The history of rubber—a survey of sources about the history of rubber

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- You have cookies disabled in your browser. You need to reset your browser to accept cookies or to ask you if you want to accept cookies.
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- Your browser does not support cookies. Try a different browser if you suspect this.
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Unfortunately, the history of rubber has a dark side as well. About one hundred years ago, millions of Africans died in the Congo Free State as a result of lust for rubber and rubber profits. Sources. The major commercial source of natural latex used to create rubber is the Para rubber tree, Hevea brasiliensis (Euphorbiaceae). This is largely because it responds to wounding by producing more latex.

Collection of rubber. A woman in Sri Lanka (Ceylon) in the process of harvesting rubber. In places like Kerala, where coconuts grow in abundance, half of a coconut shell is used as a container to collect the latex. The shells are attached to the tree by a short, sharp stick, and the latex drips down into it overnight. Rubber is a substance that has great use in today’s society. It assists in construction, forms the structure for tires, and even supports the soles of shoes. However, since it’s identification around three millennia ago, rubber has been greatly developed into the modern substance familiar today. First identified and collected in Central and South American in about 1600 B.C.E., the earliest rubber was mainly used for games. Although games were the primary use for rubber at the time, traces of the substance have also been found in the construction of metal and stone tools, used mainly to hold these materials to a wooden handle. Over time these early humans discovered that rubber was waterproof, and could be used to create water resistant clothing.