

QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The search for treasures derived from jungle pharmacopeia is a practice funded by almost every major pharmaceutical company in the world. Call it bio-piracy or bio-prospecting, each company has its own branch of researchers combing the tropical forests of the world, often in secret. Indigenous people have gradually become aware of this and are rightfully seeking injunctions to keep multinational drug companies from patenting their traditional formulations. Most of these formulas are actually empirically verified treatments which native people have refined after countless decades of active research and development. At ATL we believe naturally occurring phytochemicals found in plants should never be ‘owned’ by any one company. We strive to develop an equitable approach to cooperate with indigenous leaders in the marketing and cultivation of the plants and remedies which they, and their ancestors, have developed.



Nursery beds are set up for the cultivation of natural botanical trees and shrubs. The young trees are then transplanted back into the forest, or at the edge of grasslands where logging by timber companies or ranching has destroyed the jungle cover.



Dr. Barrantes and Dr. Maximo Aedo (top), tend germplasm and genetic material in vivo. Plants such as these were developed by the Inca and other pre-Columbian cultures over decades of natural selective harvest in the Andes mountains (left). Careful techniques such as co-management direct planting under the forest canopy, mimics exactly the growing conditions of sensitive, rare botanicals.

MATERIA PRIMA! EXTRA FINE RAW MATERIAL

Our raw materials are derived from organically certified farms or wildcrafted under our ‘Sustainable Harvest’™ label. In many regions of the Amazon and Andes, we continue to work with indigenous groups who cultivate endemic medicines in their original, native habitat. In South America many of our staff botanists are leading taxonomic botanists. They maintain collections of plant vouchers, chemical analysis, botanical specimens and a database which is unparalleled in North America. Today, our network of growers and wildcrafters supply the freshest and finest medicinal plants in the industry.

Cultivation techniques for a sustainable yield are time practiced against the Amazon’s demanding conditions. Lands once damaged by logging, erosion and cattle ranching are now planted in native medical herbs for export to our laboratories. Here, Amazon Smilax and other herbs are introduced from the wild into garden beds for a more regulated control of harvest.

Proper Preservation Techniques:
We work with small lots that are fresh harvested by master herbalists to impart the strongest therapeutic benefits. Our team members have knowledge of climates, soils and appropriate harvesting and preservation techniques.



ETHICS AND EFFICACY

Voucher specimens of botanicals (top and below) are kept in herbarium collections in order to verify species and to note the distribution and habitat ranges of each species. This data base is also valued for ethnobotanical studies long after traditional peoples have stopped using the native plants or altered their living habits. Today, environmental and cultural pressures contribute directly to the loss of indigenous heritage. This almost always includes the loss of medicinal plants and priceless ethnobotanical data. This hard-won data has been empirically proven after centuries of diligent studies by indigenous physicians who lived in contact with the natural ambiance.



When a new chemical is identified in nature, some laboratories seek ways to synthesize the drug in their laboratories. Once the botanical has been rendered into a synthetic substance, ownership can be claimed by issuing a technical or application patent. Sole rights over the distribution of this ‘new drug’ and even the proprietary rights over the treatment for particular ailments, have thusly been transferred from a botanical medicine of world heritage origins, to a ‘wholly-owned new drug’ placed in the hands of a single company. Some pharmaceutical companies continue to lobby against traditional medicines while at the same time they search the jungles and bio-prospect raw materials, attempting to copy and patent chemicals which are found within the traditional herbs. Countries such as Brazil, Peru and India are now leading the charge to help protect their indigenous intellectual property rights. Amazon Therapeutic Laboratories participates in South American congressional meetings to help find equitable solutions to this growing dilemma.

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