

an expedition to the South Pacific with scientists from the Philadelphia Museum of Natural History. After a stint in the Navy and a year's residence in Haiti, they settled in Miami in 1949. Mrs. Adams' ancestors in England were keen amateur horticulturists and rather

closely connected with Kew Gardens. Her great grandfather collected rhododendrons in the Himalayas, turning them over to Kew for propagation. Several are named for her relatives.

Random thoughts and observations
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Palm Trunks As Living Planters

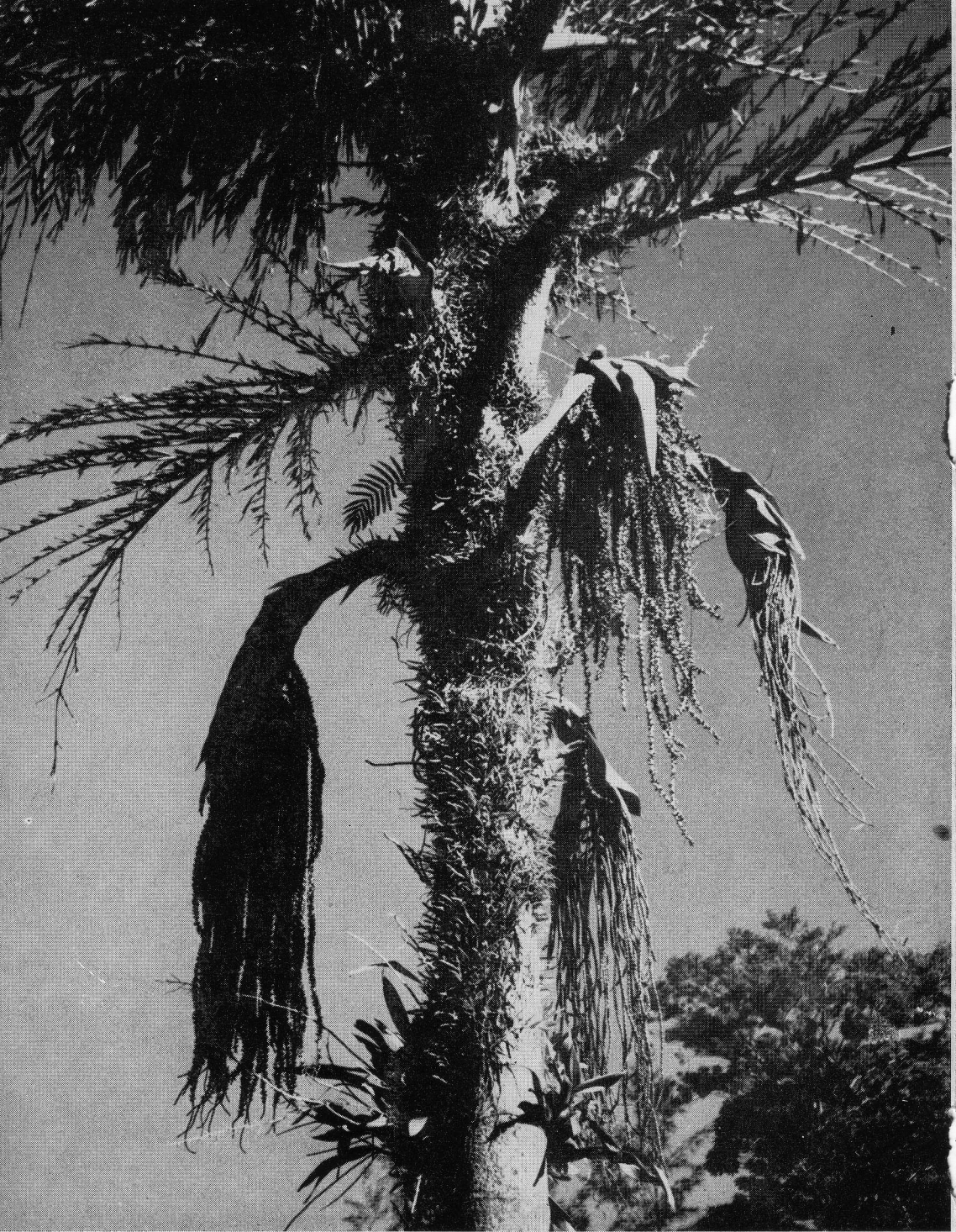
W. H. HODGE

In nature the trunks of palms, like those of many other trees, frequently serve as the home for other plants. Such plants, which simply use a tree solely for support, are known botanically as *epiphytes*. Their primary purpose in occupying such grandstand seats high above the shaded ground is to better their position in relation to sunlight. Familiar examples of epiphytes include most showy cultivated orchids as well as the great family of the Bromeliaceae, or bromels as they are more familiarly known. In general, the wetter the climate the more abundant the epiphytic population in a tropical forest.

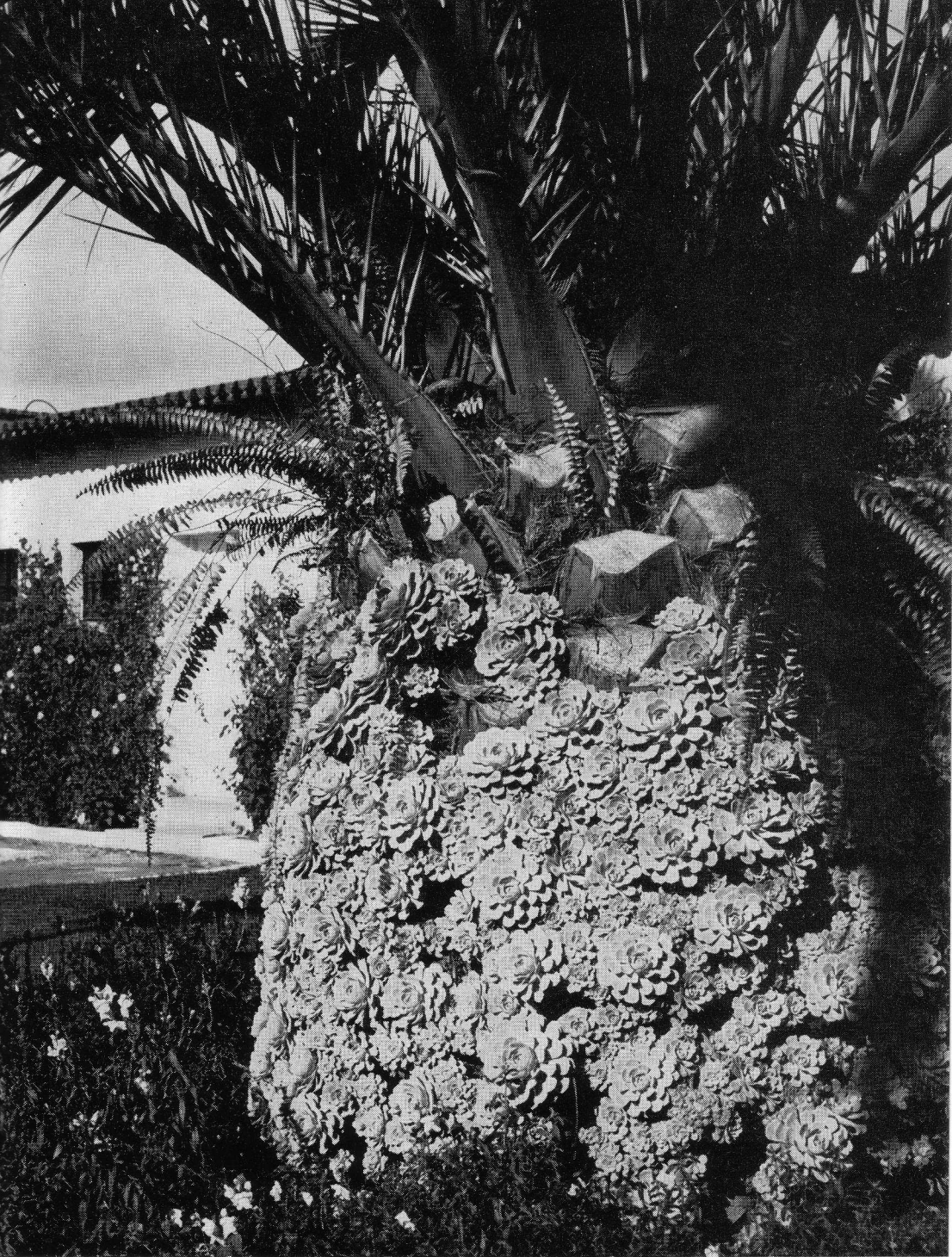
Guest plants such as these naturally find it easier to gain a toehold on trees that have rough bark. Consequently, they are usually more numerous on such trees. This follows in the family of the palms as well and as a rule those palms whose older leaves are tardily deciduous or which hang on for several years, building up a dry mass or "shag," are the most frequent species to be found supporting colonies of epiphytes. The quantity of decaying organic material accumulating in such clusters of dried leaves is considerable and its loose, well aerated mass becomes a natural growing medium for many an epiphyte, especially ferns, which commonly "seed" themselves into such sites. This is not to say that, given the opportunity, epiphytes cannot thrive on smooth palm boles, for they do. Hardly

a royal palm can be found without its smooth gray bole speckled with lichens. Though representing lower plant forms they are none the less epiphytes. Given a high enough rainfall even the smoothest palm trunk will develop its epiphytic family, usually of ferns, orchids or bromels—many, if not most of them, of ornamental habit.

To the person growing palms as garden subjects, this natural and intimate association of palms with epiphytes should be of interest for, if desired, it can be encouraged in the backyard, often with very attractive results. Ferns growing locally in the area will often naturalize themselves on your palms whether you want them to or not. But where old palm leaves persist, requiring trimming, the old stubs that remain offer suitable niches in which to encourage the growth of more ornamental species. The result is a living backyard planter. One of the most interesting examples that I have seen, using such a trimmed palm trunk in this way, was in Mexico City a few years ago. Here a species of *Echeveria*—hardly an epiphyte in nature—had been encouraged to cover over the crevices and chinks existing between the old cut-off leaf bases of a young date palm. As the accompanying figure shows, the result was very attractive. Doubtless many other garden subjects which are by nature epiphytes could be similarly used with equally interesting results.



47. Orchids and ferns growing wild as epiphytes on the smooth trunk of a cultivated fishtail palm. Wet tropical environment, West Indies. Photograph by W. H. Hodge.



48. Echeverias planted on the trunk of *Phoenix* growing in Mexico City. The Boston fern (*Nephrolepis*), also to be seen, probably naturalized itself. Photograph by W. H. Hodge.