

Nahua Materia Medica

Table 1: Nahua Materia Medica of Plant Origin in the Top 110 Simples (n = 74)

Medicine	Number of Times Cited	Nahua Meaning/Name	Scientific Name	Use	Source(s) of Information
Acaxaxan, hoacaxacan	7	Guayacan	<i>Potamegatón Mexicana</i> (Recchi), <i>Guaiacum lignum</i>	Syphilis, dropsy, shortness of breath, falling sickness, stimulant, diaphoretic	La Naturaleza, 1873, Paradisus Batavius, Emmart, p. 70
Achiotl	12	Achiote	<i>Bixa Orellana</i>	Fever, diuretic, diarrhea	<i>Aztec Medicine</i> , Karttunen dict.
Acuitzehirarique	9				No modern information
Axoyatic	10		<i>Abies Rel.</i>	Diarrhea	Gates, Clavijero
Ahuehuetl, leaves, seeds, nuts, bark	8	Cypress	<i>Cupressus Montezuma</i> , <i>Taxodium mucronatum</i>	Gout, ulcer, diuretic, toothache	Gates
Axixtlacotl	13	Yerva mora/berry?	<i>Solanum</i> sp.?	Purifies kidney, provokes urine, removes dropsy, resolves winds	León, Bancroft <i>Native Races</i> , Comas – Vetancurt
Cacahuatl	11	Cacao, chocolate	<i>Theobroma cacao</i>	Mix with rubber for diarrhea, used as vehicle for medicinal beverages	<i>Aztec Medicine</i>
Cempoualxuchitl, zempoaxochitl	10	“Twenty flower,” clavelina de las Indias	<i>Tagetes erecta</i> , <i>Tagetes clavula</i>	Sweat producer, cathartic, cures dropsy	“Empirical Aztec Medicine,” <i>Aztec Medicine</i> , Comas – Vetancurt
Chlli	20	Chile, chilli, Mexican pepper	<i>Capsicum pubescens</i> , <i>C. frutescens</i> , <i>C. annuum</i> , etc.		Comas – Lopez
Chilpahtli	12	Plant with milky sap			Karttunen dictionary
Chilpantlazolli	7	Aromatic flower?	<i>Lobelia laxiflora</i>		<i>Cross Name Index of Medicinal Plants Vol. 1</i>
Chupiri (Tarascan), Tlepahtli (Nahua)	9		<i>Euphorbia calyculata</i>	Purgative, skin afflictions, mange, sores	“Empirical Aztec Medicine”
Cihuapatli	12	“Woman’s medicine”	<i>Montanea tomentosa</i> , <i>Montanea grandiflora</i> , <i>Eriocoma floribunda</i>	Oxytotic, diuretic	León, <i>Aztec Medicine</i>
Cococxihuitl	7		<i>Bocconia frutescens</i>	Relieves constipation, cures abscesses, swelling	“Empirical Aztec Medicine”
Cohuanepilli, coanepilli, cohuapahtli	38	Snake tongue, Contrayerva, may be Cohuapatli—causes much confusion (Comas – Lopez, p. 159)	<i>Passiflora jorullensis</i> (Ortiz), <i>Dorstenia contrayerva</i> (Emmart, Comas), <i>Boerhavia viscosa</i> (León), <i>D. brasiliensis</i> , <i>Asclepias setosa</i> , <i>Aristolochia serpentaria</i> , <i>Flaveria contrayerva</i> , <i>Bouvardia jacquini</i> , <i>B. ternifolia</i> , etc.	snake or scorpion bites, urinary tract problems, fever; induces sweating, diuretic; pain reliever, coagulates blood	Ruiz de Alarcon, Emmart, Ortiz, León, Comas – Lopez; cohuapahtli and coanepilli may be the same, according to Flores (1886, I:256 in Comas – Lopez)
Cozolmecatl, olcacatzan	37	China root, palo de la vida	<i>Smilax Mexicana</i> , <i>S. cordifolia</i> , <i>S. rotundifolia</i>	Cures syphilis (bubas), revives the dead, resolves ventosidades, comforts the thin and weak—marvelous effects	Comas – Vetancurt; Comas – Barrios

Medicine	Number of Times Cited	Nahua Meaning/Name	Scientific Name	Use	Source(s) of Information
Ecapahitli	17	“Wind medicine”	<i>Cassia occidentalis, Cassia alata</i>	Tumor, fever, headache, skin conditions, astringent, swelling, sores, ear pain, mange	John Carter Brown Library (JCB)—commentary on Hernandez, Comas – Vetancurt
Eztepatli (ezpahtli?)	7	“Blood medicine,” dragon’s blood?	<i>Jatropha spatulata, Croton sanguifluum, Croton cortesianus</i>		Comas – Lopez
Huitzilxuchitl, huitzilxochitl	13	“Hummingbird flower”	<i>Pedilanthus?</i>		<i>La Naturaleza, v. 4</i>
Ichcaxihuitl	7	Cotton	<i>Gossypium</i>	Skin sores, animal bites, snake bites	<i>Gossypium in Pre-Linnean Literature, 1919; David P. Austin, Florida Ethnobotany; Standley</i>
Itzcuinpatli	11	Dogbane, cebadiilla	<i>Senecio candicida, Veratrum leuterum, Stenanthium frigidum, Veratrum sabadilla, Veratrum frigidum, Schoenocaulon officinale</i>	Antiepileptic, sudorific, cure for itch, relieves chest pain	Gates, Comas - Lopez
Iyauhtli, yauhtli, quauhyautli	33	“Offered-up thing,” absinthe, worm-wood, wild incense	<i>Tagetes lucida</i>	Incense, used in childbirth for chest pain, chills, gout, fever, fear, dementia, lightning strike	Ruiz de Alarcón, <i>Aztec Medicine, Integrative Phytochemistry</i>
Izquixochitl	7		<i>Bourreria huanita, Bourreria formos</i>	Aromatic white flowers used in religious festivals	Karttunen, Duran, <i>Red Medicine, Wake, Framing the Sacred</i>
Iztacpatli	14	“White medicine”	<i>Prosopis juliflora, Acacia farnesiana</i>		Gates
Iztauhyatl	16	Estasiate or Artemisia	<i>Artemisia Mexicana, Artemisia ludovicana, Artemisia filicifolia, Ambrosia artemisaefolia</i>	Relieves weakness, colic; reduces fever, cough, kidney trouble, blisters, pain, digestion, phlegm	<i>Aztec Medicine, “Empirical Aztec Medicine,” Comas – Barrios</i>
Laurel	9				
Mecapahtli, also quauhmeatli, quammecat	28	Sarsaparilla	<i>Smilax aritolochiaefolia, S. medica, S. havanensis, S. mollis</i>	Diaphoretic, diuretic, relieves pain in the joints	“Empirical Aztec Medicine,” Comas - Lopez
Mecaxochitl	13	“Rope flower”	<i>Piper amalago, Piper sanctum</i>	Comforts the heart, helps stomach, thins humors, antidote for venom, side pain, diuretic, diarrhea; aromatic flower used to flavor chocolate	JCB on Hernandez; Gates, <i>Aztec Medicine, Comas - Vetancurt</i>
Metl (penca de and others)	15	Maguay (Taino term)	<i>Agave, sp., Agave astrovirens, Agave Americana, Agave salmiana, A. sisalana, etc.</i>	Wounds	Comas - Lopez
Mexuchitl	7			Emetic	León in Sahagún
Michcuitlaxcolli	7	“Fish gut herb”—resembles fish guts			No modern information; Hernandez
Nanacace	11	“Plant with corners”?		Angular plant; diaphoretic, fevers, fluxes, laxative, cures bleeding in the bowels	Aztec narcotics article from <i>Journal of Heredity</i> (source is Hern)
Nochtli	8	Prickly pear cactus and tuna, Noapl	<i>Opuntia sp., Opuntia ficus, O. vulgaris, O. engelmannii, O. tomentosa, etc.</i>		Comas - Lopez
Ocotzotl, also xociocotzotl, xociocotzotlquahuitl, oxitl	14	Liquidambar de Indias, pine, pine resin, turpentine, storax	<i>Liquidambar styraciflua, Liquidambar macrophylla, Pinus oocarpa</i> Schiede ex Schlechtendal	Relieves rashes, toothache; tonic for stomach; adhesive also used in painting	“Empirical Aztec Medicine”; <i>Aztec Medicine; León, Karttunen, Molina, Standley, Contributions from the U.S. National Herbarium, Comas – Barrios, “Resins and Drying Oils”</i>
Ocoxochitl	8	Pine flower	<i>Didymea mexciana?</i>	Fevers	

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Octli	9	Pulque	<i>Agave</i>	Vehicle	
Olcacatzan; see Cozolmecatl, China root	12				No modern information
Picietl, iyetl	31	Tobacco (Arawak term), “Little Tobacco”	<i>Nicotiana</i> sp., <i>Nicotiana rustica</i>	Purge, pain, childbirth, toothache, rash, chest rub, asthma, stomach, dropsy	Ruiz de Alarcón
Quauhtlepatli, cuauhtlepatli	22	“Fire plant,” rhododendron	<i>Euphorbia calyculata</i>	Purgative, skin ailments	<i>Aztec Medicine</i>
Quetzalylin	7	Alder Tree, Illin			Gates
Teamoxтли	8	“Paper rush among stones,” “Stone moss,” “Stone plant”	<i>Juncus</i> sp.		Gates
Tecomahaca que se llama copalihyac-memeyalquahuil	10	Copal; resin or gum of various trees	<i>Elaphrium copalliferum</i> , <i>E. aloexylon</i> , <i>E. jorulense</i> , <i>E. trijugum</i> , etc., or <i>Elaphrium tecomaca</i>		Comas – Lopez
Temecatl	9	“Vine, shoot”			No modern information
Tepechian, chian	7	Chia, sage, verbena	<i>Salvia</i> sp., <i>Salvia chian</i> , <i>Salvia hispaneca</i>		León
Tetzmetl, tetzmitl?	8	House leek	<i>Sedum</i> sp.	Gums, dysentery, hemorrhoids	Gates
Texaxapotla	13		<i>Ptarmica indica</i>		<i>A New Dictionary of Spanish and English and English and Spanish</i> , 1725
Nueces de la tierra	25	Peanuts?			Barrios
Tlacopathli	13	“Stick medicine”	<i>Aristolochia Mexicana</i> , <i>Aristolochia pilosa</i>	Astringent, pain, worms, rash, urine, fever, deafness, vision, tumors, broken bones, nose-bleed, dysentery, cough	Ruiz de Alarcón, Tropicós, Comas - López
Tlacoxiloxochitl	8	“Corn silk flower”	<i>Calliandra anomala</i> , <i>Calliandra grandiflora</i>	Inflammation, teeth, gums, headache, colds, spitting blood	Standley, <i>Contributions from the U.S. National Herbarium</i> , Gates
Tlalamatlapah-tli, tlamatla, Joan infante, de metzitan	25	Yerba que se halla en Mechoacan, Los naturales le llaman Tutetacuárun	Tlalamafía barba	Healing wounds	Monardes, <i>Diccionario Castellano con las voces de ciencias y artes y sus . . .</i> , Volume 3 by Estevan Terreros y Pando, 1778
Tlalanquaye	24	Mexican pepper	<i>Piperaceae</i> sp., <i>Irecina calea</i>	Diarrhea, epilepsy	<i>Aztec Medicine</i> , Gates
Tlalayotic	7			Diuretic, fever reducer, detains diarrhea, cura el hipo, cures sores and blisters of the mouth	Comas – Vetancurt
Tlallatlaquacuitlapil, tlatlanquacuitlapilli, tachuache en tarasco	9	Mechoacan: Polvos, Raiz, Flor, Xalapa, Jalapa	<i>Ipomea purge</i> , <i>Ipomea jalapa</i> , <i>Bryonia mechoacana</i> , <i>Exogonium purge</i>	Purge	León in Sahagun, Comas – Lopez, Comas – Vetancurt, Emmart, p. 69., Comas – Barrios
Tlalquequetzal	19	“Earth plumage,” yarrow, doradilla	<i>Achillea millefolium</i> , <i>Selganilla rupestris</i> , <i>S. lepidophylla</i> , <i>S. pilifera</i> , <i>Adiantum trapeciforme</i>	Purging, childbirth, stomach problems, coughs, sores, aches, scabies	<i>Aztec Medicine</i> , <i>Healing with Plants</i> , Comas – Lopez
Tlaolli, atolli de	7	Maize, dried kernels of maize; atolli	<i>Zea mays</i>		Karttunen, Comas - Lopez
Tlilxochitl, baynillas del	13	“Black flower,” vanilla orchid	<i>Epipendron vanilla</i>	Flavoring for cacao; moves urine; mixes with mecaxoxil—drink abrevian el parto a las mugeres; stops pains of the uterus, resolves ventosidades, heals the stomach	Comas – Vetancurt
Tomahuactlacopatli	9			<i>Aristolochia mexicana</i> ?	<i>A Botanical Materia Medica: Consisting of the Generic and Specific</i> , 1812

Medicine	Number of Times Cited	Nahua Meaning/Name	Scientific Name	Use	Source(s) of Information
Tomatl, tomates, xitomate	8	Green husk tomato	<i>Lycopersicum esculentum</i> , <i>Solanum lycopersicum</i> , <i>Physalis costomatl</i> , <i>Saracha umbellata</i>		Karttunen, Lopez – Comas
Traorigano	11	Italian cooking herb? Unclear			
Tzonpoton	10				Kay, <i>Healing with Plants in the American and Mexican West</i> , but ref is to Hernandez
Ulli, holli, ule, ullin, holquahuitl	7	Rubber tree sap (also use bark)	<i>Castilla elastic</i>	Diuretic, emollient, softens chest, alleviates bloody diarrhea, softens uterus and cures sterility	Gates, also <i>History of Science, Technology and Medicine</i> , Vol. 1, Comas - Vetancurt
White frankincense	7	Unclear			
Xaltomatl	9	“Sand tomato”	<i>Saracha jaltomata</i> , <i>Physalis mollis</i>	Cleans intestines, resolves ventosidades, alleviates bloody diarrhea, is given to those with tabardillo, diaphoretic	Gate, Comas - Vetancurts
Xalxocotl	7	“Sand plum,” guayaba, guava	<i>Psidium guajava</i> , <i>Psidium pomiferum</i> L.	Fruit is digestive; bark against dysentery; leaves against mange	“Empirical Aztec Medicine,” <i>Aztec Medicine</i>
Xilxochitl	7	Silk-cotton tree, Clavelina	<i>Calliandra grandiflora</i> , <i>Caesalpinia pulcherrima</i> L., <i>Pseudobombax ellipticum</i>	Emetic, for flatulence, aids gastrointestinal tract	Gates, Karttunen
Xiuhtotonqui	9	“Hot herb from Totopec”			No modern information
Yohualxuchitl	11	“Nocturnal flower,” flower that opens at night			No modern information
Yolloxochitl	10	“Heart flower”	<i>Taulauma mexicana</i> , <i>Magnolia glauca</i>	Astringent, for epilepsy, comforts heart, diuretic, used for sterility, used in religious ceremonies	Gates
Zacachichic	10	“Bitter herb,” Simonillo	<i>Conyza filaginoides</i>	Purge and evacuate heat and phlegm through vomiting	<i>Chemistry, Biological, and Pharmacological Properties of Medicinal Plants</i> by Joseph Kroger, Patrizia Granziera, other by Kurt Hostettmann, Comas - Vetancurt
Zayolpahtli, zayolquahuitl, axixpatli	8			Diuretic	Comas - Vetancurt

Table 2: Nahua Materia Medica of Animal Origin in the Top 110 Substances (n = 4)

Medicine	Number of Times Cited	Nahua Meaning/Name	Scientific Name	Use	Source(s) of Information
Axin, gordura de	10	Insect/worm (gusano) that produces waxy substance	<i>Coccus axin</i>	Rashes, impetigo, ear ulcer, pain reliever, tumors, diarrhea	Ruiz de Alarcon, Comas – Vetancurt
Egg, white, yolk	17			Vehicle	
Miel, blanca, de maguey, de abejas	25	Honey		Vehicle	
Tlaquatzin, cola de, agua de	15	“Thing that is eaten” with honorific “tzin,” Opposum, Lizard	<i>Didelphis marsupialis</i> or <i>Didelphis virginiana</i>	Constipation, childbirth, urination obstruction	Ruiz de Alarcón, Achim article, Comas – Lopez, Comas - Vetancurt

Table 3: Nahua Materia Medica of Mineral Origin in the Top 110 Simples (n = 11)

Medicine	# Times Cited	Nahua Meaning/ Name	Scientific Name	Use	Source(s) of Information
Coztictecpatl	7	A yellow stone		Helps the heart	Comas – Vetancurt
Earth, white	9				
Eztetl (stone)	20	Quartz or bloodstone		Stops bleeding	<i>Integrative Phytochemistry: From Ethnobotany to Molecular Ecology; Medicine across Cultures</i> , Comas; Vetancurt
Itzal	20	Salt			
Itzpahtli	14	“Obsidian medicine”			<i>El Calepino de Sahagún</i>
Pearl	9				
Piedra bezar	18				
Tecpahtli - stone	9	Liver medicine—a black stone found in Tlapaloya		Ground up in a drink, cures the liver	Comas - Vetancurt
Tetllahuitl (stone)	11	Red ochre		Relieves heart pain	<i>Medicine across Cultures</i>
Tacalhuatzin (stone)	10				No modern information
Tzahuanqueni (stone)	12				No modern information

Table 4: Unidentifiable Nahua Materia Medica in the Top 110 Substances (n = 20)

Medicine	# Times Cited	Nahua Meaning/ Name	Scientific Name	Use	Source(s) of Information
Apitzalpahtli	11	“Diarrhea medicine”			No modern information
Chatalhuic	8				Clavijero
Cohuaciluitpahtli	9				No modern information
Cohuaquiltic	9				No modern information
Cohuayelli	7				No modern information
Curitzeti	13				No modern information
Iztaczazalic	8	White gummy dough?			No modern information
Nahuiiteputz	11				No modern information
Omimetzli	7				No modern information
Phemahue	10				No modern information
Pozteccapatli	7				No modern information
Quauhiyac	7				No modern information
Tlahuelitoc	8				No modern information
Tlameme	10	Carrier, porter			
tlatlahuicapahtli	13				No modern information
tonatiuh yxiuh	12				No modern information
Tzontolli	8				No modern information
Zazalic	12	Gummy dough or paste		Given as beverage for aid in childbirth	Kartunnen, Comas – Barrios

Sources for tables: Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano, *Aztec Medicine, Health, and Nutrition*, and “Empirical Aztec Medicine”; Nicolás de León, in Sahagún, *Historia de las Cosas de Nueva Espana*; William Gates, *An Aztec Herbal: The Classic Codex of 1552*; Hernando de Ruíz de Alarcón, *Treatise on the Heathen Superstitions*, appendix D; *La Naturaleza, 1873; Paradisus Batavius*; Francisco Clavijero, *Historia de Mexico*; Kartunnen, *Dictionary of Nahuatl*; Molina, *Dictionary of Nahuatl*; *Cross Name Index of Medicinal Plants Vol. 1*; Bancroft, *The Native Races*; Standley, *Trees and Shrubs of Mexico*; Margarita Kay, *Healing with Plants*; Emily Wolcott Emmart, *Badianus Manuscript*; John Romeo, *Integrative Phytochemistry: From Ethnobotany to Molecular Ecology; Medicine across Cultures*; *Gossypium in Pre-Linnean Literature*, 1919; David F. Austin, *Florida Ethnobotany*, *El Calepino de Sahagún*; Diego Duran, *Red Medicine: Indigenous Rites of Healing and Birthing*; Eleanor Wake, *Framing the Sacred: The Indian Churches of Colonial Mexico, Contributions from the U.S. National Herbarium*; John Stevens, *A New Dictionary of Spanish and English and English and Spanish*, 1725, *A Botanical Materia Medica: Consisting of the Generic and Specific*, 1812; Joseph Kroger, Patrizia Granziera, *History of Science, Technology and Medicine*, vol. 1; *Chemistry, Biological, and Pharmacological Properties of Medicinal Plants* by; Juan Comas, “Un Caso de Aculturación Farmacológica en la Nueva Espana del Siglo XVI: El “Tesoro de Medicinas” de Gregorio López”; Juan Comas, “La Medicina Aborigen Mexicana en la Obra de Fray Agustín de Vetancurt (1698)”; Juan Comas, “Influencia de la Farmacopea y Terapéutica Indígenas de Nueva Espana en la Obra de Juan de Barrios” (1607).

