

# Peruvian diggers find 2.5 million-year-old tobacco

November 20 2010

---



An undated picture released on November 19, 2010 by the Museum of Paleontology Meyer Honningen based in the northern city of Chiclayo, 760 km north of Lima, shows a cluster of fossilized tobacco leaves (*Nicotiana tabacum*), presumably belonging to the Pleistocene era, some two and a half million years ago, found in the Marañon basin, in the Amazonas Department.

Paleontologists in Peru have discovered fossilized tobacco in the northern Amazon that dates back to the Pleistocene Era 2.5 million years ago, the scientists said Friday.

The compact block of [tobacco](#), about 30 square centimeters (4.5 square inches), was found by scientists from the Meyer-Honninger Paleontology Museum earlier this week in the Marañon river basin in northeastern Peru.

"This discovery allows us to establish that the plant dates back to the Pleistocene Era, and confirms that it originated in northern Peru," the museum said in a statement.

Tobacco was smoked and chewed by Native Americans long before the arrival of European explorers in the 15th century, the scientists said.

It was also used for therapeutic purposes -- in everything from eye drops to enemas -- and for rituals, such as blowing smoke into the faces of warriors before battle and on women prior to intercourse, they said.

(c) 2010 AFP

Citation: Peruvian diggers find 2.5 million-year-old tobacco (2010, November 20) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-11-peruvian-diggers-million-year-old-tobacco.html>

|  |
|--|
| <p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p> |
|--|