

Muira Puama

Family: Olacaceae

Genus: *Ptychopetalum*

Species: *olacoides*

Common Names: Bois de la Puissance, Bois de la Puissance Sexuelle, Marapuama, Muira-Puama, Muirapuama, Potency Wood, Ptychopetali lignum, *Ptychopetalum olacoides*, *Ptychopetalum uncinatum*.

Part Used: Bark and root

Description

Muira puama, also called "potency wood," is a small tree that grows to 5 m high and is native to the Brazilian Amazon and other parts of the Amazon rainforest. The small, white flowers have a pungent fragrance similar to jasmine's. The *Ptychopetalum* genus is a small one - only two species of small trees grow in tropical South America and five in tropical Africa. The two South American varieties, *P. olacoides* (found in Brazil, French Guiana, Guyana, and Suriname) and *P. uncinatum* (found only in Brazil), are used interchangeably in South American herbal medicine systems. The *olacoides* variety is usually preferred, as it has a higher content of lupeol (one of the plant's active phytochemicals). A completely different species of Brazilian tree, *Liriosma ovata*, also goes by the common name of muira puama (and is often sold in commerce as such); however, it is a completely different tree with a different phytochemical makeup.

Health Benefits

May Relieve Depression

As reported by Life Extension Magazine, muira puama has a long history of use by Amazonian people to treat various maladies. They use it to relieve stress, among other things. A 2008 study by Brazilian researchers comparing muira puama to the antidepressant drug imipramine demonstrated them to be equally effective in relieving the symptoms of depression. Researchers have also found little adverse effects from using muira puama, according to Life

Extension. Check with a licensed therapist or your doctor before taking muira puama to relieve depression.

Can Improve Memory

Life Extension also reports that muira puama might help improve memory among older people. In a 2004 study conducted by Brazilian researchers, aging rats treated with muira puama performed as well as adult mice. Researchers theorize muira puama may be effective due to inhibiting acetylcholinesterase. Acetylcholinesterase is an that enzyme breaks down the important neurotransmitter acetylcholine, necessary for memory and cognition. By protecting acetylcholine, muira puama might have therapeutic value for memory or cognition-impaired people. If you're on an acetylcholinesterase inhibitor such as donepezil, consult a physician before taking any natural remedy such as muira puama.

Reputed to Improve Sexual Performance

An article in Nutrition Review says muira puama has long been used as an aphrodisiac in South America. Clinical studies confirm the plant improves sexual function, including the ability to get an erection and arousal. A 1995 study at the Institute of Sexology in Paris under the supervision of Dr. Jacques Waynberg showed significant improvement in 51 percent of participants with erectile dysfunction. Also, 62 percent of the men in the group greatly increased their libido, or sexual desire, according to the researchers. In another study conducted in 1990 by Dr. Waynberg, 66 percent of the men reported an increase in the frequency of sexual intercourse. If you intend to take muira puama to increase your sexual desire or help maintain an erection, consult a licensed health care practitioner first.

Side Effects

It is not known if muira puama is safe or what the possible side effects might be.

Special Precautions & Warnings

Pregnancy and breast-feeding: Not enough is known about the use of muira puama during pregnancy and breast-feeding. Stay on the safe side and avoid use.

References

1. [http://herbswiki.org/index.php?title=Muirapuama_\(Liriosma_ovata\)](http://herbswiki.org/index.php?title=Muirapuama_(Liriosma_ovata))
2. <http://www.rain-tree.com/muirapuama.htm#.Vyb1kNJ97IV>