

MEDICINAL PLANTS:**MEDICINAL AND USEFUL PLANTS OF ALAGOAS**

This project, which aims to recover and test popular knowledge about medicinal plants in Alagoas, is a collaborative venture between the Chemistry Department of the Federal University of Alagoas (UFAL) and the Herbarium in the Environmental Institute of the State of Alagoas (IMA). The principle investigators are Antônio Euzébio Goulart Sant'Ana, Rosângela P. de Lyra Lemos, Lucia Maria Conserva, Lucia Maria Cunha Rebouças and Margarida Maria dos Santos Humberto.

The first phase of the project is an ethnobotanical survey based upon interviews with local healers, indigenous herb-alists and local users using questionnaires designed to maximise the objectivity of the information obtained and to counter the well documented confounding factors that beset such studies.

Voucher specimens have always been taken for reference purposes and are housed in the Herbarium (MAC) of IMA. So far 207 different species (both native and cultivated) from 74 families have been identified as being used for medicinal purposes within Alagoas. "Barbatimão" (*Pithecellobium avaremotemo*) and "sambacaitá" (*Hyptis pectinata*) are the two most frequently employed species.

Profa Lúcia Maria C. Rebouças testing

Data from the collections and the associated interviews are stored in a database.

A medicinal plant garden has been installed within the campus of UFAL as a first step towards the implementation of a 'living pharmacy' pro-gramme along the lines established by Prof. A. Matos in Ceará in another Plantas do Nordeste project. This pro-gramme aims to encourage the use of native medicinal plants, of proven pharmacological efficacy, among local communities.

Evaluation of the efficacy of a reported medicinal use for a given plant is relatively simple in those cases for which the pharmacological effect is well defined. This has been a key element in the choice of ten species for more detailed

plants of potential medicinal use.

phyto-chemical study aimed at determining their active components. Plants are currently being grown at UFAL both for experimental study and as a possible future source of plants of proven medicinal value for community based medicinal plant gardens.

The project will publish an illustrated manual to publicise, in as simple a fashion as possible, the use of the better known plants in Alagoas. This manual will include the common name of each plant with information about its distribution and a brief description alongside indications as to when and how the plant should be used. This will contribute to maintaining and disseminating popular knowledge about the use of medicinal plants.

General Coordinator for PNE

We are delighted to welcome Dr Fernando Dantas Araújo as Coordinator for PNE in Brazil. Over the next few months I shall be handing over responsibility to Fernando for management and development of PNE as part of our effort to establish formally PNE in Brazil.

We have been working together since August and are now touring all PNE projects. The initial phase of the handover process will be completed by March 1996. Fernando will set up an office in Recife and, over the next few months, will concentrate on organising the Editorial Committee for publications. He will also help develop new project proposals, prepare for a PNE conference in March 1996, initiate fundraising within Brazil and organise the appointment of an administrator

PNE General Coordinators Dr Araújo

to take financial and administrative responsibility for PNE. Dr Araújo is a forest ecologist. He recently completed his PhD on *Caryocar brasiliense* (Piqui tree from the cerrados) at the Oxford Forestry Institute, UK.

(BR) and Karen Pipe-Wolferstan (UK)

After completing his first degree at the Universidade de Brasília, he worked for 16 months with Cimetel in forest production and research management and also helped to establish the 'Bioma Cerrado' project at the University.

KPW

Funding for Information, Dissemination and Training

◆ Excellent progress has been made towards obtaining major funding for the PNE Information, Dissemination and Training Subprogramme (IDTS). The IDTS team - Everardo Sampaio, Isabel Christina Machado, Edson Carvalho (Universidade Federal de Pernambuco) and Pablo Siderski (Assessoria e Serviços a Projetos em Agricultura Alternativa), with Bob Allkin (RBG Kew) - wrote a final proposal early in 1995. This was approved by CNPq who have also agreed to act as Administrative Authority for the Subprogramme.

This proposal was submitted, via the PNE Association, to the Agência Brasileira de Cooperação (ABC) in Itamaraty. ABC has given Brazilian Government approval and passed the proposal to the Overseas Development Administration (ODA), UK, for consideration for funding from the bilateral aid programme.

In brief, the proposal includes:

- a documentation centre on the natural resources of NE Brazil
- repatriation to NE Brazil of information from RBG Kew and other European institutes
- technology transfer and capacity building including a major training programme in project, data and resource management
- an extensive dissemination programme aimed at technical audiences (e.g. development agencies) and rural communities

The final step to secure funding is to be an evaluation visit by ODA and ABC technical representatives to NE Brazil in November or December this year.

Medicinal Plant Descriptors

✠ The PNE Medicinal Plant Workshop in Maceió this April offered an opportunity to discuss development of the Medicinal Plant Descriptor Standard. PNE participants and invited specialists from elsewhere in Brazil took part in the debate and agreed that the current

Standard met our immediate purpose but could be improved by allowance for the different needs of different types of project. Two working groups were established: the first (Evani Araújo, Rinalda A. G. Oliveira, Fábio Correia Sampaio and Euclides Lara Cardoso Júnior) will develop the Standard for use in projects primarily concerned with the popular use of plants while the second (Prof. Lapa, Escola Paulista de Medicina and Prof. Matos, UFC, Fortaleza) will develop a parallel list for use in laboratory based projects.

Courses in species database management

◆ Bob Allkin ran a PNE database course in February at the Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco, Recife. There were 16 participants - with at least one representative from all but one of our current PNE projects. PNE's information strategy and data standards were covered as well as use of the Alice database system.

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Practical sessions were interspersed with background talks, demonstrations and theoretical sessions. Open discussions gave participants the chance to make suggestions and exchange ideas with one another. The course was a great success, with everyone (including Bob) learning a great deal!

Many thanks to Mari Rodal and Carmen Zickel (the organisational team at UFRPE) for their fantastic support and to Teonildes Nunes (UEFS) and Eduardo Dalcin (Botanical Garden, Rio de Janeiro) for their technical help with training sessions.

✠ People and Plants Initiative

Ethnobotany and Sustainable Use of Plant Resources

WWF, UNESCO and The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew started the PPI in July 1992. The aim is to contribute to the sustainable and equitable use of plant resources by promoting community based ethnobotanical work in the humid tropics.

Current activities include field projects, training workshops and publications. Field work concentrates on Biosphere Reserves, World Heritage Sites and other protected areas.

The PPI offers workshops for ethnobotanical training and discussion of ethical issues (e.g. the exploitation of botanical resources in developing countries). PPI also distributes scientific and popular literature, including working papers and practical manuals in resource harvesting and related topics.

A project is underway to produce a *People and Plants Handbook*, containing information on programmes, foundations, societies and publications associated with wild plant resources, conservation and community development. It aims to encourage collaboration and exchange of information.

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✠ PNE Biodiversity Workshop for the Identification of Botanical Material.

The PNE - Biodiversity Subprogramme, Dr Maria Regina V. Barbosa (UFPB) and Dr Simon Mayo (UFPE, RBG Kew) in collaboration with the Herbarium of Empresa Pernambucana de Pesquisa Agropecuária (IPA; Rita de Cássia A. Pereira, Curadora) - organised the first workshop for the identification of botanical material in August in Recife. Others involved were: Valdelice C. Lima, Maria Olívia de O. Cano, Lúcia C. de Lira (IPA; PE), Maria Edileide A. Oliveira, Marlene F. Mata, José Luciano S de Lima, André G. Fotius (EMBRAPA), Marcus Vinícius Alves (UFPE), Maria de Fátima Agra and Emerson Antônio R. M. de Lucena (LTF/UFPB). Simon also took the opportunity to discuss the PNE Biodiversity Strategy. Following the success of this workshop future meetings will be planned.

SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

✠ Flora of the Pico das Almas

Chapada Diamantina, Brazil, by Brian Stannard (Ed.) 1995 RBG Kew. c.600pp.

This volume details the vascular plants of Pico das Almas, in Central Bahia, Brazil. It rises to over 1900 m above sea-level, with the Flora area occupying approx. 170 sq. km. Since 1974, over 1200 species have been recorded, of which over 80 (c.7%) were previously unknown.

This volume is a product of collaborative research by botanists from Kew and São Paulo and other internationally known experts. It includes taxonomic accounts, detailed descriptions with keys of all the vascular species recorded, a list of bryophytes and a wealth of line drawings to aid identification of many of the species by botanical artist, Mark Fothergill.

To order write to:
Mail Order Service, RBG, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AE, U.K. Price £36.00 (£41.40 including 15% for packing and postage).

To Kew and PNE

✠ Baroness Chalker (Minister for Overseas Development) and Andrew Bennett (Chief Natural Resources Adviser, ODA) visited the Herbarium and Centre for Economic Botany at Kew on 23 August. They learnt about some of Kew's projects and saw a presentation of PNE and the IDTS proposal by Bob Allkin (see page 2).

✠ Dr Margareth Sales (Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco - UFRPE) is working within the Herbarium from 15/08/95 to 15/10/95 on the identification of material from the PNE project "Brejos de Pernambuco" (Darwin Initiative funding).

✠ Dr Maria P. Socorro do Nas-cimento (EMBRAPA, Teresina/PI), is working on the identification of selected forage species and the study of germination of *Gramineae* at the Kew Seed Bank, Wakehurst Place from 10/09/95 to 10/12/95.

✠ Dr Mari Rodal (UFRPE), will be working on the identification of specimens from the Brejo project and at the Department of Botany in the Natural History Museum to be trained by Dr Chris Humphries and Dr Paul William on the use of their Worldmap software from 01/10/95 to 01/11/95.

The PNE team based at Kew would like to thank Mrs Adriana A.R. Menezes from MZUSP/ São Paulo for her invaluable help to PNE. She is presently living in London

WHAT IS PNE?

PNE is a multidisciplinary research programme contributing to the identification and sustainable use of plant resources in the Northeast region of Brazil. PNE combines conservation and improvement of ecosystems with positive socio-economic benefit to the local community.

PNE raises funds independently to support its activities.

Please direct any comments or contributions to this publication to Amélia B. Baracat, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Tel:+44 (0) 181 332 5718 Fax: +44 (0) 181 332 5740 Email: a.baracat@rbgkew.org.uk