

## PALM LITERATURE

**FIELD GUIDE TO THE RATTANS OF AFRICA.**

Terry Sunderland. Kew Publishing, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AB, UK. 2007. ISBN 978 1 84246 180 8. Price \$40.00. Paper. Pp. 66.

This is another volume in the series of palm field guides published by Kew Gardens.

The guide begins with an introductory section on rattans and their ecology, distribution and uses in Africa. Notes are also given on collecting herbarium specimens of rattans. A key to the genera is given, and there are also keys to the species of each genus.

Twenty-two species of rattan are found in west and central Africa, and all are treated in this guide. For each species the guide gives the Latin name and common names, a description, notes on uses, conservation status, habitat, distribution and distribution map, a line

drawing – very nicely done by Lucy Smith – and several, beautiful color images.

I found hardly anything to criticize – in fact this guide could serve as a model for other aspiring authors. One small thing I noticed and found slightly confusing was that the page of images opposite the treatment of *Eremospatha barendii* are not of that species, nor those opposite *Oncocalamus wrightianus* of that species.

Like the other guides in this Kew series, the *Field Guide to the Rattans of Africa* is based on sound taxonomic research. The author spent many years in West Africa working on rattans and has a deep knowledge of his subject. This knowledge is reflected in the guide – it is an excellent, high-quality piece of work, and the author is to be congratulated.

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**GROWING PALM TREES IN HAWAII AND OTHER TROPICAL CLIMATES.**

David Leaser. Mutual Publishing, Honolulu, Hawaii. 2007. ISBN 987-1-56647-825-0. Price \$12.95. Softcover. Pp. 128.

This how-to volume is David Leaser's follow-up to his attractive homage to palms, *Palm Trees: A Story in Photographs*. While the first book was a visual tour de force, it had virtually no information on palm horticulture. Persons attracted to the palm family by the photos in the first book had to look elsewhere for information on growing the palms. Leaser's second book is the perfect companion to the first. While it lacks photographic impact of the first, it has illustrated chapters on choosing the right palm for specific environments, planting palms, pests and diseases, germinating seeds, and pruning and grooming. A brief glossary is also included. While this book is aimed mostly at Hawaii, palm growers in other tropical or subtropical areas will find something of value in this manual.

Most of the book's pages are devoted to portraits of commonly cultivated palms from Hawaii and other warm areas. This "sampler" of palms covers an impressive 81 species. Each portrait takes up most of the page and is captioned with a short paragraph giving the scientific and common names, place of origin, distinctive features and noteworthy horticultural traits. Almost all of the portraits

illustrate mature palms, so readers can get an accurate idea of each palm's size, shape and garden-worthiness.

A very useful feature of this book is the section on Hawaiian botanical gardens with important palm collections. Leaser provides names and addresses (and websites) of a dozen botanical gardens, arranged by island. He also gives a brief account of each garden, highlighting the size, history or important palms for each garden. The garden section is followed by a section on palm organizations, including the International Palm Society. Contact information for local palm societies around the world is also included.

his book is deceptively slim, but it carries much the same weight as some of the larger books already on the market. It covers a very broad range of topics, not always in great depth, but with enough solid information to get the first-time palm grower off on the right foot. This book would be an excellent accompaniment to the purchase of a first palm or a welcome gift to a newcomer to palms (or a new neighbor, whose landscape needs palms!). With this book, Leaser has produced an attractive, affordable guide to growing some of the world's most beautiful plants.

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