

PALM BRIEFS

"Col Rouge" or *Neodypsis lastelliana* The Pride and Passion of a Palmateer

Whether or not *Neodypsis lastelliana* ever makes the scene outdoors in southern California, at least one healthy specimen grows robustly in Vista, California. This is the reward of reading *Principes* in which Dr. H. E. Moore, Jr. described and illustrated this palm which he saw during his trip to Madagascar (*Principes* 9: 13-29, 1965).

The author immediately started writing off to the island and very fortunately received some seed which was planted immediately. In short order, less than two months, one seed sprouted, then a second. Since I had over 50 seeds, I felt I would have plenty and another palmateer, Mr. David Barry, had stopped by so I gave him one of the newly sprouted seedlings. Only one other seed sprouted and this damped off in two days. Dave promptly lost his and I only had one left. It was just before the Biennial meetings in Miami (1966). I attended the meeting and saw approximately six six-inch plants at the Fairchild Tropical Garden. My plant was barely three inches high, so when mine reached about nine inches I checked with Stanley Kiem, Superintendent at the Garden, who reported that his were still six to seven inches high. A desperate attempt involving Dale Bremerman to try to save and force on those palms failed.

Given the V.I.P. treatment, my palm slowly grew. In its youth, when about five feet tall, the backs of the leaf rachises appeared "hot pink" and I became very excited. Although inside the jungle room, it continued to grow through the winter without any additional heat but it lost the pink coloring. As the crownshaft developed, instead



1. *Neodypsis lastelliana* with the author pointing to the reddish-brown feltlike crownshaft. The longest leaves are about 12 feet long and a trunk is just beginning to show. Photograph by A. B. Graf.

of red, it appeared more reddish-brown, very soft and woolly like felt or plush corduroy. The leaves are very erect—pinnae flat and held at right angles to the rachis—and a nice apple green. The trunk appears to be about six inches in diameter. Now all it has to do is survive outdoors. If this happens, Palm Society members in southern California, at least, can add another truly fine palm for cultivation but most important, one with color.

Since I feel others would like an estimate rather than "no comment," I'll estimate that the plant will flower in three to five years and I'll report it in *Principes* when it does.

I've made repeated attempts to get more seed which I did receive on two occasions but never did any of these later seed shipments germinate. A very

costly attempt is now underway to get more seed of this and many other palms of Madagascar.

The overall outline of this palm is similar to *Rhopalostylis sapida*. The major differences are the flat plane of the pinnae in *Neodypsis lastelliana* rather than the V-groove formed by pinnae of *R. sapida*, and the brighter green color of the leaves. The plant pictured has leaves about 12 feet long and one foot of green trunk showing. It produces two or three leaves each year. I would estimate that it is in almost full sun and has virtually no petiole. If there are other specimens anywhere, I hope the owner will write to me and let me know about his or her plant.

M. E. DARIAN, DVM
2615 Santa Fe Ave.,
Vista, California 92083

[Editor's note: Dr. Darian asked me to comment on the color of the crownshaft of *Neodypsis lastelliana*. It is a dull red or red-brown not bright red as I remember it, but still an interesting and pleasant contrast to the usual green of palm crownshafts.]

***Livistona crustacea* Burret**

There follows a bit of history I have on the growing of a palm rare to Florida, *Livistona crustacea* Burret. During 1939, while working for the Fairchild Tropical Garden, Dr. David Fairchild gave me a small potted seedling of this palm and told me Dr. Leonard Brass had sent the seed in from New Guinea. The palm was planted here in Palm Beach County on the family homesite west of the city of Lake Worth. It now has an overall height of approximately twelve feet. The crown spread is about eight feet. It has been an attractive specimen since the early years of its growth. Although it has flowered over the past eight or ten years, no fruits have developed. The

previous blooming was November, 1971. Flowers appear to be perfect.

In April, 1960, I corresponded with Dr. Leonard J. Brass, now deceased, then associated with the Archbold Biological Station, Lake Placid, Florida. He obligingly provided photos he had taken of the palm in its native habitat, the type locality for the species, and wrote much interesting information. I am taking the privilege of quoting from one of his letters as follows:

"My records show that seeds of my #7668, *Livistona crustacea* Burret (new species) were sent by air to Colonel Montgomery's Coconut Grove Palmetum in 1936. So far as I know, this is the only collection of the species, although it is possible that some other person has collected it since the war and sent seeds to the Fairchild Garden.

"My collection of *L. crustacea* was made at Lake Daviumbu, Middle Fly River, Territory of Papua, on 3 September 1936. The palm was common on forest edge along shores of swamps and lagoons, growing to a height of about 30 feet (much taller on open ground edging grass marshes); leaf bases persistent on younger trees..."

Dr. Brass was present at the 1960 spring meeting of The Palm Society and we discussed *Livistona crustacea* with the Superintendent of the Fairchild Tropical Garden, Mr. Stanley Kiem. Later in the year, Mr. Kiem wrote, "In tracing down the palm here at the FTG and at the Jennings' estate, it appears that all the ones planted in 1939 and 1940 were lost in the early 1940's." Mr. Kiem further expressed a desire for seeds at such time as the Lake Worth specimen might produce in order that the palm might be established at the Garden.

The plant has grown in its present location about thirty years with occasional mowing around it and no other care than to cut off dead leaves. Over