

255. *PAULLINIA CUPANA* Kunth ex H.B.K. (SAPINDACEAE) — Guarana, Uabano, Brazilian Cocoa

Guarana is a dried paste, chiefly of crushed seeds, which may be swallowed, powdered, or made into a beverage. It is a popular stimulant in Brazil among natives who grate a quantity into the palm of hand, swallow it, and wash it down with water. Taste is astringent and bitterish, then sweetish. A refreshing guarana soft drink is made in Brazil similar to making the ordinary drink, but sweetened and carbonated. Odor is similar to chocolate. Cultivated by the Indians, the seed made into a paste, sold in two grades. Said to be used also in cordials and liqueurs. Tyler notes that Coca Cola® — Brazil uses guarana in a carbonated beverage it markets there.³⁷ Zoom®, a rather tasty beverage, has been promoted as a "cocaine" substitute.

A nervine tonic and stimulant, the drug owing its properties to caffeine. Used for cardiac derangements, headaches, especially those caused by menstrual or rheumatic derangements, intestinal disorders, migraine, and neuralgia.²⁷ Action is sometimes diuretic, and used for rheumatic complaints and lumbago. With words like aphrodisiac, diet, narcotic, and stimulant associated with guarana in the herbal literature, it is little wonder that the herb has excited curiosity among avante garde Americans. Promotional literature states that guarana outsells Coke® in Brazil, suggesting that Amazon natives sniff the powdered seeds, and stating, wrongly or rightly, that guarana decreases fatigue and curtails hunger. However, Latin Americans used the plant mainly as a stimulant and for treating chronic diarrhea.²⁹ Rose adds that guarana is also used for hangovers and menstrual headaches.⁴⁷

Indians in South America also made an alcoholic beverage from the seeds along with cassava and water. Guarana contains guaranine, an alkaloïd similar to theine of tea and caffeine of coffee; about 2.5 to 5% caffeine and 5 to 25% tannin, as catechutannic acid. An 800-mg tablet of Zoom® is said to contain *circa* 60 mg caffeine.³⁷ Adenine, catechin, choline, guanine, hypoxanthine, mucilage, resin, saponins, 8.5% tannin, theobromine, theophylline, timbonine, and xanthine are reported, in addition to the caffeine.²⁹

Toxicity — Narcotic stimulant;⁵⁴ may be quite high in caffeine (Cheney³⁵² says the highest of any plant) and tannin. Dysuria often follows its administration. Has been approved for food use (§172.510).²⁹