

CENTERS OF DIVERSITY IN *FICUS* SECTION *PHARMACOSYCEA* (MORACEAE) IN THE ATLANTIC FOREST

Theme: Biodiversity conservation indicators

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The Atlantic Forest is one of the 25 global biodiversity hotspots and considered one of the three most threatened biomes on Earth with about 8% of its original cover and only 2% protected. *Ficus* section *Pharmacosycea* is comprised of woody plants, up to 35 m height, occurring in the later stages of forest formations, often cited as indicators of areas of high biodiversity. Among the 29 neotropical species, eight of them occur in the Atlantic Forest and four of them still with unpublished studies. They inhabit from sandy coastal plains to montane dense forest, in the moist to semideciduous formations. In order to collaborate with the conservation of Atlantic Forest, this study aimed to determine *Ficus* section *Pharmacosycea* diversity centers, providing data that can serve as an auxiliary tool for the creation and strengthening spaces and/or species protection areas. We analyzed the specimens deposited in major herbaria in the southeast region, conducted field excursion to study natural populations, plotted occurrence areas and mapped the ten diversity centers of relevant interest in conservation: Cambé (PR), Serra de Paranapiacaba (SP), Peruíbe (SP), Campinas (SP), Campos do Jordão (SP), Ubatuba (SP), Parati (RJ), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Serra dos Órgãos (RJ), Silva Jardim (RJ) and Caparaó (ES). Among the centers, Cambé deserves more attention for being a predominantly agricultural region with few remaining forest, with *Ficus* populations confined to private properties, mostly on river banks. This area needs urgent creation of integral protection conservation units, because it shelter new species of *Ficus* section *Pharmacosycea*, already at risk of extinction. All other areas have some form of environmental protection of areas that, theoretically, ensure the maintenance of biodiversity.

Keywords: *Ficus*, *Pharmacosycea*, Moraceae, centers of diversity, Atlantic Forest

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