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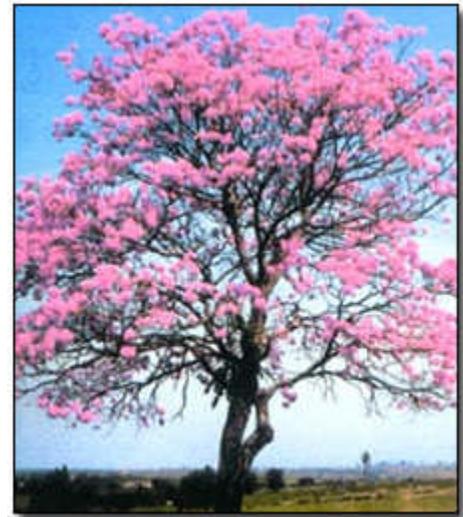
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News You Can Use

Pau d'arco

The native Indians of Brazil, northern Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia and other South American countries have used lapacho for medicinal purposes for thousands of years; there are indications that its use may actually predate the Incas. Throughout South America, tribes living thousands of miles apart have employed it for the same medicinal purposes for hundreds of years.

Pau d'arco is recorded to be used by forest inhabitants throughout the Amazon for malaria, anemia, colitis, respiratory problems, colds, cough, flu, fungal infections, fever, arthritis and rheumatism, snakebite, poor circulation, boils, syphilis, and cancer. Pau d'arco also has a long history in herbal medicine around the world.



In North American herbal medicine, pau d'arco is considered to be analgesic, antioxidant, antiparasitic, antimicrobial, antifungal, antiviral, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, and laxative, as well as to have anticancerous properties. It is used for fevers, infections, colds, flu, syphilis, urinary tract infections, cancer, respiratory problems, skin ulcerations, boils, dysentery, gastrointestinal problems of all kinds, arthritis, prostatitis, and circulation disturbances.

Pau d'arco also is employed in herbal medicine systems in the United States for lupus, diabetes, ulcers, leukemia, allergies, liver disease, Hodgkin's disease, osteomyelitis, Parkinson's disease, and psoriasis, and is a popular natural remedy for candida and yeast infections. The recorded uses in European herbal medicine systems reveal that it is used in much the same way as in the United States, and for the same conditions.

Pau d'arco bark has active principles, mainly lapachol, quercetin and other flavonoids. One of the active ingredients and the one from which most of the research has centered is lapachol. Lapachol concentration typically is 2–7% in true pau d'arco. Most of the chemical analyses of lapacho have been performed on the heartwood of the tree, however the part of the tree that is

most potent and consistent is within the bark structure. It is the phloem (pronounced floam) or inner lining of the bark, which is used medicinally. Assuming that the living bark contains a similar set of active constituents as the heartwood plus some others that make it more effective accounts for the living bark's greater popularity as a folk medicine. Traditionally, it is the living bark of a plant, especially a tree or shrub, that is used medicinally--not the heartwood. The reason is that the nutrients and representative families of chemical substances used to sustain the life of the tree are found in greatest concentration in the cambium layer and phloem of the living bark.



Lapacho is applied externally and internally for the treatment of fevers, infections, colds, flu, syphilis, cancer, respiratory problems, skin ulcerations and boils, dysentery, gastro-intestinal problems of all kinds, debilitating conditions such as arthritis and prostatitis, and circulation disturbances. Other conditions have reportedly been cured with lapacho including lupus, diabetes, Hodgkins disease, osteomyelitis, Parkinson's disease, and psoriasis.

The following is a summary of some of the effects of lapacho and/or any of its constituents that have been validated by modern research:

1. **Laxative effect.** Regular use of lapacho will maintain regularity of bowel movements. Users of lapacho universally report a pleasant and moderate loosening of the bowels that leads to greater regularity without any unpleasant side-effects such as diarrhea.
2. **Anti-cancer effect.** The absence of side effects makes lapacho a treatment of choice even in conjunction with standard forms of therapy. Naturally, any and all treatment of a cancerous condition should be done under the supervision of a qualified physician.

Some constituents or groups of constituents of lapacho have indeed been found to suppress tumor formation and reduce tumor viability, both in experimental animal trials and in clinical settings involving human patients. Leukemia has proven particularly susceptible to the application of lapacho and several of its constituents. Some researchers feel that lapachol is one of the most important anti-tumor agents in the entire world.

3. **Anti-oxidant effect.** In vitro trials show definite inhibition of free radicals and inflammatory leukotrienes by lapacho constituents. This property might underlie the effectiveness of lapacho against skin cancer, and definitely helps to explain observed anti-aging effects. Modern science has recently uncovered the importance of free radicals in the generation of many debilitating diseases, from cancer to arthritis. These molecules are even heavily implicated in the normal aging process. Reversing their action has become big business in world health circles. Anti-oxidants, or free-radical scavengers, have emerged as premier candidates for the role of healers and disease-preventers. Among the antioxidants few have greater potency than lapacho and other constituents of lapacho.

4. **Analgesic effect.** As a primary modality for lessening the pain associated with several kinds

of cancer, especially cancer of the prostate, liver or breast. Arthritic pain has also been relieved with lapacho ingestion.

5. **Antimicrobial/anti-parasitidal effects.** includes inhibition and destruction of bacteria, yeasts, fungi, viruses and several kinds of parasites. Two troublesome families of viruses inhibited by lapachol are noteworthy: Herpes viruses and HIV's. The anti malarial activity of lapacho spawned a great deal of research interest in the early decades of this century. Pau d'arco is also confirmed as being an antiparasitic against various parasites, including: malaria, schistosoma, and trypanosoma.

6. **Anti-fungal effect.** Lapacho is often singled out as the premier treatment for Candida or yeast infections.

7. **Anti-inflammatory.** The anti-inflammatory action of lapacho might account for its observed tendency to reduce the pain, inflammation and other symptoms of arthritis. Anecdotal accounts of complete cures are even available.

8. **Other beneficial effects.** Routine screenings have revealed several minor properties of lapacho that might occur if needed in certain individuals: diuretic, sedative, decongestant, and hypotensive, to name a few.

One of the strongest actions of lapacho is against viruses. The range of viruses inactivated by lapacho extends from those that cause the common cold to those that are responsible for AIDS. It has been shown to actively inhibit, kill or stunt the growth of several dangerous viruses, including herpes virus hominis types I and II, polio virus, vesicular stomatitis virus, avian myeloblastosis virus, rouscho murine leukemia virus, friend virus, and rous sarcoma virus.



Some plants, such as yerbamate, contain sulfurous compounds which, when combined with lapacho, might provide a catalyst for transformation of lapachol to beta-lapachone. Due to this, the effectiveness of lapacho as an anti-viral agent may be increased when an herb or plant, such as yerbamate, is applied in addition to the Pau d'arco.

Lack of quality control at every stage of the enterprise of producing Pau d'arco, from gathering to processing and shipping indicates that one must exercise extraordinary care in your purchases of Pau d'arco or lapacho. Generally speaking, the best lapacho will be obtained from manufacturers specializing in this herb.



Some texts distinguish between red and purple lapacho with recent evidence suggesting that these two varieties of lapacho possess superior medicinal properties, with a slight bow going to the purple as the best of all.

There have been no reports of human toxicity when a whole-bark decoction or tincture of pau d'arco is used. The FDA gave lapacho a clean bill of health in 1981.

Drug Interactions: None reported.

Yours in Good Health!

Sincerely,

Dr. Jack and Chris Ritchason
Back to Herbs Team

References:

<http://www.paudarco.org/>

<http://www.pau-d-arco.com/Dr.Mowry.html>

<http://www.rain-tree.com/paudarco.htm>

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