The Ethnobotany of Valentine’s Day
The Legend of St. Valentine

The history of Valentine's Day--and the story of its patron saint--is shrouded in mystery. We do know that February has long been celebrated as a month of romance, and that St. Valentine's Day, as we know it today, contains vestiges of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition. But who was Saint Valentine, and how did he become associated with this ancient rite?
The Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of whom were martyred. One legend states that when the e roman Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for young men. Valentine, continued to perform marriages for young lovers in secret. When Valentine's actions were discovered, Claudius ordered that he be put to death.
According to another legend, an imprisoned Valentine actually sent the first "valentine" greeting himself after he fell in love with a young girl--possibly his jailor's daughter--who visited him during his confinement. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter signed "From your Valentine," an expression that is still in use today.
Origins of Valentine's Day: A Pagan Festival in February

While some believe that Valentine's Day is celebrated in the middle of February to commemorate the anniversary of Valentine's death or burial, others claim that the Christian church may have decided to place St. Valentine's feast day in the middle of February in an effort to "Christianize" the pagan celebration of Lupercalia.
Origins of Valentine's Day: A Pagan Festival in February

While some believe that Valentine's Day is celebrated in the Lupercalia was a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as to the Roman founders Romulus and Remus. It was celebrated at the ides of February, or February 15.
Lupercalia survived the initial rise of Christianity but was outlawed ("un-Christian") at the end of the 5th century, when Pope Gelasius declared February 14 St. Valentine's Day.
It was not until much later that the day became definitively associated with love. During the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that February 14 was the beginning of birds' mating season, which added to the idea that Valentine's Day should be a day for romance.
Typical Valentine's Day Greetings

In Great Britain, Valentine's Day began to be popularly celebrated around the 17th century. Americans probably began exchanging hand-made valentines in the early 1700s.
In the 1840s, Esther A. Howland began selling the first mass-produced valentines in America. Howland, known as the “Mother of the Valentine,” made elaborate creations with real lace, ribbons and colorful pictures known as "scrap."
In addition to the United States, Valentine's Day is celebrated in Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, France and Australia.

Today, according to the Greeting Card Association, an estimated 1 billion Valentine's Day cards are sent each year, making Valentine's Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year. (An estimated 2.6 billion cards are sent for Christmas.) Women purchase approximately 85 percent of all valentines.

A question still remains... how many trees?
A representative of love in all forms, Rose became a popular Valentine’s Day Flower in the 17th century. The popularity of roses as Valentine’s Day Flowers originates from the belief that the Red Rose was the favorite flower of Venus - the Roman Goddess of Love and Beauty and it dubs as the flower of love and passion.

- 110 million roses, the majority red, will be sold and delivered within a three-day time period.

- Valentine’s Day is the big time of year for red roses; Mothers' Day means more pastel roses.

- California produces 60 percent of American roses, but the vast number sold on Valentine's Day in the United States are imported, mostly from South America.
Workers prepare a bouquet of red roses ahead of Valentine's Day, at a flower farm of "The Elite flowers" company in Facatativa, near Bogota, Colombia, on February 1, 2012. In giant greenhouses outside Bogota, the flowers are clipped and shipped worldwide, accounting for 65 percent of the roses imported in the United States and many of the bouquets delivered in Europe. *Washington Post, Feb. 1. 2012*
In giant greenhouses outside Bogota, the flowers are clipped and shipped worldwide, accounting for 6 percent of the roses imported in the United States and many of the bouquets delivered in Europe. The hours ahead of Valentine’s Day are a boom period for Colombian growers, who expedite their exports.

In Straelen, Germany. Valentines Day is among the busiest times of year for Germanys flower retailers. *Newsday, last week*
STRAELEN, GERMANY - FEBRUARY 09: Flowers prepared for dispatch are pictured at wholesaler Bloomways warehouse five days before Valentines Day on February 9, 2012. Newsday, last week
Help the world to be a better place

If you are planning to buy your loved ones flowers this Valentine’s day you may also be able to help make the world be a better place.

You can still give that special someone a bouquet of beautiful red roses this Valentine’s Day AND support the farmers and workers that grew them. Fair Trade Certified™ flowers are a great way to celebrate this 700-year-old holiday—a way to share
Pierson and Seville in Volusia Co. Florida is the "Fern Capital of the World." It's a place where leatherleaf fern grows inside shade tents. Other foliage -- known as tree fern -- sprout underneath the natural shade of oaks. Families have been tending the crops for generations. Fern Trust Inc., estimates 60 percent to 75 percent of the Seville-based farm cooperative's profits come from Valentine's Day and Mother's Day. *The Daytona Beach News Journal, Feb.10, 2012*
SHANGHAI, CHINA - FEBRUARY 07. Valentine's Day theme advertisement is seen in a shopping mall on February 7, 2012 in Shanghai, China. Preparations for the Valentine's Day begin in China after the Spring Festival.
Valentine’s Gifts: Perfumes

“If you’re planning to buy the one you love a bottle of fragrance this Valentine’s Day, you’re not alone. Sales of perfume go up by 50 per cent at this time of year. Here’s our guide to the right spritz for February 14’.

• A fragrance is a mix of oils and other additives. In a 75% to 95% alcohol solution. Perfumes have 22% or more of oils, Eau de Perfume, between 15-22% and Eau de toilette 8-15%.

• The “heart” of the fragrance lies in the oils that evaporate of the skin. An average fragrance has 60-100 ingredients. Some like Estee Lauder Beautiful has a record of 700.
• Some very interesting studies have produced evidence that all the men on the study were more attracted to the scent of pumpkin pie than to any other fragrance!

- Jasmine, roses, lavender, cloves, etc… go into the seduction of modern perfumes.

According to Nielsen, Americans will purchase around **58 million pounds of chocolate** during the days leading up to the 14th and we shell out somewhere around $345 million to satisfy our Valentine's sweet tooth. Thirty five million heart-shaped boxes of chocolates each Valentine's Day.
Chocolate, the Food of the Gods.

- The seed of the plant *Theobroma cacao* is the source of chocolate. It is a native of South and Central America tropical forest.

- “Chocolatl” consumed by the Aztecs, who made a drink of chocolate, vanilla and chili pepper; medicinal use; even as currency! *Theobroma* = food of the gods.

- Introduced to Spain by Hernan Cortes in the 1520’s. The Spanish added sugar. Cocoa use spread to the rest of Europe. The Swiss added milk.

- In the 19th century, cocoa butter was processed with sugar to make the first chocolate bars.
Did you know that chocolate is a mild aphrodisiac?

Cocoa contains phenylethylamine (PEA). The PEA in chocolate is the same endorphin that is naturally excreted into the bloodstream when a person experiences the sensation of "being in love". Thus, eating chocolate increases the level of this endorphin in the bloodstream producing the same effect than the natural endorphin.
Love and Lust

• The list goes forever….but there is very little evidence that any of these have an effect on increasing male virility or female attractiveness.

• *Cunninham’s in Encyclopedia of Magical herbs* provides a good compendium of plants that have been considered magical to increase love and lust.
Love and Lust

• Herbals and books on Chinese medicine provide a compilation of plants that may increase libido and attractiveness, but again, these assumptions are not backed with appropriate scientific data.

• In all coincidences, garlic, ginger, dill, hibiscus, ginseng, avocados, caraway seeds and cinnamon among a few others are repeatedly present in these lists. It is also documented that the Aztecs believed
'Safed Musli'

*Chlorophytum borivilianum* (Liliaceae), commonly known as 'Safed Musli', is an endangered species valued for the dried storage roots.

These are reputed to have aphrodisiac properties and form an important ingredient of herbal tonics prescribed in the Ayurvedic system of medicine in India.

The plant is of economic importance in India since its dried roots are currently sold at a high market price per kilogram. Due to large scale and indiscriminate collection of wild material and insufficient attempts either to allow its replenishment or its cultivation, *C. borivilianum* is rapidly disappearing and it has become an endangered species.
**Turnera diffusa Willd**

Damiana, “hierba del venado”. The infusion of the leaves is said to be an aphrodisiac and to increase sexual potency. An infusion of the whole plant is said to treat infertility in women. These plants that are sold in the markets are collected rather than cultivated.

Extinction resulting from overexploitation and habitat destruction is an acknowledged threat to many economically important plants which are collected in the wild.
**Pausinystalia yohimbe**

- Yohimbine is the principal alkaloid of the bark of the West African evergreen (There are 31 other yohimbane alkaloids found in Yohimbe. In Africa, yohimbe has traditionally been used as an aphrodisiac.

- The main active chemical present in yohimbe bark is yohimbine HCl (indole alkaloid). The levels of yohimbine that are present in yohimbe bark extract are variable and often very low. Therefore, although yohimbe bark has been used traditionally to reduce male erectile dysfunction, there is not enough scientific evidence to form a definitive conclusion if it is effective or not.

- The tree is currently threatened with extinction in its native habitat due to international demand. Its conservation is difficult because the bioactivity of the tree has led many Western governments to declare it a proscribed species.