

shrub was attended by the formation of several short ascending leaves held closely parallel to the stem for half their length, clearly showing that the plant was spending most of its vigor on the erection of new stem at the expense of the foliar growth. The photographs in Figs. 12 and 12a were taken just as

this account is being concluded, so that as yet there is no sequel. It is to be surmised, nevertheless, that the reduced foliage will soon be succeeded by a normal leaf crown, with some of the leaves arching or extending outward horizontally to five or six feet.

Coccothrinax Crinita

NAT DE LEON

The genus *Coccothrinax* as it is presently understood consists of about 30 species. Geographically they range from South Florida through the West Indies, reaching their greatest development in Cuba where some 21 species are recorded.

At present there are a dozen species under cultivation in South Florida, but these are still poorly understood, for much work still remains to be done in the genus. One of the species, however, is so distinct that it could never be confused with others. Imagine, if you will, a palm whose trunk is completely covered with long strands of fiber that give the appearance of hair and you have *Coccothrinax crinita*.

This species, found only in Cuba, was first discovered by Charles Wright, but was not described until some 40 years later by Beccari. The original description was very fragmentary and it was not until some years later that better collections were to fill in the missing details. Specimens have only been collected in two widely separated mountainous areas in Santa Clara and Pinar del Rio, Cuba.

Coccothrinax crinita is a palm to 30 feet tall. Its large, palmate circular leaves are deeply divided into many segments, dark glossy green above, grey-green beneath. From the bases of the petioles are produced long strands of fiber that

completely cover the trunk. If one inspects the trunk closely, he will find that the old leaf bases persist from ground level up, therefore, the long hairy mass also persists. A much branched inflorescence is produced from among the leaves, at first nearly upright, later almost hanging under the great weight of its fruit. The fruits, to one inch in diameter, are light purple at maturity and very fleshy; the furrowed seeds to half an inch.

Credit for the introduction of this interesting palm must go to our Society's president, Mr. David Barry Jr., plant introducer extraordinary. The record shows that in 1939 he sent young seedlings to the U. S. Plant Introduction Station, Coconut Grove, Florida. From these, three mature specimens can be seen today, one growing very close to the station's main office. These are the only mature palms growing in Florida. Also in cultivation are two mature trees growing at Atkins Gardens in Cuba, but their origin is unknown to me.

It is interesting to note that *Coccothrinax crinita* is without a doubt the hardiest species of the genus in cultivation today. During the very severe winter of 1957-1958, Mr. Dent Smith of Daytona Beach, Florida, recorded that two plants only several years old were unaffected by cold. Further proof was noted when I visited the Cowgill Nursery

in Tampa, Florida, during the spring of 1958 and saw a young seedling with no signs of cold damage. It may perhaps

be theorized that the fiber produced, even when the palm is very young, helps protect the bud from cold damage.



21. *Coccothrinax crinita* fruiting at Chapman Field, Florida. Photograph by R. W. Read.

Coccothrinax crinita is not a difficult palm to grow. The seeds germinate readily. After the first few leaves have been produced, a full sun situation is preferred, although the palm will tol-

erate shade at any stage of growth. While it shows no soil preference, a loose, well drained medium suits it best. Although slow growing, the species is well worth planting as a unique palm.

New Caledonia For Palms

DAVID BARRY, JR.

When Captain Cook discovered New Caledonia in 1774 he was evidently more impressed with the native pines than with the palms. He named the island New Caledonia because the pines reminded him of Scotland. Probably Captain Cook saw only the coconut palms and not the beautiful palms that lured me there, as these grow deep in the forests where they are not visible from the sea.

In January of 1962 I spent ten days in New Caledonia in a quest for palms. For several reasons they seemed to promise more to a palm collector from Southern California than would the palms from other places in the tropics. The islands south of New Caledonia had already been a source of palms for Southern California. From Lord Howe Island had come the howeias. From Norfolk Island and from New Zealand had come their respective species of *Rhopalostylis*. These palms have done well in the coastal belt of Southern California since their introduction a half century ago. It seemed reasonable to hope that New Caledonia palms from the mountain regions, some of which exceed 5000 feet in elevation, would be able to withstand the frosts of Southern California.

Except for being French and in the South Pacific New Caledonia is not like Tahiti. Languorous, glamorous Tahiti is verdure-covered in many shades of green. Its natives are light-skinned Poly-

nesians. Papeete, the capital, is a small town. Tahiti is a well-advertised tourist attraction with accent on a life of ease. On the other hand, the green of New Caledonia is concentrated only in its dark forests and eastern coastal areas which contrast sharply with rolling areas of niauoli or of low brush. Its natives are dark-skinned Melanesians with thick, woolly hair that is often dyed a reddish brown. Nouméa is a small city of 20,000 population. Accent is on a life of industry. Mining is the principal activity, with important nickel, chrome and cobalt deposits. Until recently few tourists, except New Zealanders, visited New Caledonia.

Life in Nouméa is pleasant, and is as French as that in France. There are a number of excellent restaurants and a splendid beach for swimming. Long loaves of French bread are delivered like newspapers.

New Caledonia does not have the intensely tropical climate of lands that are near the equator. Except for somewhat more humidity its climate is much like that of the Hawaiian Islands. New Caledonia lies in the South Pacific in latitudes from 20° 8' to 22° 25', about the same distance below the equator that the Hawaiian Islands are above it in the North Pacific. Not counting New Zealand, New Caledonia is the largest island in the South Pacific. It is 250 miles long with an average width of 30 miles. A *chaîne centrale* forms its back-