

PALM CLIMBERS (Cont.)

estimated to be worth a dollar a year in *palmiche* alone. By the country people the trees are classified as one hog or two hog trees according to the amount of fruit they produce.

"Of course this method of tree climb-

ing can only be used where the trunk of a palm is absolutely smooth. You could not climb a date palm this way. . . . The *trepadores* in Cuba travel far and wide in pursuit of their trade and, from the point of view of their countrymen, they make a very fair living."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The names of plants frequently prove perplexing. With the thought that some readers may enjoy knowing more about the meaning and the pronunciation of palm names, this column is begun to consider names. There is no standard guide to the pronunciation of plant names, and where English is spoken pronunciation sometimes varies from region to region. The suggested pronunciations, therefore, are by no means the only pronunciations, but they are based on the usual usage. An informal phonetic system will be used here and in later columns in which the vowels have fixed sounds: "a" either alone or at the end of a syllable as in the initial letter of *around*; "e" as in *pet*; "i" as in *if*; "o" as in *note*; "u" as in *up*. Except when it follows "n," the letter "g" should be pronounced as in *girl*: the diphthong "th" should be pronounced as in *thin*. Stressed syllables are indicated by an accent. Words from other languages do not always lend themselves to easy and pleasant pronunciation in English. Then, as in *Orbignya*, the anglicized form may differ greatly from the correct pronunciation in the language of origin.

Certain names for genera of plants have become so firmly fixed in botanical usage that they have been conserved by international botanical congresses over less familiar names that would otherwise replace them. There are eight of these names in the palms, or nine if *Desmoncus*, which does not actually require conservation, is included. These nine are the first names we consider.

Arenga (a réng ga) comes from the Malayan name *areng* used for *Arenga pinnata*.

Chamaedorea (cam ee dó ree a) is derived from a combination of the Greek words *chamai* (on the ground) and *dorea* (gift) perhaps from the generally low habit of the species, perhaps because the fruits are easily reached. Willdenow, who gave us the name, did not specify its meaning.

Desmoncus (dez món cuss) is a combination of two Greek words—*desmos* (band) and *ogkos* (hook)—and refers to the upper pinnae of the leaves which are modified into hooks in this genus of climbers.

Maximiliana (max i mil ee ay na) was named by Martius for the sponsor of his travels in Brazil, Maximilian Joseph I, once King of the Bavarians.

Orbignya (or big nee a) honors Alcide Dessalines d'Orbigny (1802-1857), a French naturalist and explorer who travelled in South America from 1826-1833 and whose palm collections were studied by Martius. If a French pronunciation is desired, a closer approximation would be "or bi nyée a."

Pigafetta (pig a fét ta) was not explained by Martius and Blume who first used it as a subgeneric name. One source suggests that it may honor A. Pigafetta who wrote an account of his voyage around the world with Magellan.

Pritchardia (pri chár dee a) was named for William T. Pritchard, once British Consul in the Fiji Islands and author of *Polynesian Reminiscences* (1866).

Veitchia (vée chee a) honors James Veitch (1792-1863), a British nurseryman.

Washingtonia (wash ing tó nee a) commemorates George Washington.