

# Palm Research in 2001

COMPILED BY

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## Books

**Betrock's cultivated palms of the world.** D. & A. Ellison. 2001. Betrock Information Systems. ISBN 0-9629761-5-6. 257 pages. Price US\$59.99.

**Insects on palms.** F. W. Howard, D. Moore, R. M. Giblin-Davis & R. G. Abad. 2001. CABI Publishing. ISBN 0-85199-326-5. 400 pages. Price US\$65.00.

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**The insect fauna of rattan.** H. Steiner. 2001. GTZ, Eschborn. ISBN 3-933984-99-8. 92 pages. Price 5 Euros (also available on line at <http://www.gtz.de/toeb>)

**Field guide to palms in Papua New Guinea.** A. Barfod, R. Banka & J. Dowe. 2001. AAU Reports 40. ISBN 87-87600-55-2. Price US\$15.00

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In November 1999, the *Gulubia* flowered for the first time and set three infructescences with over 500 fruit each. Cream flowers were followed by pale yellow-orange ovoid fruits (Fig.2) that ripened to a blue-grey background with prominent longitudinal charcoal grey striping (Fig. 3). Within two days of harvesting, the fruits turned black. As if this color change was not dramatic enough, the thin pulp was raspberry-red in color.

Fruits range from 6–10 mm in length and because the pulp, while thin, is difficult to remove by hand, I have simply soaked the fruit in water for two days and sowed them on the surface of a standard nursery mix (peat moss/perlite/silica sand). Two community pots of about 100 seeds each were held in the FTG Nursery at about 30°C from December 1999 until June 2000 when the first seedlings emerged. Within a month, approximately 75% of the seeds had germinated and by September 2000, all had a second leaf. Most of these seedlings were donated to FTG for future planting and distribution to members.

The subsequent fruiting in December 2000 resulted in over a thousand fruit which were distributed to collectors and nurseries in South Florida. At that time I cleaned the fruit by hand by adding some silica sand to a handful of seed and vigorously rubbing my handful of sand and seed to remove the pulp. This process yielded very

clean seeds in less time than any other methods I had tried. These seeds were sown on 8 January 2001, but upon dissection in October 2001 all the ungerminated seeds I sampled were desiccated or showed signs of fungal activity. Despite my hope that depulping the seeds would improve germination, this was not the case. I wonder if the act of removing the endocarp somehow promoted fungal infection or speeded up desiccation before the seeds germinated.

This year, I shall clean some seeds but not the entire batch to see if epicarp removal is the limiting factor in germination.

Of all the pendant leaflet palms that are so graceful and so reminiscent of the tropics, *Gulubia* seems to be the best adapted for cultivation in warm areas outside the tropics. As attractive as they are, I have found *Euterpe oleracea*, *E. precatorea* and *E. edulis* to be even more cold-tender and intolerant of our alkaline soils and dry winter winds. Although *Gulubia costata* has been rarely available to collectors in South Florida, we now know that this species can be raised to maturity in our area with only minimal cold protection when young and can become a welcome addition to the landscape. Once the germination problems are solved, cultivated seedlings of this palm may be available to more palm enthusiasts than ever before.

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