

## How plants have shaped the course of human history

Quinine (Scientific name: *Cinchona*) is a plant that has influenced the course of human history. Used for centuries by the indigenous people of the Andes as a cure for fevers, *Cinchona* became known to Jesuits stationed in Peru in the early seventeenth century. The “Jesuit powder” was subsequently introduced to Europe as a medicine against malaria and remained the only effective treatment well into the twentieth century.

...

Britain prospected Peruvian bark trees and grew them in India, having first transplanted them to Kew, one of many botanical gardens that served as a center for medical and colonial botany. In fact, the success of British rule in India depended partly on the control of malaria through the establishment of local *Cinchona* plantations.

...

Plants have shaped human societies even before the establishment of agriculture by providing food, clothing, shelter, remedies and poisons. As the source of psychotropic substances, they have facilitated communion with the sacred in some societies, and bestowed on others the ravages of addiction. As the focus of ethnobotany and archaeobotany, plants yield invaluable insights into the past. In art, they have served as both an ornament and as an index of wealth, networks and values ....

**Read full, original article:** [How Have Plants Shaped Human Societies?](#)