



Tropentag, October 6-8, 2009, Hamburg

“Biophysical and Socio-economic Frame Conditions  
for the Sustainable Management  
of Natural Resources”

## Medicinal Knowledge in Cuba — Domestic Prescriptions Using Front and Backyard Biodiversity

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### Abstract

For about a decade the Portuguese Tropical Research Institute (IICT) has been interviewing traditional healers, urban gardeners, peri-urban farmers, medicinal herb traders and plant therapists in Latin America, in order to assess local resources usage and built-up local knowledge databases that might provide future generations' alternate ways to deal with health problems. During April 2009 a sample has been extracted from a couple of La Habana municipalities (Playa and Plaza de la Revolución) totalling fifty interviews both to households possessing front or backyard (47) and to small herb traders (3). Results proved to be quite similar to previous cities and metropolitan areas investigated, starting with Belém (Brazil) in 1998 and 2005, followed by Santiago (Chile) from 2002 to 2005, Mexican Central Metropolitan Region in 2004 and 2006 and Lima (Peru) in 2006. A total number of sixty medicinal species have been registered in Habana, the most consumed being Tilo or Tila (*Justicia pectoralis*) an anti-flu and anti-stress half a metre Caribbean herb possessing the same common designation of *Tilia europaea*, a tall old world tree, with identical therapeutical indications. In matter of fact, the top ranking species consumed in the other four countries has always been an eclectic herb, either European (Peru and Chile) or local (Mexico and Brazil), yet named after a European plant species with comparable prescriptions usually a mild tranquiliser. Results discussion is an ongoing joint La Habana University (CESBH) — IICT process aimed at exploring local ethno-botanical resources pharmaceutical virtues so as to present alter ways to cope with aches, flu, chronic diseases while mitigating more serious health problems. The expectation is to promote life quality and adequate medicinal herb management among urban gardeners and plant therapy believers worldwide.

**Keywords:** Cuba, Latin America, local Medicinal Knowledge