

Botany, the study of plants, occupies a peculiar position in the history of human knowledge. In fact, it is impossible to know today just what our Stone Age ancestors knew about plants, but from what we can observe of pre-industrial societies that still exist, a detailed learning of plants and their properties must be extremely ancient. They have always been enormously important to the welfare of peoples, not only for food, but also for clothing, weapons, tools, dyes: medicines, shelter, and a great many other purposes. Tribes living today in the jungles of the Amazon recognize literally hundreds of plants and know many properties of each. This is logical.