
- **Fever, Colic and headache**
- **Avoid in pregnancy and lactation**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Damiana** *Turnera diffusa*

## Turneraceae

- **Tea taken to “increase libido”, treat sterility, as a tonic for fatigue**
- **For colds and body aches**
- **May have antidepressant action**
- **Avoid in pregnancy**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Diente de león, Dandelion

*Taraxacum officinale* - Asteraceae

- Tea made from plant is used to treat gall bladder and liver ailments, anorexia
- Digestive, diuretic
- Externally, latex removes warts (irritating)



Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine

# Doradilla, Resurrection plant

*Selaginella lepidophylla*

Selaginellaceae

- **Diuretic**
- **Gall bladder stones**
- **Kidney pain**
- **Urinary problems**
- **Combined with horsetail (Equisetum)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Encino, Oak

*Quercus spp.* - Fagaceae

- **Astringent (tannins)**
- **Bleeding gums**
- **Loose teeth**
- **Skin antiseptic**
- **Toothache**
- **Bark decoction**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Epazote, Wormseed

*Chenopodium ambrosioides*  
Chenopodiaceae

- Tea is taken to treat stomach ailments and expel worms
- Avoid in pregnancy, lactation, and children
- Leaves are safe as condiment, but oil is neurotoxic



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Epazote de Zorrillo

*C. graveolens* - Chenopodiaceae

- **Anthelmintic**
- **“Aire” (flatulence)**
- **Coughs (expectorant)**
- **“Fright” (espanto)**
- **Stomach and liver ailments**
- **Potentially toxic, avoid use**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Espinosilla** *Loeselia mexicana* Polemoniaceae

## **External application for:**

- **Alopecia**
- **Dandruff**
- **Erysipelas**
- **Aerial parts as infusion  
(tea)**



# **Estafiate** *Artemisia mexicana*

## **Asteraceae**

- **Tea made from leaves and stems is used to treat stomachache, diarrhea, worms and rheumatism**
- **Avoid in pregnancy and lactation**
- **Avoid in patients with nervous disorders**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Estropajo, Luffa

*Luffa aegyptica* - Cucurbitaceae

- **Gerícuca (leaf infusion as bath)**
- **Lice (mashed fruit in water, as hair rinse)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Flor de manita, Macpalxóchitl

*Chirantodendron pentadactylon*

Sterculiaceae

- Tea from flowers
- Anxiety, Nerves
- Cardiac ailments



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Flor de tila, Linden *Tila spp.* Tilaceae

- **Anxiety**
- **Insomnia**
- **Nervous disorders**
- **Flower infusion**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Garañona** *Castilleja tenuiflora* Scrophulariaceae

- **Alopecia**
- **“Blood purifier”**
- **Gall bladder**
- **Vaginal infections**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Girasol, Sunflower

*Helianthus annuus* - Asteraceae

- **Headache**
- **Nervous disorders (anxiety)**
- **Scabs**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Gobernadora, Guámis, Creosote bush, “Chaparral” *Larrea tridentata***

## **Zygophyllaceae**

- **Athlete’s foot**
- **Cancer (antioxidant)**
- **Foot odor**
- **Fungal skin infection**
- **Kidney stones**
- **Urinary infections**
- **Venereal disease**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Creosote bush, “Chaparral”

- **NDGA, active principle**
- **Free radical scavenger**
- **Antifungal compounds**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*



# Creosote bush, “Chaparral”

- **Non-concentrated infusion internally**
- **Concentrated forms not recommended**
- **Pills and capsules may cause hepatic and renal damage**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Creosote bush, “Chaparral”

- **Avoid prolonged treatments**
- **Avoid in pregnancy, lactation and small children**
- **Topical applications may cause irritation**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Gordolobo, Everlasting

## *Gnaphalium* spp. - Asteraceae

- Similar properties as unrelated Mullein (*Verbascum* spp.)
- Respiratory problems, asthma, coughs
- Lumbago (externally)
- Avoid in pregnancy

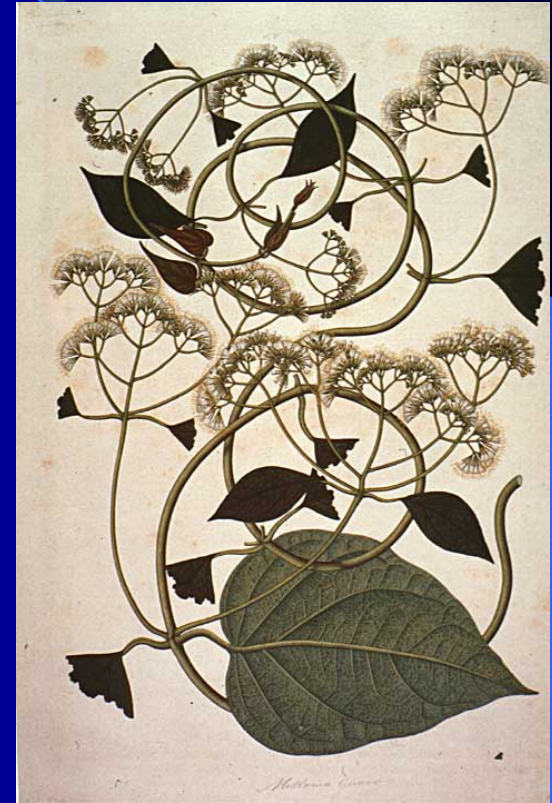


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# Guaco

*Mikania spp.* - Asteraceae

- Stomach ulcers, liver problems
- Worms
- “Antidote” vs. snakebites (unproven, avoid)
- Avoid in pregnancy and lactation



# Guamúchil *Pithecellobium dulce*

## Fabaceae

- **Diarrhea**
- **Upset stomach**
- **Coughs**
- **Buccal sores**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Guanacastle

*Enterolobium cyclocarpum* - Fabaceae

- **Red caterpillar sting  
(bark decoction  
applied directly to  
affected area)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Guayaba, Guava

## *Psidium guava* - Myrtaceae

- **Diarrhea  
(Tannins)**
- **Stomach upset**
- **Excellent source  
of Vitamin C**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Guayacán, Palo Santo

## *Guaiacum sanctum* - Zygophyllaceae

- Coughs (flowers as tea)
- Dysentery
- Diaphoretic
- Gastric ulcers
- Syphilis
- Tuberculosis



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*



# Guázuma *Guazuma ulmifolia*

## Sterculiaceae

- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Antiemetic
- The fruits contain mucilage



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Guázuma** *Guazuma tomentosa* Sterculiaceae

- **Leprosy**
- **Elephantiasis**
- **Syphilis**
- **Skin infections**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Helecho macho, Male fern

*Dryopteris filix-mas*

- **Anthelmintic, obsolete in modern phytotherapy**
- **May cause abortion**
- **Avoid in pregnancy and lactation**
- **Avoid in children**

# Hierba de la víbora

## *Zorriza spp.* - Asteraceae

- Taken as tea to treat “Pasma”
- Antidote vs. poisoning
- Anti-inflammatory  
(topical application)

# Hierba del cáncer

*Cuphea aequipetala* - Lythraceae

- Antiseptic
- Boils, skin “tumors”
- Diarrhea (leaf infusion)
- Wounds
- Avoid in pregnancy
- Avoid in children



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Hierba del carbonero

*Baccharis sarothroides* - Asteraceae

- Colds
- Muscular pain



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Hierba del golpe

*Oenothera rosea* - Onagraceae

- **Bruises (topically)**
- **Colic (infusion)**
- **Skin inflammation (poultice, topically)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Hierba del pollo (Matláli)

## Commelina stans - Commelinaceae

- **Arthritis (topically)**
- **Colic**
- **To treat diarrhea, the leaves are blended with water, lime juice and honey)**
- **Hemostatic; fresh crushed leaves applied directly to cut**



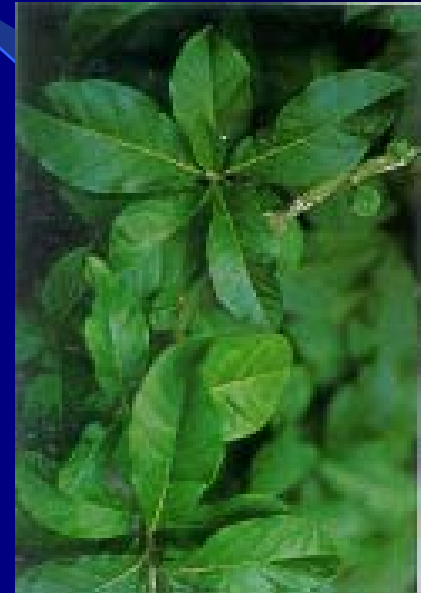
*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*



# Hierba del zorrillo

*Petiveria alliacea* - Phytolaccaceae

- **Fever**
- **Seizures**
- **Weakness**
- **Avoid in small children, pregnancy and lactation**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Hierba de San Francisco

*Heimia salicifolia* - Lithraceae

- **Bruises, inflammation**  
(ground leaves applied topically as plaster)
- **Cold bladder (branch decoction as bath)**

# **Hierba Luisa** *Aloysia triphylla* Verbenaceae

- **Tea from leaves is taken to treat anxiety, diarrhea and stomach upset**
- **Leaves have citrus-like aroma**

# Higuerilla, Ricino, Castor oil, Palma christi)

*Ricinus communis* - Euphorbiaceae

- **Fever, headache**
- **Purgative**
- **Seeds very poisonous**
- **Lectins cause hemagglutination of red blood cells**
- **Avoid internal use**

# Hoja santa Tlanepaqueelite, Momo

## *Piper sanctum* - Piperaceae

- Tea from stems and leaves is used to treat “susto” or fright



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Huinólo, Chiráhui

## *Acacia cuchliacanta* - Fabaceae

- Colds
- Diarrhea
- Gastritis
- Typhoid fever
- Urinary problems



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Huizache *Acacia farnesiana*

## Fabaceae

- **Diabetes**
- **Diarrhea**
- **Dyspepsia (flowers)**
- **Fever**
- **Kidney pain**
- **Tuberculosis (root)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Hule** *Castilleja elastica* Moraceae

- **Dislocations**
- **Fractures**
- **Latex applied topically**
- **“Vilmas” (bandages)**



# Flor de Jamaica, Hibiscus, Roselle

## *Hibiscus sabdariffa* - Malvaceae

- **May lower cholesterol**
- **Diuretic**
- **Fever**
- **Laxative, digestive**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Lágrimas de San Pedro, Job's tears

*Coix lachryma-jobi* - Poaceae

- Tea from the leaves is used to treat diabetes



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Madroño *Arbutus xalapensis*

## Ericaceae

- **Kidney pain**
- **Leaf decoction**
- **Ingested as tea**
- **Avoid in pregnancy**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Magnolia** *Magnolia grandiflora* Magnoliaceae

- **Cardiac problems**
- **Nerves**
- **Seizures**
- **Avoid in pregnancy**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Maguey, Century plant

*Agave spp.* Agavaceae

- The leaf juice is taken internally to treat constipation and other digestive ailments
- Aguamiel (sugar extract from root) used against gonorrhoea



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Mangle rojo** *Rhizophora mangle* Rhizophoraceae

- **Diabetes**
- **Dysentery**
- **Kidney pain**  
(bark decoction  
as tea)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Mango** *Mangifera indica*

## **Anacardiaceae**

- **Originally from Asia**
- **Mouth infections (seed decoction as mouthwash)**
- **Stomachache (bark decoction as tea)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Mata ratón, Coccoíte

## *Gliricidia sepium* - Fabaceae

- **Fever**
- **Stomach upset**
- **Leaves are used as rodent poison**
- **Avoid internally**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*



# **Mezquite** *Prosopis juliflora* Fabaceae

- **Boils (leaves)**
- **Conjunctivitis  
(leaves)**
- **Stomach upset**

# Muicle *Justicia spicigera*

## Acanthaceae

- **Tea from aerial parts taken to treat constipation**
- **Mange (branch decoction applied topically)**
- **Rash**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Nanche *Byrsonima crassifolia*

## Malpighiaceae

- **Astringent action used to treat diarrhea**
- **Fungal infections of the gums**
- **Loose teeth**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Nopal, Prickly pear cactus

## *Opuntia spp.* Cactaceae

- Stems eaten raw or cooked to treat diabetes
- Stems contain mucilage and fiber
- Pulverized cactus capsules taken to lower cholesterol
- Digestive
- Obesity (fiber)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Nopal duraznillo

*Opuntia leucotricha* - Cactaceae

- Stem eaten to treat diabetes
- Diarrhea
- Urinary - problems



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Ocote Colorado *Pinus patula* Pinaceae

- Sore throat  
(hoarseness)
- Branch decoction  
taken as tea
- Colds



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Palo bobo** *Ipomoea arborescens* Convolvulaceae

- **Cardiac problems**
- **Fever**
- **Spleen**
- **“Madness”**
- **Toxic to ruminants (causes emaciation)**

# Palo de Brasil

*Haematoxylon brasiletto* - Fabaceae

- Tea made from branches taken to treat depression, fever and urinary problems (infections, kidney stones)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*



# **Palo de Campeche, Tinto**

*Haematoxylon campechianum* - Fabaceae

- **Branch decoction taken as tea to treat:**
- **Diarrhea and dysentery**
- **Venereal disease (“blood purifier”)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Palo fierro *Olneya tesota*

## Fabaceae

- **Asthma**
- **Fever**
- **Loose teeth**
- **Stomach ache**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Palo mulato** *Bursera grandifolia* Burseraceae

- **A decoction of the bark is taken as tea against fever**

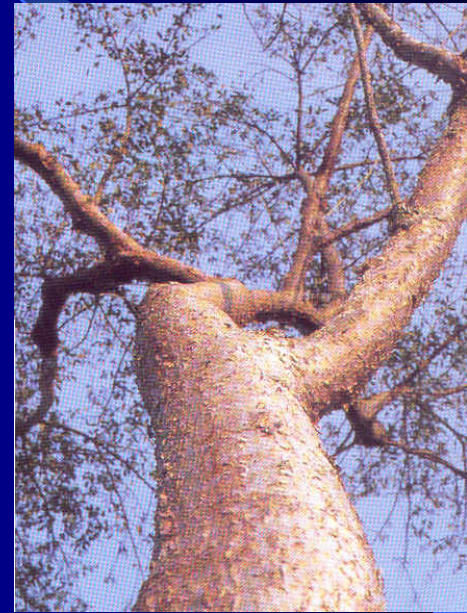


*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Palo mulato *Bursera grandifolia*

## Burseraceae

- **Headache**
- **Stomachache**  
(branch decoction  
applied topically as  
poultice)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Papayo

*Carica papaya* - Caricaceae

- **Asthma (boiled leaves as plaster)**
- **Digestive (pulp)**
- **Insect bite (latex)**
- **Meat tenderizer (seeds)**
- **Seeds used to expel worms**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Pata de vaca *Bauhinia divaricata*

## Fabaceae

- Asthma
- “Cesido”
- Dysentery
- “Empacho”
- Icterus
- Worms



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Pegarropa, Pegajosa**

## *Mentziella hispida -Loasaceae*

- **Venereal disease**
- **Depurative**
- **Purgative**
- **Avoid in pregnancy**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Pica - pica**

*Mucuna pruriens* - Fabaceae

- **The “hairs” covering pod are mixed with porridge or soft cheese to expel worms**
- **This product is ingested before breakfast**
- **Avoid in pregnancy**
- **Allergenic to skin**



# **Pingüica** *Ehretia tinifolia*

## **Boraginaceae**

- **Leaves and fruits used to make tea for treatment of urinary ailments**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Piñoncillo** *Jatropha curcas* *Euphorbiaceae*

- **Abortifacient**
- **Candidiasis (oral)**
- **Oral infections**
- **Purgative (latex and roasted seeds)**
- **Potentially toxic**
- **Avoid internally**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Pirúl, Arbol del Perú**

## *Schinus molle* - Anacardiaceae

- **Tea made from leaves is used to treat diverse ailments including: colic, conjunctivitis, coughs, gonorrhoea, rheumatism and tuberculosis**
- **The plant can be a skin allergen**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Pitahaya

*Lemaireocereus thurberi* - Cactaceae

- **Tea made from the plant used to treat diabetes**
- **Snakebite (unproven treatment)**
- **Stings**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Plátano, Banana *Musa sapientum*

## Musaceae

- **Fruit is used to treat gall bladder ailments and diarrhea**
- **Fruit peel decoction taken as tea**
- **Fruit is rich source of potassium and carbohydrates**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Pongolote** *Cochliospermum vitifolium* Cochlospermaceae

- **Enemas (bark decoction) for digestive problems and body cleansing**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Puán** *Muntingia calabura* Eleocarpaceae

- **A decoction made from the plant is used externally to treat measles, urticaria and skin infections**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Quelite, Bledo, Lamb's quarters** *Amaranthus hybridus* - Amaranthaceae

- **Tea made from the plant is used to treat diarrhea and intestinal - hemorrhages**
- **Leaves are edible, but may contain oxalates**
- **Externally, the leaves are applied as a poultice to treat skin infections**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*



# Quiebra muelas, Milkweed

*Asclepias curassavica* - Asclepiadaceae

- Boils (leaf poultice applied topically)
- Toothache (latex applied topically)
- Avoid internal use, potentially toxic



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Ramón *Brosimum alicastrum*

## Moraceae

- Boils (bark decoction as tea or wash)
- Coughs
- Kidney pain (leaf decoction as tea)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Roble *Tabebuia rosea* Bignoniaceae

- **Callous feet (bark applied topically)**
- **Fever**
- **Rheumatism**  
(branch decoction applied as bath)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Salvia, Sage

*Salvia spp.* - Lamiaceae

- Tea from leaves is used to treat menstrual problems such as hot flashes in menopause
- Topically as skin antiseptic
- Avoid in pregnancy and lactation



# Salvia, Sage

- **Essential oil is neurotoxic, avoid in epilepsy**
- **Avoid in patients with high blood pressure**
- **Avoid in small children**



# Sangre de drago, Sangregrado

*Jatropha dioica* - Euphorbiaceae

- Applied topically for alopecia and dandruff
- Branch decoction as rinse or mouthwash
- Avoid internally
- Drastic purgative



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Sangre de grado

*Croton draco* - Euphorbiaceae

- Latex from the branch and fruit applied topically to treat candidiasis and stomatitis
- Avoid internally
- Drastic purgative



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Saúco, Mexican elder

*Sambucus mexicana* - Caprifoliaceae

- Arthritis and rheumatism (leaves-externally)
- Coughs, bronchitis (flowers-infusion)
- Expectorant
- Whooping cough



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*



# Saúco, Elder

- **Unripe berries may cause digestive upset (diarrhea, vomiting)**
- **Avoid bark, root or berries in small children, as well as during pregnancy and lactation**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Sávila, Zábila, Aloe

*Aloe spp.* - Liliaceae

- Gel is emollient and used topically for skin cuts, infections and burns (usually safe)
- Latex is purgative, used to treat constipation and diabetes, but may cause toxicity



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Sávila, Zábila, Aloe

- Leaf preparations may cause uterine contractions, avoid in pregnancy and lactation
- Avoid internally, it may be irritating to intestine and kidneys



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Tabachín *Caesalpinia pulcherrima* Fabaceae

- Flower infusion (tea) is used to treat coughs and a condition known as “Oguío”



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Tabaco coyote, Wild tobacco

*Nicotiana glauca* - Solanaceae

- **Arthritis (topical)**
- **Asthma (smoked)**
- **Fever (leaves applied on stomach)**
- **Headache (leaves applied on temples)**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Tabaco coyote, T. cimarron

- **Contains nicotine**
- **Avoid in pregnancy, lactation, and in small children**

# **Taray** *Eysenhardtia polystachya* Leguminosae

- The bark is used as a tea (diuretic)

# Táscate, Juniper

*Juniperus deppeana* - Pinaceae

- **Neuralgia –  
rheumatism (topical)**
- **Nocturnal enuresis in  
children**
- **Avoid in pregnancy  
and lactation**
- **Avoid internal use**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*



# Tatachinole

*Tournefortia hartwegiana* - Boraginaceae

- A decoction from the roots is taken to treat coughs, kidney stones, parasites and rheumatism



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Tepescohuite

*Mimosa tenuiflora* - Fabaceae

- Burns, wounds  
(pulverized bark,  
applied topically)
- Gastritis, ulcers  
(bark decoction as  
tea)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Texcalama, Amate

## *Ficus petiolaris* - Moraceae

- Chest pains
- Emetic (root)
- Fractures (topical)
- Cathartic
- Stomatitis (latex)
- Emetic (root)
- Avoid in pregnancy



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Tlachichinole *Kohleria deppeana* Gesneraceae

- A tea made from the branches is taken to treat gastrointestinal inflammation and kidney pain



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Tlatlancuaya** *Irisine celosia* Amaranthaceae

- **Anti inflammatory**
- **Diaphoretic**
- **Fever**
- **Insect bites**
- **Typhoid fever**
- **Typhus**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Toje** *Phoradendron californicum* Loranthaceae

- **Used to treat boils, diarrhea and venereal disease**
- **Potentially toxic**
- **Avoid in pregnancy**
- **May cause hypotension**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Toloache** *Datura stramonium*

## **Solanaceae**

- **Asthma ( smoked as cigarettes)**
- **Applied topically for skin boils**
- **Hallucinogenic (seeds)**
- **Rheumatism (topical)**
- **Used in ethnic rituals**
- **Toxic, Avoid Use**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# **Tronador** *Kalanchoe pinnata* Crassulaceae

- **African plant**
- 
- **Anti inflammatory**
- **Burns (topically)**



# **Tulipán** *Hibiscus sinensis* Malvaceae

- “Ascedio”
- **Candidiasis (thrush)**

# Tulipán de monte

*Malvaviscus arboreus* - Malvaceae

- **Dysentery**
- **Gall bladder ailments**
- **Stomachache**

# Tumbavaqueros *Ipomoea stans*

## Convolvulaceae

- **Epilepsy**
- **Hepatitis**
- **Nervousness**
- **Root decoction**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Uña de gato *Martynia annua* Martyniaceae

- Epilepsy (seed decoction)
- Unrelated to plant from South America with the same common name (*Uncaria tomentosa*)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Vara Blanca

*Croton fragilis* - Euphorbiaceae

- **Diarrhea**
- **Purgative**
- **Stomach upset**
- **Malaria**  
(bark decoction as tea)



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Wereke, Guareque

## *Ibervillea sonorae* - Cucurbitaceae

- **The dried root is used to make a decoction to treat diabetes**
- **Pulverized root is applied to skin as an antiseptic**
- **Avoid in pregnancy and lactation**



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Zapo, Lomboy blanco

## *Jatropha cinerea* - Euphorbiaceae

- **Scabs and skin infections (leaf decoction)**
- **Candidiasis (rinse)**
- **Sap purgative**
- **Avoid in pregnancy**

# Zapote blanco, White sapota

## Casimiroa edulis - Rutaceae

- A decoction of the seeds and leaves is used to treat insomnia and high blood pressure
- Seeds are hypnotic; toxic in large doses
- Avoid in pregnancy



Photo courtesy of *Mexico Desconocido Magazine*



# Zacatechichi *Calea zacatechichi*

## Asteraceae

- Tea from the leaves promotes appetite and is also used to treat fever and stomach ailments, such as colic, and diarrhea



*Photo Courtesy of México Desconocido Magazine*

# Zoapatle, Cíhuatlpatli

- **Tea from the leaves is used to promote labor and as a contraceptive**
- **Avoid in pregnancy and lactation (potentially toxic to both mother and child)**
- **Avoid internally**



Photo by Dr. Robert Bye,  
from *Plantas de México al Mundo*

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