

TRUE STORIES

PLANTS ABOUT US

Are Roots Useful to Us?

Last month we talked about leaves and how we benefit from them. Today let us dwell on the farthest ends of the plant and see if they are of direct value to us. It is strange to hear anyone say that our favorite *ginatan* is made up of roots. But what are *camotes*, *ube* and *yubi* but the enlarged roots of plants so modified as to store food. Let us check off rapidly those roots we use for food: radishes, *sincamas*, *tugé*, *camoteng kahoy*, *tuñgo*. Can you think of others?

Some roots also have medicinal value. The ginger is of manifold use to us. We boil it in water with sugar and produce the stimulating drink of *taho*. It is indispensable in the cooking of *pinacsiw*. But more often it is pounded with other herbs to serve as *poultice* for certain ailments as prescribed by *arbolarios*. Maidens often mix it with coconut juice to wash their

the moisture deposited by dew or rain on the surface of the leaves among which it lives.

The colors of the tree-frog harmonize as a rule so completely with those of its leafy surroundings that its presence very readily escapes detection. All it does is to sit still and wait, and after a while its color is changed. Its eyes

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hair: this mixture, they say, promotes the luxuriant growth of the hair. A sister to the ginger root is the *dilaw*. It is very similar to the former but when pounded gives a yellow color. It is used for medicinal purposes. Some mothers boil the roots of the *sarsaparilla* and the cacao with their drinking water shortly after giving birth. They say it restores their color and increases their blood. Can you name other roots that have medicinal value?



Of course, we all know that roots go deep into the ground to absorb water for the plants and other minerals in the soil like nitrogen. Indirectly they help prevent landslides in mountainous countries. The trees on the mountain sides by means of their roots hold the soil compactly together and prevent it from pouring down on the valleys below.

The root is almost as important to the plant as the heart is to a man. A plant can live and grow again if deprived of its leaves and stem if it but retains its roots; but cut the roots and the plant perishes. So in that story of the monkey and the turtle as you all know the wise turtle chose the roots. Because they hold life and the promise of plant growth.