

Utilization of Medicinal and Edible Plants in Brazil (5)

Shunsuke Inoue and Goro Hashimoto

Centro de Pesquisas de Historia Natural

Rua Jaime Ribeiro Wright, 618, Sao Paulo, Brasil

Summary

Brazil, located on the opposite side of the Earth from Japan, covers a vast land crossing over the equator, ranging from N.L. 5° to S.L. 33°. It consists of a great variety of ecosystems, from tropical rain forests to temperate climate, making this country extremely rich in biodiversity. There are approximately 40,000 species of wild plants, which accounts for about 10% of all species existing on the planet.

More than 3000 species of medicinal plants are utilized in Brazil including approximately 2000 wild species. Therefore, Brazil is a treasure house of medicinal plants.

Since its discovery by Cabral, a Portuguese navigator, in 1500, a large number of immigrants have come to Brazil, mostly from Europe and Japan. Additionally, many Africans have been brought by force to Brazil as slaves, making Brazil a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country.

Because of this racial diversity, medicinal plants are utilized in various ways, depending on the ethnic groups, and the species used are distinct in each region.

Here I report the medicinal and edible plants utilized in Brazil, item by item.