

# Sapotón (Zapotón)

## *Pachira aquatica*

Botanical Garden Guatemala City





## Introduction to *Pachira aquatica*, Zapotón

Of all the trees of the Bombacaceae family, the only one that flowers over many months every year is *Pachira aquatica*. Almost all the other trees of the Bombacaceae limit their flowering to the dry season. For example, the ceiba lose their leaves and flower.

But the main reason that the *Pachira aquatica* tree is of interest is that its flower is the largest and most visually spectacular of the flowers of the Bombacaceae family. Thus the Preclassic and Classic inhabitants of Mesoamerica were obviously familiar with this tree, especially since the flowers have an enticing fragrance. And the seeds are edible.





## We have the following FLAAR Reports on *Pachira aquatica*

- *Pachira aquatica* in Rio Dulce
- *Pachira aquatica* at Tikal
- *Pachira aquatica* at AutoSafari Chapin

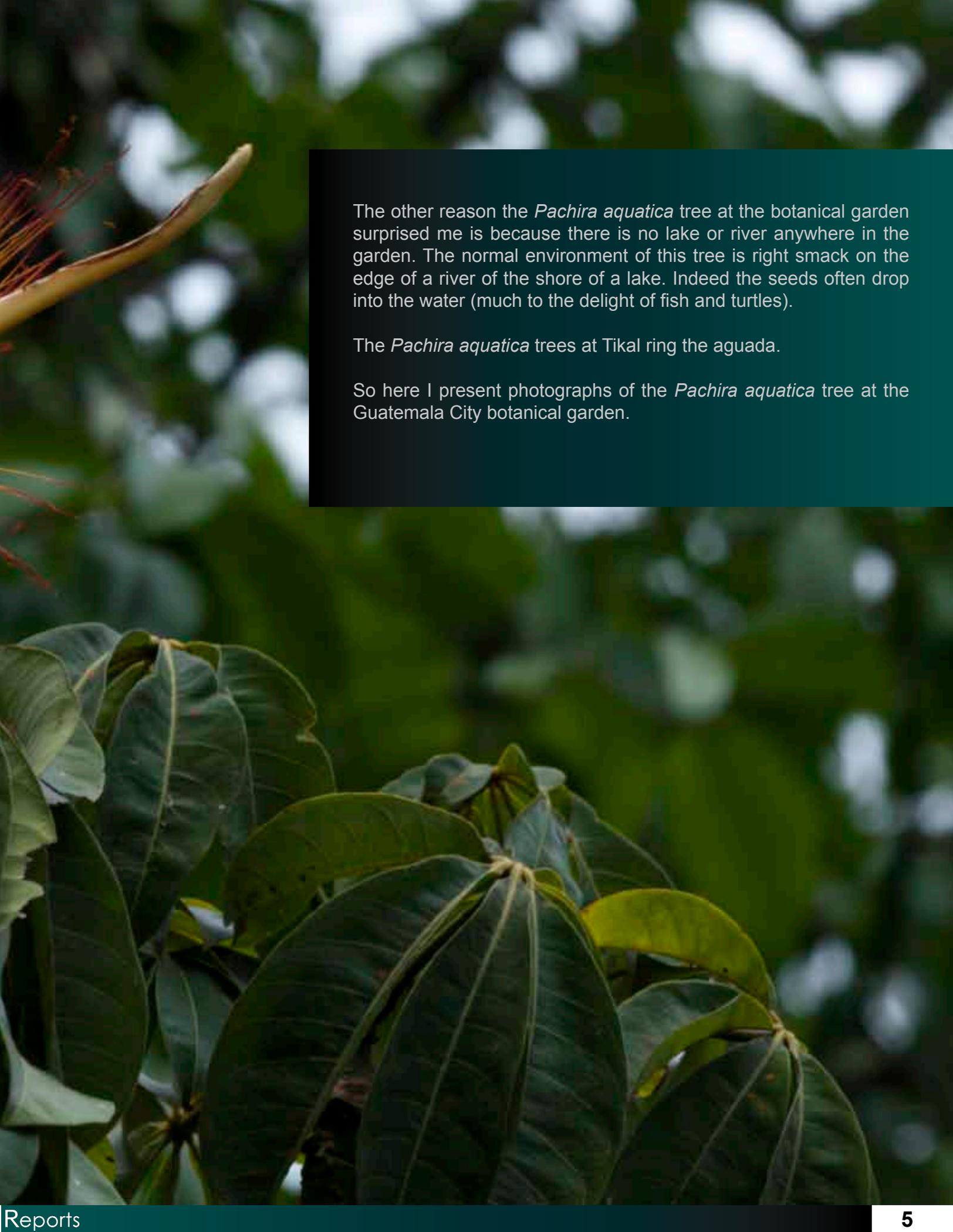
## And the present

- *Pachira aquatica* in the Botanical Garden, Guatemala City.



## Elevation: habitat of *Pachira aquatica*

Since zapotón grows at close to sea level along the Rio Dulce, and at low elevation at AutoSafari Chapin (an hour's drive inland from the Pacific Ocean, Guatemala), I was rather surprised to find a fully flowering *Pachira aquatica* tree growing in Guatemala City, at an elevation well over 1300 meters above sea level (the FLAAR offices are probably closer to 1400 to 1500 meters above sea level, since we are on the hillsides overlooking the city). *Pachira aquatica* is growing acceptably in our garden. We brought seedlings and seeds from AutoSafari Chapin.



The other reason the *Pachira aquatica* tree at the botanical garden surprised me is because there is no lake or river anywhere in the garden. The normal environment of this tree is right smack on the edge of a river or the shore of a lake. Indeed the seeds often drop into the water (much to the delight of fish and turtles).

The *Pachira aquatica* trees at Tikal ring the aguada.

So here I present photographs of the *Pachira aquatica* tree at the Guatemala City botanical garden.



## Acknowledgements

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