

3.2.2.3.7.9 Muira puama - not an aphrodisiac, just a tonic

Try any ordinary search engine with a query for "muira puama" and all you normally get as result is one sales pitch after the other. This is not specific to muira puama, of course. The same will happen if you try a query for saw palmetto, or bee pollen, or potassium.

Quackery is alive and kicking, in the US and anywhere around the world, as it was some 150 years ago. The only difference is that before quacks had to travel from town to town (if for no other reason than to avoid the guns of those who have tried their potions and found them to be worthless), and that now, they can spam the Internet (safely out of reach).

Just as some 150 years ago in the American West, quacks still peddle their herbal concoctions with the same exaggerated claims. And now as then, nothing sells as well as tinctures that promise extra performance during intercourse, or to cause an increase in penis size.

For those in the herbs business, the extraordinary success of Viagra surely came as no surprise. After all, Viagra does work for almost all men, though the stiff price of the Pfizer product for many men puts limitations on the frequency of that other Pfizer-caused stiffness.

No, muira puama is no substitute for Viagra, and it does not work as an aphrodisiac. Maybe it works as a general tonic. But in the arena of tonics, it competes with a wide range of other products, from green tea to red ginseng. Tonics are no miracle medicines, and the sales potential for just one more tonic is of course much lower than it would be for a so-called herbal Viagra.

It is our intention to set the record straight and slow down a little bit the moneymaking machines of those who promise you that you don't need Viagra if only you take your muira puama diligently (and purchase a generous supply from them).

You can buy your muira puama and feel good about having contributed to the preservation of the plant's habitat, the Amazon

basin. There will probably also be some rather indistinct tonic effect. But the bottom line is that muira puama will do nothing to enhance your sexual function and performance.

In no way are we against tapping into the knowledge of traditional medicine's use of plants. But not every herb, Mongolian shamans or South American medicine men have been using, actually will work. This is especially true when it concerns herbs that allegedly improve male sexual performance.

Shamans and medicine men have found many a good herb against indigestion, or to induce sleep, or to treat nausea. But what their best clients, elderly tribal chieftains, always requested more than anything else, they were never able to deliver: a herb that would restore their sexual prowess. A notable exception: traditional healers in West Africa did have something at hand: the bark of the tree *Corynanthe yohimbe*.

Yohimbe is one of only two herbal remedies that indeed have the power to enhance sexual desire, function, and performance (and no, we do not sell any yohimbe). The other one is tongkat ali. (For information on tongkat ali, please see www.tongkatali.org (alternative sites: pasakbumi.com, eurycomalongifolia.net)

The active ingredient of yohimbe, yohimbine, has been isolated decades ago, and there are hundreds, if not thousands, of scientific studies that attest to the power of yohimbine in the treatment of erectile dysfunction or impotence, and in enhancing sexual parameters in healthy individuals.

You can check Medline, the huge database of scientific medical research, and you won't find a single document coming to the result that muira puama were to improve sexual function. Actually, you will have a hard time finding any scientific study on muira puama at all. If indeed, muira puama would work as aphrodisiac, this would hardly have escaped the medical profession, at least not in Brazil and other countries where muira puama is sold by quacks as ingredient of potency pills.

But there are thousands of scientific studies on the Medline database that attest to the aphrodisiac qualities of yohimbine, and there are

some scientific studies that prove the sexual enhancement qualities of tongkat ali (scientific name: eurycoma longifolia).

I am not prejudiced. I have tried a bottle of muira puama myself. Taking muira puama alone, I haven't noticed any effect. In combination with yohimbine, muira puama didn't add to the yohimbine's power.

If the effect of muira puama probably is that of a general tonic, and if it were advertised as such, there would be nothing wrong with it. The nuisance is that anywhere it is sold as aphrodisiac because as aphrodisiac, the marketing potential is so much better.

Of course, those selling other herbal products often also cannot resist the temptation to drive up sales by ascribing some pro-sexual effects to the herbal they carry. The bluntest attempt in that direction, we have seen on a web site dedicated to saw palmetto. Saw palmetto capsules were advertised there as "the sex pills of the nineties". My God, saw palmetto is an anti-androgen, it interferes with dihydrotestosterone, and if anything, then it will make erections more difficult to achieve.

Muira puama isn't that bad. But it's also not an aphrodisiac.