



Jardín de Semillas Sagradas La Pedregoza

Corporación Ambiental La Pedregoza

Puerto Carreño, Vichada, Colombia

www.semillasagradas.org

The Challenges of Creating a Botanical Garden

by Dexter B. Dombro

If you had asked me 10 years ago whether I would ever create a botanical garden, I probably would have laughed at the idea. How times have changed! I have always been passionate about medicinal plants, but I never really thought about what that involves in a reforestation setting. Worse, it never really occurred to me that there are numerous tree and plant species that are endangered, and that losing them means possibly losing the cure for a serious disease. As I got more and more involved with tree planting and conservation in the Orinoco River basin, I realized that numerous trees there have amazing medicinal and alimentary properties. It is sad to note that our knowledge regarding those rain forest trees is being lost, as the use of big-pharmaceutical chemical drugs replaces traditional wisdom of natural cures and therapies around the world.



The selected site is 16 hectares or 40 acres in size.

Never having built a botanical garden before, I wasn't completely sure how to start. The first thing we did was look for a suitable site within the [Reserva Natural La Pedregoza](#). One site in particular looked like it offered a wide range of features ideal for the proposed garden. It had terrain that included low lying areas, well-drained areas, areas that inundate, serranía (the local rocky hills that dot the Orinoco River basin), all bordered by one of our fabulous *morichals*. We agreed that we had found the site for our [Jardín Botánico de Semillas Sagradas](#) (Sacred Seeds in Spanish) project. I called up a civil engineer and surveyor in Puerto Carreño and asked them to come out and create a topography and lot plan for the proposed botanical garden. A short time later we had a topographic plan in 25 cm elevations that covered a whopping 16 hectares or 40 acres. Somewhat stunned by the size of what we were about to do, a friend of ours joked that we were going to be busy for the next 20 years.



Bixa orellana is a typical medicinal and alimentary tree.

Thanks to our conservation work with the establishment of the [Reserva Natural La Pedregoza](#), I came into contact with analog forestry folks who told me about an interesting program being coordinated by the [Missouri Botanical Gardens](#) in the United States. They are actively looking for partners around the world who will establish botanical gardens dedicated to the preservation and conservation of traditional medicinal and alimentary trees and plants. The more I thought about it, the more I loved the idea. I discussed it with my co-founders at La Pedregoza, so we contacted the [Missouri Botanical Gardens](#), and with their blessing and support created the [Sacred Seeds Botanical Garden](#) at La Pedregoza.



The Sacred Seeds garden is backed by a gorgeous *morichal*.

Armed with the topography plans, we contacted someone we knew in Edmonton, Canada, who had won an environmental

Anandenanthera peregrina is a ceremonial tree in traditional medicine.