

The tree of love that bears fruit in the jungle of Jones

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Baptized as the tree of love, the curious spawn of nature gives anacahuita-shaped mangoes in the Jungle of Jones, Isle of Youth.

On the Isle of Youth, about 17 kilometers from Nueva Gerona, in a place known as La Jungla, two trunks with the same vigor hug each other from the roots, to provide mythical fruits each summer.

Baptized as the tree of love, the curious spawn of nature that gives mangoes in the form of anacahuita, is the center of a singular ritual, where they are blessed who, after depositing a coin in the shade of the forest, border the plant in search of a wish.

That, too, is the preamble to a pathway that leads to the confessed passion of husband and wife Harry and Hellen Jones for biodiversity.

They, of American origin, settled in this part of the Cuban soil in 1902 to grow one of the most exotic places on the island, where almost twenty birds are housed, among which the thrush, the parrot and the zunzuncito predominate.

Plants brought from different parts of the world come together here, according to a project in coordination with the US Department of Agriculture, which at that time had among its purposes to study the adaptability of these species to the tropical climate.

Thus, the one that constituted the second botanical garden of Cuba after that of Cienfuegos (1901), from the 30s of the last century greened and became a health tourist destination for those who needed to rest or eliminate stress under the yamagua, cocoa or ocuje.

Hellen became a widow in 1938 and touched by mysticism she had as unconditional company from that moment a majá from Santamaría, who added fame to the place.

The old woman died violently 22 years later and with her the charms of the forest, which Tomás Betancourt López, Head of the current Forest Estate, revives by immortalizing the legend of the now ancient tree of love, where the passion of Hellen and Harry.