

1. Description

Uncaria tomentosa is a liana (a climbing plant) or vine that grows on flat land that is technically defined as hydrophilic, meaning that they flood in rainy seasons. They often occupy the upper canopy where the trees act as hosts.

It is recognised by its heart shaped leaves, its cats-claw shaped thorns, and its flowers and seeds. On being cut it also squirts thirst-quenching water.



2. Sustainable management of Cats claw

This consists of a series of activities which vary according to the type of forest and the species or group of species that are to be managed. The steps of the process are:

- Define the objective, which is to say, answer the question 'why do we want to manage the forest?' For example, to use dry bark chosen from cats claw to generate aqueous extracts.
- Identify the land to be worked on (identification of the management area)
- Explore the management area (the forest) and collect information on the number of plants, their size and their lengths (Inventory)
- Undergo cleaning and eradication of malicious materials (silvicultural management)
- Sow Cats-claw plants in natural open areas (enrichment)
- Harvest the Lianas

3. Silvicultural management activities

These are the activities which aim to encourage the growth, production and propagation of the species that are intended for management, and enables us to select the desired characteristics for our aims.

In the case of production, the main silvicultural management activities are the following:

Delimit the management area and separate the area which is to be harvested each year. In our case, the total delimited area was of 100 hectares which was divided into ten subplots, each of ten hectares. This way the first plot, the one which is to be used in the first year, would have ten years to recover before the second harvest in the eleventh year.

4. Enrichment

Consists of planting activities in the forest.

Our experience has shown that it is best to use the forest as a natural nursery, using the small plants to transplant to natural clearings. The main activities to undergo during enrichment are:

- Search for seedlings in naturally clear/open areas and new farms. Of particular interest are naturally clear areas and new farms where there are seedlings undergoing natural regeneration.
- Preparation of the nursery. In a flat central place on the plot not vulnerable to flooding, lay the temporal nursery for the production of 600 plants; which is to say 8 ring beds each ten metres by one metre, made with forest materials.
- Bag filling. With the same soil prepare the substratum, adding the compost material (decomposing or organic material) at a ratio of 2 soil to 1 compost. This substrate is to be poured into black polyethylene bags 8 inch by 5 inch by 1mm.
- Transplant the seedlings. Choose the best seedlings to be transplanted on the same day to the chosen place, preferably on a cloudy or rainy day.
- Care for the nursery. Wait five months before planting. The stripping should be done from November and maintained until April when the plant has a minimum height of 40cm.
- Planting in naturally clear areas and place of extraction. In April start planting in same place as where the lianas were extracted from, as long as the place is not flood-prone; if this is not the case you should wait until June when infiltration from the little lakes that form culminates.
- Maintenance. The maintenance consists of replacing the plants which are dead, defecting or showing bad growth. Further you must clean out impurities and free the plants from strangling lianas and fallen palm leaves.

5. Harvest

The following activities are carried out:

- Create a path for those who will transport the product to the meeting point with the trucks.
- Clear away weeds from the area that surrounds the stumps and host trees, to make work easier.
- Select the lianas with over 5cm thickness (diameter) and prune the hosts. To increase productivity in some special cases the host can be logged, but normally only the liana is cut.

Once the liana is extracted, cut it into one meter segments, clean to remove the external layer (cortex), and the internal layer is packed and transported in blocks of 30kg to the warehouse.

The next phases are drying, selection and packaging for the market.

6. Post harvest process

Drying. Done using a dryer with a sloped, clear corrugated roof. One of its walls has a forty centimetre opening to the ground floor and another, also forty cm, to the height of the roof - both of the openings span the width of the building. The inside is made up of scaffolding/shelving on various levels, wide enough to serve as trays on which to spread the cat-claw bark. The floor is gravel.

In this way a rapid drying process is achieved (approx. 5 days), thanks to the build-up of solar radiation, increased by the transparent roof, the circulation of fresh air and the movement and exit of humidity from the upper opening.

Production and packaging. The dried bark can be packaged with a sticker indicating weight, shearing, classification, packaging, labelling, sealing and grouping.

Average value. A production cost of S/ 0,69 is calculated per 100g bag, and a sale price of S/ 1,50. That is to say, an additional S/ 0,81 per 100g of bark (eight times more than wholesale bark).

Related Electronic Resources:

Management and transformation of cat-claw

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