

Rainforest Bio-Energetics

By John Easterling

Not being a complete stranger to traveling and trading in various outposts of the Southern Continent (having made over 160 trips since 1976), I can in retrospect say that there was simply no way to anticipate or prepare for my awakening to the bio-energetic principles of the Rainforest.

Certainly I had spent some time in Amazonia during my treasure seeking years and it had proven to be a formidable foe. Fueled by a dream to discover lost cities and armed so ineptly with a machete and some survival provisions, the jungle was heavy and overwhelming. Driven by the scent of treasure, I was constantly tortured by heat, humidity, biting insects and the threat of poisonous snakes. I knew that the nebulous cache was just over the next hill or across the river.

My reward for this determination and persistent sweltering through the semi-permeable molasses of forest was bountiful, and expressed itself in several ways. There was of course the exhaustion, the fevers, the dysentery, the parasites and other similar benefits too unsavory to discuss, not the least of which was the wounded ego of a treasure hunter with an empty basket.

After several such forays I surmised that the treasures of Amazonia were probably best left in the care of the Rainforest that do diligently guarded them. After all, by moderate standards, I was doing quite well with handicrafts from the Andes and gemstones from the mines in Brazil and Uruguay. Realistically I could have left this remote chunk of real estate to God's birds and beasts and gone on about my business, but this fascination with the interior would not go away. I now understand Col. Fawcett's (*Lost Trails, Lost Cities*) preoccupation with the mysterious seduction of the forest.

My own path continued to criss-cross the Andes, but would occasionally yield to the call of the Amazon. Invariably I would find myself upriver pursuing my natural trade, engaging in commerce with the indigenous Indians. Trading in tribal artifacts, blow guns, monkey bones, ceramics and textiles was only marginally profitable, but afforded convenient excuse to continue to journey into the Rainforest. It was on one of these trips that my life was essentially changed forever.

(Now to regress for just a moment. My personal health history includes a bout of hepatitis and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever that culminated in a death experience in a hospital in North Carolina. Since that time, 10 years prior to this trip, I have been continually challenged by a compromised liver. As anyone who has dealt with a liver problem knows, the liver serves a multitude of functions. Symptomatically poor liver function manifests itself as a feeling of low energy, fatigue, ungroundedness, unclear thought processes, and all in all operating at about 60% of my optimal efficiency. I had been plagued by all these symptoms up to the time of this journey.)

I knew I wasn't in top condition when I wandered into the Shipibo Village. I was sweating and chilling with a low-grade jungle fever, and I knew I looked shabby and travel-weary. It had been an exhausting day on the river, and with the searing afternoon heat I was feeling a bit sideways and stir-fried. Along with a suitable site to tie my hammock, I was offered some Una de Gato (*Uncaria Tomentosa*) and Chanca Piedra (*Phyllanthus Niruri*) teas. I drank about a liter of this combination, and by morning the fever was broken and I was feeling better.

After three days of resting and drinking these teas, my health improved significantly and I was ready to travel again. I took some of the Gato vine and Chanca Piedra shrub with me and continued to use these Rainforest herbs daily. I continued to sense noticeable improvements in my health. After about ten days of using these Rainforest herbs I realized I was in better health than I had been in years. I had a strong sense of connectedness, clarity of thought, an energetic power and internal chi. I was breathing easier and my posture was more erect. In fact, I was in better health than I had ever been, even before hepatitis and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever! Yet as dramatic as this rejuvenation was, it was only the beginning.

Being now newly charged, I began to hear the call of those treasure sirens again. A couple of days further upriver, I stepped out of the dugout canoe into a double canopy forest and was immediately aware of something which I had never noticed before. I could sense a very powerful energy coming from the forest. I felt that magical moment of discovering a treasure that you are not looking for.

There was an awakening and a realization that I was standing in the highest concentration of life-energy on our planet. Incredible symbiotic relationships were all around me. Of an estimated 200,000 species of plants in this forest, only 2% have been thoroughly studied. New species of birds and frogs are identified each year, and new insects discovered every day. Clearly the Amazonian Rainforest is our planet's greatest natural treasure house.

This was a new perception for me. It was as if I had passed through a filter—a screening process—and the blinders had been removed. The plants were radiating a clear life-energy. The Rainforest was no longer my foe. This is simply the most awe-inspiring living eco-system on the face of the earth. Everything is being recycled. An iguana could die at my feet and be completely consumed in a matter of minutes—nothing left but clean bones. Life begetting life. A leaf would fall from the top canopy, drift down, hit the forest floor, decompose and another plant utilizing those nutrients would grow right back out.

There is a variety of flying and crawling and biting insects; some of which chose to fly, crawl on and bite me. Some even saw greater opportunities in burrowing into my skin, laying their eggs and raising families. I was just another host organism in this environment. I wasn't at the top of the food chain any longer, either. The jaguar, cayman and snakes in this area could take me out for nutritional content. Nature's decision here is clear and absolute—there is no appeal process. It is a very humbling experience to recognize oneself as a minority species, as part of the living mosaic of the whole.

The living forest maintains its ecological harmony. There are members of our species who have a clear understanding of the energetics of this environment and its symbiotic balance. These are of course the Shipibo, Machegunga, Campa, Aguarana and all the other groups who call the forest their home. These people had renewed my life with Una de Gato and Chanca Piedra, and from them I began to learn the true value of the Rainforest botanicals. Through our narrow model of scientific and clinical methodology, studies have shown the immune enhancing properties of Una de Gato and the liver rejuvenating characteristics of Chanca Piedra, but the true value of these Amazonian botanicals goes far beyond a "this for that" mentality.

The plants from the Amazonian Rainforest serve as a store of nutrients, as well as trace elements and minerals from the rich soil of this environment. This is very important in that much of the food supply grown in this country is grown in soil that has been depleted of many of the essential trace elements and minerals. Yet these trace elements and minerals are the very building blocks of health. Without them, even vitamins can't do their job efficiently.

When harvesting botanicals in the forest, often the indigenous people will sing to the plants to set up the correct resonance. These songs ask for the plant's permission and willingness to transfer its essential bio-energetic properties. But even more important is the idea of how this high concentration of life energy is stored and transferred. The botanicals of the Amazon serve as a conduit of information of our planet's greatest living treasure house of species and nutrients.

In *The Secret Life of Plants*, Peter Tompkins and Christopher Byrd demonstrate that plants interact with their environment. Plants growing to classical music grew better than plants exposed to heavy rock music. Even more profound were their experiments connecting the plants to polygraph machines and measuring their response to a variety of environmental criteria including changes in behavior and the emotional state of the plant's owner. Their results seem to confirm some type of photosynthetic intelligence in living plants.

Also worth considering is Carl Jung's theory of the "collective unconscious." Recent DNA research has demonstrated the possibility that the collective information of our ancestors is encoded in our genes. This suggests that when we recognize or learn something seemingly new, it is simply bringing the pre-known stored data into present awareness.

Many of us have a sincere and genuine concern for the survival of the Rainforest. Unquestionably the ecologically-intact Amazonia is threatened. Perhaps some of us are just tapping into this "collective unconscious" as to the true value of the Rainforest. Perhaps the botanical intelligence from the Rainforest is playing a role in manifesting this awareness.

The true value of the Rainforest botanicals lies not only in their rich nutrient value, trace minerals and phyto-pharmaco-logical properties, but in the stored information of a thousand generations of ecological harmony. When we consider the environmental chaos that seems to be

accelerating—as evidenced by dramatic changes in weather patterns and seismic activity—perhaps the subtle energies of the Rainforest are what will nourish our awareness to value symbiotic balance at all levels of experience. The knowledge of our Creator’s green temple is now being unveiled as the consciousness of natural healing comes of age.

“The robust healthy tribes do not live near easily navigable rivers, but retire beyond the range of civilized man....There, I believed, lay the greatest secrets of the past yet preserved in our world today. I had come to the turn of the road and for better or for worse I chose the forest path.”

--Col. P.H. Fawcett
Lost Trails, Lost Cities, 1913

“The art of healing does not lie before us in the gray mysteries and doctrines of the future, but far behind us in the past of the green, original life of nature.”

--J.H. Rausse (1805-1848)

About the Author

*John Easterling, 48, is the founder and President of Amazon Herb Company. He founded the Andes Fur Trading Co., Inc., which did business as Raiders of the Lost Art in 1978. The company was engaged in importing and distributing gemstones, crystals, mineral specimens and Amazon Basin Tribal artifacts. He has extensive experience in dealing in Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. He’s made over 70 trips to South America. Mr. Easterling sold Raiders of the Lost Art in May 1990 and founded his present company, Amazon Herb Co., in June 1990. He earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Environmental Studies at the University of North Carolina in 1976. He is the author of “**Traditional Uses of Rainforest Botanicals,**” and was recently awarded an Honorary Masters Degree in Herbology.*