

Title:

Caribbean Medicinal Teas and Bush Baths

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Abstract:

The diverse history of Caribbean peoples has led to a rich cultural identity vibrantly expressed in artistic expression and tradition. The biodiversity of the Caribbean archipelago has fostered an intimate relationship between plants and people as it provided the fabric and blue print for sustainable living. The ubiquitous reliance on plants for food, shelter, craft and medicine, framed a tradition still practiced by many in the Caribbean. Many common species are esteemed for their healing powers and are administered in the form of teas for detoxification or as baths in ritual cleansing. There is a folk song that captures the folklore and heritage of plant usage in Jamaica. Plants named in this song include Lemon grass, Minnie root, Gully root, Man piaba and Woman piaba.

These names show variations along the archipelago but the richness of the tradition is evident in all pharmacopeia. Medicinal teas are used for chronic and common ailments such as diabetes, high blood pressure, colds and flu. They are also thought essential as a strategy for good health and long living in cleansing and detoxification of the body. Herbal baths are used for respiratory ailments, skin lesions or alleviating the body of ill will that could lead to prolonged disease. Knowledge sharing of this diverse and colourful Caribbean tradition will be the focus of this workshop.

Key words: Tradition, heritage, medicinal plants, evaluation

Learning objectives:

Participants will

- be introduced to the common and scientific names of selected plants used for medicinal teas and herbal baths in the Caribbean
- analyse of the folksong which describes common plants in the Caribbean pharmacopoeia that would have been traded by village matriarchs:

***“She had Man Piaba, Woman Piaba
Tom Tom Fall Back and Lemon Grass,
Minnie Root, Gully Root, Granny Backbone,
Dead Man Git Up and Live On turro,
Coolie Bitter and Gorina Bush and old
Compellance Weed, Sweet Broom,
Cow Tongue, Granny Scratch Scratch,
Belly Pusherm and Guzu Weed.”***

- become familiar with the organoleptic properties of the dried plant material used in preparing medicinal teas and herbal baths
- be exposed to methods of preparation of medicinal teas and herbal baths with accompanying evaluation exercises.

Timeframe:

Preparation of instructional materials:

Plant material should be acquired dried. Allocate approximately 60 minutes to set up the facilitation of the workshop.

Activity including introduction/background and hands on practice should be allocated between 120 – 180 minutes.

List of materials:

Dried plant material:–

Lemon grass leaf – *Cymbopogon citratus*

Gully root – *Petiveria alliacea*

Man piaba – *Leonotis nepetifolia*

Woman piaba – *Hyptis pectinata*

Wonder-of-the-world – *Kalanchoe pinnata* syn *Brophyllum pinnatum*

Jack-in-the-bush – *Chromolaena odorata* syn *Eupatorium odoratum*

Sour sop – *Annona muricata*

Christmas candle – *Cassia alata*

Bay leaf – *Pimenta racemosa*

Ginger – *Zingerberaceae*

Broad-leaved-thyme - *Plectranthus amboinicus* syn *Coleus amboinicus* syn *Coleus aromaticus*

Lime – *Citrus aurantiifolia*

- Empty tea bags
- Kettle
- Plastic/styrofoam cups and spoons
- Sweetening agent – sugar/honey (optional)
- Bowls to simulate herbal bath
- Almond oil

Procedure and general instructions (for instructor).**Powerpoint Presentation**

A presentation on plants of the Caribbean Pharmacopoeia is required. Each of the selected species will be identified taxonomically, by common name, physical characteristics and phytochemistry related to their applications. The presentation will also include an analysis of the 'Weed Song' by Bill Rogers in terms of the historical and socioeconomic relevance in the Caribbean.

Activity

The organoleptic properties of each selected species will be discussed in relation to applications. Participants/students will be allowed to interact with the plant material with an exercise on the aromatic principles. This will involve:

- Maceration of leaves to release the characteristic exudates and rating in terms of the aroma ratings.
- Preparation of samples of one component and two component tea formulations with sensory evaluation for the basic principles of taste and acceptability
- Analysis of the sensory herbal and tea evaluation in relation to the medicinal principles indicated and the detection limits

Sensory Evaluation Exercise

Part I - Each participant should be provided with samples of the dried plant material, for the herbal sensory evaluation. The dried herbs will be assessed for their aromas in the categories of fruity, lemony, floral, spicy and woody. A hedonic rating system will be used as the rating guide. See the **Herbal Sensory Evaluation Form** provided. Participants will then select herbs, based on their rating system to simulate herbal bath and massage oil preparations.

Part II - Teas will be prepared by the infusion of tea bags and each participant provided with samples of single component teas for evaluation of properties including colour, aroma, flavour, after taste, astringency, sweetness, sourness, bitterness, saltiness and overall acceptability. See **Tea Sensory Evaluation Form** provided. Unknown multicomponent formulations will then be provided for identification by the participants using their personal rating system.

The results of the sensory exercise will then be discussed in relation to medicinal principles indicated.

Sweetness – Hydroxylated natural products such as polyphenols, some amino acids;

Bitterness – Alkaloids e.g caffeine, glycosides, tannins; **Sourness** – Organic acids including cinnamic acids (generally, the higher the sour rating the higher the molecular complexity)

Appendix I(a)**Man Piaba - performed by Harry Belafonte (Adapted from the 'Weed Song' by Bill Rogers)**

When I was a lad of three-foot-three
Certain questions occurred to me,
So I asked me father quite seriously
To tell me the story 'bout the bird and bee.
He stammered and he stuttered pathetically
And this is what he said to me.

He said, "The woman piaba and the man piaba
and the Ton Ton call baka lemon grass,
The lily root, gully root, belly root uhmm,
And the famous grandy scratch scratch.

It was clear as mud but it covered the ground
And the confusion made the brain go 'round.
I went and ask a good friend of mine,
Known to the world as Albert Einstein.
He said "Son, from the beginning of time and creativity
There existed the force of relativity
Pi r square and a minus ten means a routine only when
The solar system in one light year
Make the Hayden planetarium disappear
So if Mt Everest doesn't move
I am positive that it will prove

That the woman piaba and the man piaba
And the Ton Ton call baka lemon grass,
The lily root, gully root, belly root uhmm,
And the famous grandy scratch scratch.

It was clear as mud but it covered the ground
And the confusion made the brain go 'round.
I grabbed a boat and went abroad
In Baden Baden asked Sigmund Freud
He said "Son, from your sad face remove the grouch
Put the body down up on the couch
I can see from your frustration a neurotic sublimation
Hey love and hate is psychosomatic
Your Rorsach shows that you're a peri pathetic
It all started with a broken sibling
In the words of the famous Rudyard Kipling

That the woman piaba and the man piaba
And the Ton Ton call baka lemon grass,
The lily root, gully root, belly root uhmm,
And the famous grandy scratch scratch.

Well I traveled far and I traveled wide
And I don't even have me self a bride
All the great men upon this earth
Have confused me since my birth
I've been over land and been over sea
Trying to find answer 'bout the bird and bee
But now that I am ninety three
I don't give a darn you see

If the woman piaba and the man piaba
And the Ton Ton call baka lemon grass,
The lily root, gully root, belly root uhmm,
And the famous grandy scratch scratch.

I(b) THE ORIGINAL WEED SONG BY BILL ROGERS (AUGUSTUS HINDS)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00wXT7Ksv6E&feature=player_embedded

Appendix - III

Reference list

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