

intellectual property



« Above: Bob Blanchette holds a cross section of a treated tree. Left: Agarwood pieces to be used as incense.

The Smell of Success

Scientists from the University of Minnesota are saving the endangered Aquilaria tree and, with it, lives. **BY ALLIE FENDRICK**

7,638,145

REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, Minneapolis, received a patent for methods of generating agarwood in cultivated trees. **Inventors:** Robert A. Blanchette, Henry Heuveling van Beek. **Attorney:** Viksnins Harris & Pady's PLLP.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA has patented a method of generating agarwood in cultivated trees. But what exactly is agarwood?

Agarwood is a resin produced inside a tropical tree called Aquilaria. It has a magnificent aroma when burned and has been coveted as incense for thousands of years. Since only one in every 100 or 200 trees have the resin in them after 100 years of growth, people have indiscriminately cut them over the centuries looking for trees with said resin, which because of its extreme rarity can be valued as high as \$2,000 per pound. This, in turn, has endangered the Aquilaria.

“We always worked to stop invasions in trees throughout my studies of tree defense reactions, but this project actually had us stimulating organisms.”

—BOB BLANCHETTE

Bob Blanchette, a professor in the department of plant pathology at the University of Minnesota, started his work 16 years ago after meeting someone from the Rainforest Project Foundation that wanted to help save the Aquilaria tree.

“We began studies, worked with farmers to test possible methods and perfected the methodology to induce resin in these trees,” says Blanchette. “Agarwood is formed as a tree’s response to invasion by specific micro organisms. We always worked to stop invasions in trees throughout my studies of tree defense reactions, but this project actually had us stimulating organisms.”

Raw agarwood can be used for incense, traditional medicine or can be extracted to get an essential oil that is used in perfume. All-in-all, these uses will jump start a new economy in some of the world’s poorest rural communities, provide high quality agarwood for world markets and save the remaining old-growth Aquilaria. ●

IP Tracker

» **Leanics Corporation** (Maple Grove) invented a low-complexity hybrid LDPC code encoder. **Inventors:** Aaron Cohen, Keshab Parhi. **Patent:** 7657816.

» **Lawson Software, Inc.** (St. Paul) invented a technique to provide automatic control of an electronic financial plan. **Inventors:** Sarat Sankaran, Prashant Fuloria, Rajesh Chandran. **Attorney:** Schwegman, Lundberg & Woessner, P.A. **Patent:** 7657471

» **Joel Wiens** (Lakeville) received a patent for the design of a catcher’s shirt. **Attorney:** Robert J. Bartz. **Patent:** D608982

» **Medtronic, Inc.** (Minneapolis) invented an implantable medical device with a dual power source. **Inventors:** Craig Schmidt, Paul Skarstad. **Patent:** 7657315

» **Roger Sweningson** (Cambridge) invented a device for erosion control. **Attorney:** Patterson, Thunte, Skaar & Christensen, PA. **Patent:** 7654292