

which can cause leaf burn and root damage.

Landscape Use. *Rhapis excelsa* adapts to most tropical and subtropical landscapes. *R. subtilis* thrives in warm, humid regions. *R. humilis* prefers subtropical landscapes with cool summer nights.

Indoor Use. *Rhapis excelsa* is the most adaptable of all species to interior conditions.

Acknowledgments

My thanks to Richard Douglas for proofreading this article and for his helpful comments, and to my husband Kenneth McKamey, who never complains of taking yet another photo of *Rhapis* for me.

Extensive Collections of *Rhapis*

Fairchild Tropical Gardens in Miami, Florida: *Rhapis excelsa* including green and variegated cultivars, *R. subtilis*, *R. humilis*, *R. laosensis*, and *Rhapis* sp.

The Huntington Botanical Garden in San Marino, California: *Rhapis humilis*, *R.*

excelsa and cultivars, *Rhapis laosensis*, and *Rhapis* sp.

Opryland Hotel Conservatory in Nashville, Tennessee: *Rhapis excelsa* including rare variegated and green cultivars and *R. subtilis*.

LITERATURE CITED AND FURTHER READING

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Note: The back issues of *Principes* listed above are available at \$6 each (postpaid) from The International Palm Society Business Office, P.O. Box 368, Lawrence, KS 66044.

Principes, 33(3), 1989, pp. 139-140

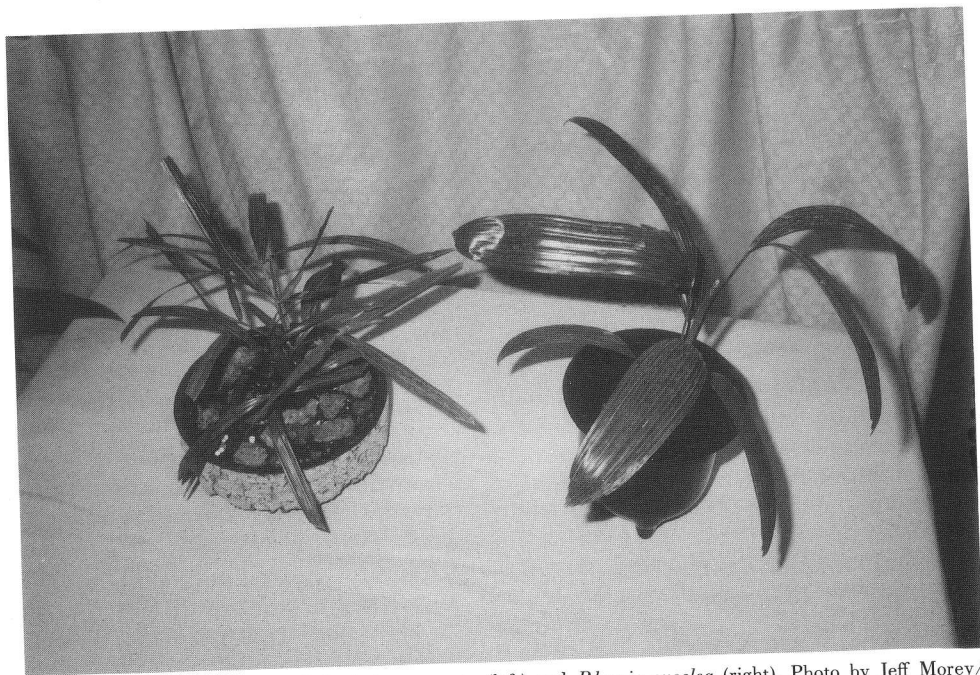
Millions of Alleged *Rhapis excelsa* Seed Sprout into *Guihaia argyrata*

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Rhapis excelsa is a versatile ornamental species, extensively used as houseplants, landscape specimens, and patio accents. However, supply of this popular palm seldom exceeds demand since seed is scarce and propagation is primarily by division, a slow process of increasing numbers.

During 1985, so-called *Rhapis excelsa* seed from mainland China suddenly became available from Far Eastern dealers. While some growers were suspicious that the seed might be the tropical *Rhapis subtilis* from Thailand, many nurseries quickly obtained seed before the supply ran out. After the buying frenzy was over, more than 10



1. Three year old seedlings of *Guihaia argyrata* (left) and *Rhapis excelsa* (right). Photo by Jeff Morey/Brantwood Publications.

million alleged *R. excelsa* seed were estimated to have been purchased by American and Australian growers, sending panic of future oversupply throughout the nurseryworld. Since *R. excelsa* have never been known to produce seed in these vast numbers, many nurserymen began to doubt that it was *Rhapis* of any kind.

Growers from both hemispheres experienced germination rates of 20% to 80%. As seed began to spout, thin grasslike leaves appeared, quite unlike any known species of *Rhapis*. Initial growth was extremely slow, and many seedlings struggled to survive, despite excellent culture. Three year old plants are now half the size of comparable *Rhapis excelsa*; underside of leaves are silvery; leaflets are split into many narrow segments. The largest plants display dark brown trunk fiber and the formation of small offshoots.

Dr. John Dransfield and Dr. Natalie Uhl have recently determined that this clustering fan palm is probably *Guihaia argy-*

rata, a new Chinese genus closely related to *Rhapis*. During 1984, Dr. Dransfield and two Chinese botanists, Lee Shu-Kang and Wei Fa-Nan, were responsible for identifying and naming this palm from Guangxi and Guangdong provinces in China.

Guihaia grows on limestone hills in warm temperate to subtropical climates and should be hardy to 20° F (-5° C). Mature size is about 3' (1 m). Dr. Dransfield observed *Guihaia* growing in shade and full sun; therefore, these palms could prove to be small, interesting ornamentals for commercial use. In the landscape, *Guihaia* might be a miniature substitute for *Chamaerops humilis* which can grow to large proportions. Several years of cultivation will be necessary to prove if *Guihaia argyrata* could be a successful indoor plant.

Further information about *Guihaia* can be found in *Principes* Vol. 29, No. 1 and in "Genera Palmarum."