



Ethnobotanical Leaflets



Post-Hurricane Watershed Restoration in Acachapa, El Salvador

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Acachapa is a community of approximately 80 families located in the Southwestern part of El Salvador. Tapping balsamo trees for resin is an important source of income in Acachapa. Farming, raising chickens, and aquaculture of fresh water shrimp, crabs and fish, in the Acachapa River, also sustain the community.

Nadia Navarrete-Tindall, a native of El Salvador, first approached the balsam tappers (balsameros) of Acachapa in March of 1998 with a proposal for a project sponsored by New Mexico State University. Project objectives are to increase community income, preserve a sustainable resource and act as a model for neighboring communities where balsam trees have been suffering from deforestation and replacement by other crops. Community income of Acachapa residents was to be increased by teaching how to produce and market natural products from the balsam tree.

Hurricane Mitch hit Central America in October 1998. Ensuing rains caused major flooding in the region. Rains washed out crops and severely damaged the watershed around the river near Acachapa. When Navarrete-Tindall and colleagues met in El Salvador with a group of the balsam tappers, the community's plea was for help reforesting their watershed. The balsameros also want to prevent further damage to their cropland and to river based production. They urgently need help to begin replanting fast-growing trees, and to set up nurseries for future reforestation. An Environmental Committee formed by Acachapa residents, hopes to begin restoration of their watershed by establishing riparian buffer strips along the Acachapa river.

Navarrete-Tindall has sought donations in the U.S. for funds to obtain and transport seedlings and to support community members as they begin the labor of replanting.

The Peace Coalition, Sierra Club, John A. Logan College and other southern Illinois organizations sponsored fund-raising talks. Logan students also organized a plant sale. The Peace Coalition and the Environmental Committee of Acachapa continue to ask for donations from individuals and organizations to help the reforestation project.

In order to protect the land from further erosion it is necessary to finish preparation of the tree nursery. It will be necessary to plant 15,000 trees combined with native shrubs and herbaceous species in the proposed buffer strips.

Individual contributions totaling \$950 began the project. Navarrete-Tindall was awarded a \$5,400 grant by the National Agroforestry Center in Nebraska to cover part of the expenses to establish a nursery and buffer strips along the river this year (2000). A \$3 donation will cover cost, transportation, and maintenance of one tree for a year.

For more information please contact Hartzog (ghartz@midwest.net) in Illinois or Navarrete-Tindall (navarreten@missouri.edu) in Missouri. Donations can be sent to the Peace Coalition of SI, 1702 Taylor Dr., Carbondale, IL 62901 with a notation to Hurricane Relief.

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