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### The Editor's Corner

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them furnished information condensed by the editor. The flavor of Dr. Bondar's adventures cannot be caught in a brief sketch. Those who read Portuguese will find the autobiographical account in

*Revista de Entomologia* for 1943 a stirring story.

The germination of palms is a subject fascinating to any grower. Dr. Tomlinson, who has written an earlier paper in *PRINCIPES* (vol. 1: 163-173. 1957), begins here a series of articles explaining something of the structure of palms. Following articles will discuss the structure of seedling leaves, stems, leaves, and other parts of palms.

Some members deplore the paucity of information on culture of palms in *PRINCIPES*. The editor regrets that this is due to a lack of proved information and articles. We attempt to achieve a balance of interest and will welcome contributions on the subject of culture.

## The Cuban Belly Palm-*Colpothrinax Wrightii*

HAROLD E. MOORE, JR.

Cuba's belly palm (*Colpothrinax Wrightii*) is mentioned in this issue of *PRINCIPES* as a challenge to growers (page 66). It has not yet been successfully cultivated in South Florida and doubtfully elsewhere. The photographs provided by Nixon Smiley (cover) and Frank Gatteri (figs. 31-32) demonstrate the unusual swollen trunk of this palm which has caused it to be called belly palm, bottle palm, or *palma barrigona*. The species is unique in other less conspicuous characteristics. The trunk, however, is very striking. Brother Marie-Victorin has given his impression on first seeing this palm near Concepción del Sur, Pinar del Río, in the delightful "Itinéraires Botaniques dans l'Isle de Cuba" [*Contributions de l'Institut Botanique de l'Université de Montréal* 41: 132. 1942] written by him and Brother Léon and here translated freely.

"The sun was touching the horizon.

Suddenly Brother Léon touched my arm: 'Look! *Colpothrinax Wrightii*!' And I saw a strange palm, which one does not forget when one has seen it in its environment. An amateur palmologist, Captain Johnston, when he passed by there with Brother Léon, burst out laughing when he saw the big-bellied palm for the first time, for it is a name that it merits and bears, belly palm, *palma barrigona*."

*Colpothrinax* grows on the sandy plains of western Pinar del Río and on the Isle of Pines, Cuba, where it forms extensive open stands, often with pines. Even when the land is cultivated for tobacco, the palms are often left standing, exposing their obesity. The bellies of these palms are used to make casks, beehives, water troughs, and sometimes boats or canoes. The trunks are used for small buildings, the leaves for thatch, and the fruit for hog feed.



31. A handsome grove of *Colpothrinax Wrightii* on Isle of Pines, Cuba. Photograph by F. Gatteri.

A botanical discussion of *Colpothrinax* has been provided by Dr. L. H. Bailey in *Gentes Herbarum* 4: 356-360, 1940. There additional illustrations may be seen. Still others accompany Brother Léon's text for the palms in *Flora de Cuba* 1: 258-259, 1946, and more appear in the first two volumes of the aforementioned "Itinéraires Botaniques dans l'Isle de Cuba." There is only one species in the genus which at one time was thought sufficiently close to *Pritchardia* of the Hawaiian Islands, the Dangerous

Archipelago, and the Fiji Islands, to be included in that genus. Dr. Bailey's study, however, emphasized a number of important differences sufficient to separate the two genera.

Botanically, the belly palm is a member of the subfamily Coryphoideae related to *Pritchardia* and perhaps to *Washingtonia*. The swollen self-cleaning trunk is unarmed, reaching a height of 30 feet, and bears a crown of large costapalmate leaves with long petioles and fibrous sheaths. Large branched in-



32. Trunks of belly palm used for support. Isle of Pines, Cuba. Photograph by F. Gatteri.

florescences appear among the leaves, each branch and the base of the main axis subtended by tubular bracts. The bisexual flowers have a cuplike calyx of united sepals and a corolla of three persistent petals, thus differing from *Pritchardia* in which the petals soon fall away. The six stamens are united by the bases of their filaments but do not form an evident exerted collar and the three carpels are united only by their styles. One of the carpels usually develops into a brown rounded fruit measuring about

9/16 inch in diameter. The seed has homogeneous endosperm.

There has been some question concerning the first valid appearance of the name for this species. A brief but apparently adequate description was given by Siebert and Voss in *Vilmorin's Blumengartnerei* 1: 1147, 1895, with the epithet misspelled and a reference to an unpublished name. Thus the complete citation for the name of the belly palm is *Colpothrinax Wrightii* Grisebach & H. Wendland ex Siebert & Voss.