

OJAI HEALING ESSENTIALS NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2019 ISSUE #32



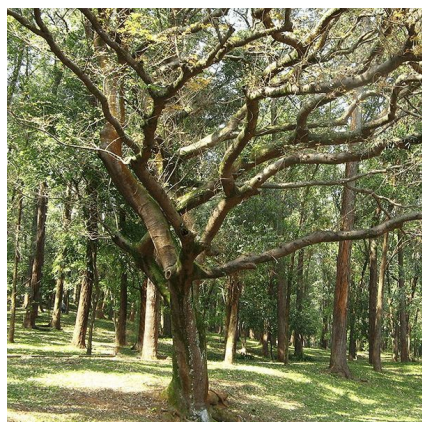
Newsletter Topics:

- History, Description, and Uses Copaiba Balsam
- Ojai Healing Essentials Aromatherapy Classes

Copaiba Balsam

History of Copaiba Balsam (*Copaifera officinalis*) Copaiba balsam was first recorded in European medicine in 1625 (brought back from the New World by the Jesuits and called Jesuit's balsam) and has been used there since in the treatment of chronic cystitis, bronchitis, chronic diarrhea, and as a topical preparation for hemorrhoids. In the United States, it was an official drug in the U. S. Pharmacopeia from 1820 to 1910. Noted ethnobotanist and author Mark Plotkin reports that copaiba balsam has been used in the United States as a disinfectant, diuretic, laxative, and stimulant-in addition to being used in cosmetics and soaps. *The Encyclopedia of Common Natural Ingredients* cites that copaiba has diuretic, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, expectorant, disinfectant, and stimulant activities.

Botany of the Copaiba Tree (*Copaifera langsdorffii*)



Copaiba is an oleoresin / balsam which is a naturally occurring resin with essential oil properties. Copaiba trees are considerably branched and grow from 15-30 m high. They produce many small, white flowers on long panicles and small fruit pods with 2-4 seeds inside. There are 35 species of *Copaifera*, found mainly in tropical South America (particularly in Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Guyana, Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela). Several different species are used as traditional medicines interchangeably: *C. langsdorffii* is found mostly in the cerrados of central Brazil, *C. reticulata* is indigenous to the Amazon region, and *C. officinalis* occurs widely throughout South America, including the Amazon. All three varieties are used interchangeably.

The part of the tree that is often employed medicinally is the oleoresin that accumulates in cavities within the tree trunk. It is harvested by tapping or drilling holes into the wood of the trunk and collecting the oleoresin / balsam that drips out, much in the same manner as harvesting maple syrup. A single copaiba tree can provide about 40 liters of oleoresin annually (this is highly disputed probably more like 1-5 liters), making it a sustainable rainforest resource that can be harvested without destroying the tree or the forest in which it grows. When tapped, the initial oily oleoresin / balsam is clear, thin, and colorless; it thickens and darkens upon contact with air. Commercially sold oleoresin / balsam are a thick, clear liquid, with a color that varies from pale yellow to golden light brown. The variety gathered in Venezuela is said to be thicker and darker in color. Although it is often referred to a balsam or oil, it is actually a oleoresin.

Copaiba trees are called "diesel trees" in South America where they grow. Many report that copaiba oil can simply be filtered and poured directly into the fuel tank of a diesel-powered car (or diesel generator) and the engine will run normally, with a bluish exhaust smoke being the only noticeable difference. The oil is also traditionally used in lamps as fuel for lighting.

History of Tribal and Herbal Medicine Uses of Copaiba

Copaiba oleoresin has been used for centuries in the Amazon. On the Rio Solimoes in northwest Amazonia, copaiba oleoresin / balsam is used topically by indigenous tribes as a wound healer, to stop bleeding, for skin sores and psoriasis, and to treat gonorrhea. Healers and *curanderos* in the Amazon today use copaiba oleoresin / balsam for all types of pain, for skin disorders and insect bites, and to cool inflammation.

In Brazilian herbal medicine systems the balsam is used as a strong antiseptic and expectorant for the respiratory tract (including bronchitis and sinusitis), as an anti-inflammatory and antiseptic for the urinary tract (for cystitis, bladder, and kidney infections), as a topical anti-inflammatory agent for all types of skin problems. Copaiba oleoresin / balsam is sold in gel capsules in stores and pharmacies in Brazil and recommended for all types of internal inflammation, stomach ulcers and cancer. One of its more popular home-remedy uses in Brazil is as an antiseptic gargle for sore throats and tonsillitis (15 drops of balsam in warm water). In Peruvian traditional medicine, three or four drops of the balsam are mixed with a spoonful of honey and taken as a natural sore throat remedy. It is also employed in Peruvian herbal medicine systems to reduce inflammation and increase urination, and in the treatment of incontinence, urinary problems, stomach ulcers, syphilis, tetanus, bronchitis, catarrh, herpes, pleurisy, tuberculosis, hemorrhages, and leishmaniasis (applied as a plaster).



What is the Difference between Resins, Oleoresins, Gums, Saps, and Balsams?

In order to understand the difference between resins, saps, and balsams I wrote a blog article for my own edification. The terms are often interchanged making it somewhat confusing. If interested in the difference, please see a detailed description on my website. Go to Ojaihealingessentials.com click on MORE in the menu bar to see BLOG.

For now here is a brief definition:

Resin: a substance secreted by a tree to protect and heal injuries to tree.

Sap: different from a resin; flows through the tree supplying nutrients. Maple syrup comes from sap.

Oleoresin: a combination of resin and essential oils. Synonymous with the word balsam.

Balsam: a combination of resin and essential oils.



Lizard fossil inside Amber Resin.

SEE BELOW: MONTHLY SPECIAL

Copaiba Balsam Description

A balsam is a mixture of essential oils with the resin. (Synonymous with the word oleoresin.)



Method of extraction: The oleoresin is obtained by dry distillation; a process where the oleoresin is heated with absence of air creating a thick liquid. The oleoresin is collected by making a hole and by tapping the tree similarly to collecting maple syrup. The hole is then sealed with clay and the tree is left to rest for 3 years.

Color: Colorless to very pale yellow, semi-viscous liquid.

Aroma: somewhat sweet, mild, soft woody, slightly spicy-peppery aroma with modest tenacity. It is a base note.

Chemical composition: The balsam contains up to 15% volatile oil; the remaining materials are resins and acids. The active biological properties are attributed to over 50% *sesquiterpenes*, *diterpenes* including *caryophyllene*. Several chemicals are uniquely found only in Copaiba. Copaiba resin is the highest known natural source of *caryophyllene*, comprising up to 37%; well known for its strong anti-inflammatory effects. .Another studied chemical in the oil is called *kaurenoic acid* and it has been reported to exert anti-inflammatory, hypotensive, and diuretic effects *in vivo* and antimicrobial, smooth muscle relaxant and cytotoxic actions *in vitro*.

Blends well with: Copaiba balsam seems to blend well with many essential oils. The list is long: Amyris, Angelica, Benzoin, Black Pepper and most spice oils, Cardamom, Cedarwood, Chamomile, Clove, Coriander, Elemi, Frankincense, Geranium, Ginger, Jasmine, Juniper Berry, Lavender, Lemon, Litsea Cubeba, Manuka, Mimosa, Niaouli, Nutmeg, Oakmoss, Opopanax, Orris, Patchouli, Pine, Ravensara, Sandalwood, Spruce, Tansy, Thyme, Turmeric, Vanilla, Violet Leaf, Ylang Ylang. "Copaiba balsam blends well with styrax [Liquidambar], amyris oil, coumarin ... and numerous other common perfumery materials. It is often used as a fixative in low-cost violet and wood perfumes. ."

Properties of Copaiba Balsam: analgesic (pain-reliever), anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antifungal, antioxidant, antiparasitic, anti-tumorous, anti-ulcerous, cellular protector, gastroprotective (protects the gastric tract), insecticidal, neuroprotective, wound healer.

Photo of Copaiba Balsam



Therapeutic Uses of Copaiba Balsam

Dermatological: Beneficial in healing wounds. Research studies have confirmed that topical use speeds the healing of wounds, reduces scars, reduces inflammation at the wound site, and prevents infection. A study published in 2013 noted that copaiba evidenced the ability to stimulate collagen synthesis and promoted new skin formation. This could be beneficial for chronic wounds, burns, and even aging skin just needing a collagen boost. For pimples and acne, wounds, rashes and external inflammation and infections dilute it with 4 parts carrier oil to 1 part copaiba oil.

- **Gastrointestinal:** In the Brazilian medical system, Copaiba is taken internally 1-5 drops in water or honey for relief of gastric ulcers.
- **Immune System:** long considered anti-bacterial and antiseptic which accounts somewhat for wound healing. Studies confirm effective against gram positive Staphylococcus.
- **Musculoskeletal: Nervous System:** Analgesic and relieves joint and muscle pain.
- **Respiratory:** Used as an expectorant for bronchitis. Also for sore throat used as a gargle.

Safety: No hazards known. No contraindications known

Therapeutic Remedies:

Copaiba Salve for aches, pains, and tissue repair. 3% dilution. Approximately 50 drops essential oils.

Keep a few jars of salve around to help address everyday cuts, scrapes, bruises and aches. (5% dilution or 50 drops)

- 30 ml Cocoa Butter
- 30 ml Cupuacu Butter (or shea butter)
- 30 ml Beeswax
- 12 drops Copaiba Balsam (*Copaifera officinalis*) wound healing
- 12 drops Black Pepper (*Piper nigrum*) warming
- 8 drops Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) tissue repair
- 8 drops Helichrysum (*Helichrysum italicum*) anti-inflammatory
- 4 drops Vanilla

Melt butters gently in double boiler. Add beeswax until melted. Remove from heat and add essential oils. Pour into sterilized 1 oz. glass jars.

Ojai Healing Essentials Aromatherapy Classes are over until the fall when we will begin again with the series of 6 classes starting with **Introduction to Aromatherapy**. Thanks to everyone who attended this past year. I enjoyed each and every class sharing stories and making projects.

MONTHLY SPECIAL
Copaiba Salve in 1 oz glass jar \$8.00 each
(limited supply)

Hope everyone can get out of their routine this summer and take a wonderful trip somewhere. Don't forget to take sun screen and a natural bug repellent as there are some possible nasty illnesses from mosquito bites. Also wouldn't hurt to bring along a sunburn, bite relief spray. See my website for all natural Bug Off and Skin Relief Spray. I am about to leave for a 2 week trip with my family to my old island home Key West where I grew up. Excited to see some old friends and special haunts.

Enjoy our gorgeous weather and beautiful earth!

Patricia Wing, RN, IAC, Clinical Aromatherapist

References:

1. *The Healing Power of Rainforest Herbs* by Leslie Taylor, copyrighted 2005 <http://www.rain-tree.com/copaiba.htm>
2. *Medical Aromatherapy*, K.Schnaubelt, PhD. P.
3. *Essential Oil Safety 2nd Edition*, Robert Tisserand, Robert Young,