

Introduction Questions: Why Study Plants?

- 1) Some scientists have argued that tropical rainforests are a “living pharmacy.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- 2) Shaman, witchdoctors and medicine men all over the world have used the bark of willow trees to relieve minor pain from a tooth ache to a head ache. Do you think this is really effective? How would you test the possibility?
- 3) If you were in a jungle in search for new drugs from plants to treat diseases in humans, would it be wise or foolish to follow a sick monkey around and see what it does to alleviate its ailment? Why or why not?
- 4) Organic chemists have great powers at their disposal to synthesize new medicinally important drugs. Considering the new advances in organic synthesis, are natural plants no longer needed as a source of new drugs? Why or why not?
- 5) We hear a lot about the conservation of biodiversity today. Is the preservation of biodiversity important to the discovery of new drugs? Why or why not?
- 6) How could the search for new medicinal drugs aid in the conservation of rainforest? By what mechanism would this be possible? That is, by what process would new discoveries of drugs help conserve the forest?
- 7) How could the search for new medicinal drugs aid in the conservation of primitive cultures and societies? By what mechanism would this be possible?
- 8) Is it important for medical schools in the United States to train students in alternative approaches to the treatment of disease such as the use of herbal therapy, that is, the use of natural plant products?

