

Poster

Comparative ethnobotany of Cochlospermaceae throughout its pantropical range

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Introduction. Cochlospermaceae has a classical pantropical distribution with species present in the southwestern United States, Mexico, Central and South America, the West Indies, west and central Africa, Asia (mostly India), and northern Australia. It is composed of two genera, *Amoreuxia* Moc. & Sessé ex. DC (four species) and *Cochlospermum* Kunth (12 species). Since species of Cochlospermaceae are used by many cultures on different continents, it represents an ideal opportunity to compare human plant use of closely related plant species among people of distant geographic regions.

Objectives. To compile ethnobotanical data, compare how people living in different geographic regions use the species of Cochlospermaceae, and explore whether there is a tendency for closely related species to be used in similar ways throughout the wide distribution of the plant family.

Methods. Ethnobotanical literature was reviewed for descriptions of plant use of Cochlospermaceae throughout its range. Formal and informal ethnobotanical interviews were conducted in Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, and Senegal.

Results. Preliminary data indicate that many species of Cochlospermaceae are used in similar ways by diverse cultural groups. For example, five species of the genus *Cochlospermum* are used as a treatment for jaundice by multiple communities on three different continents.

Conclusion. The fact that five closely related species of Cochlospermaceae are used by cultural groups of different geographic regions to treat the same illness, suggests that these species and other closely related species may contain active chemical compounds with potential biomedical value. Comparative ethnobotanical research may provide insight into how ethnobotanical knowledge is acquired and may offer new directions in the search for new plant-based medicines, products, and foods.

Keywords: *Amoreuxia*, *Cochlospermum*, jaundice

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