Finding Cures In Our Trees

It is no joke to say that everything in our world is chemical. Even trees have chemistry!

Trees have been and always will be one of the greatest renewable chemical resources available. Different species of trees contain many different chemicals and each chemical found may have important properties that can be used in medicine and industry.

There have been many spectacular finds in this field. One of the most exciting is the discovery of taxol which can be extracted from the bark of the Pacific Yew. This product shows promise in the treatment of advanced ovarian and breast cancer. Taxol is only available from these trees, and it takes about three of these trees to treat one cancer patient.

Important natural products extracted from Canadian trees include perfume oils, analgesics and sugar derivatives. The use for a new discovery can be something as simple as ski wax or as complex as pharmaceuticals. There are many trees in Canada that have not yet been chemically evaluated. This means that there are many chemicals out there that no one know about yet.

There are many methods to extract these compounds from bark and from foliage. The most commonly used methods are stream distillation and solvent extraction. Many new chemicals are found this way. They are analyzed to determine what they are, and then they are tested for potential uses.

The forests give us clear air to breathe and can give us shelter from the sun. However, there are many things in trees themselves that are there for us to discover. This is why it is so important to maintain our forests.