

Announcing the Arrival of *Nypa* *fruticans* Fruit in St. Lucia

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1. *Nypa fruticans* fruit arrived on St. Lucia's Atlantic coast already sprouted.

Nypa fruticans fruit has recently been discovered in St. Lucia.

On September 22, 2013, a group from the National Trust staff, Craig Henry, Lance Peterson and Saphira Hunt, were conducting a biosecurity visit to a small islet, Praslin Island, off the eastern coast of St. Lucia in order to protect native lizards and ensure rats have not returned. They discovered an unusual looking, already sprouted fruit along the beach. An image of the fruit was sent to Roger, who then emailed it to Larry (Fig. 1). To our knowledge, it is the first recorded sighting of *Nypa fruticans* in St. Lucia. Laurent Jean Pierre informed Roger that he has seen the fruit on Atlantic beaches before, and so it is definitely floating around. Mark de Silva also informed Roger that it is commonly seen on beaches in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

According to Genera Palmarum (Dransfield et al. 2008), *Nypa fruticans* occurs naturally from Sri Lanka and the Ganges Delta to Australia, the Solomon Island and the Ryukyu Islands. It was introduced to the Niger Delta of West Africa in the late 19th century and has spread to western Cameroon. A naturalized population of *Nypa fruticans* was reported from Panama (Duke 1991), and germinated fruits were reported from Manzanilla beach in Trinidad (Bacon 2001). Bacon (2001) speculated that the Trinidad specimens arrived from West Africa by ocean currents and because of the prevailing currents it was unlikely that they came from Panama. Inspired by the Bacon article, Dennis Johnson (2001) of Cincinnati, Ohio wrote to the editors of *PALMS* about seeing naturalized colonies of *Nypa fruticans* in western Guyana in 1994, on the Barima River, downstream from Drum Hill, at a place called Blackwater. His boatman had lived in the area all of this life and reported that *Nypa* first appeared around Mabaruma about 20–30 years earlier. Johnson remembered seeing about 20 colonies. He

speculated that *Nypa* propagules from Africa probably became established near the mouth of the river and fruits from those colonies were borne farther upstream by the tidal currents. Johnson (2001) wrote that it would not be surprising to find other colonies elsewhere in the Guianas, Venezuela and Colombia.

Nypa fruticans now appears to be arriving in St. Lucia on similar ocean currents. This is all very exciting; however, there is some concern among local people that it is going to get into St. Lucia's mangroves, because it thrives in the soft mud of estuarine situations at the mouth of rivers (Dransfield et al. 2008). Bacon (2001) calculated that *Nypa fruticans* propagules have been available for dispersal across the Atlantic for nearly 90 years. He stated that less than 10 percent are viable on arrival and that it may take a much longer time period before this species becomes established, trapped in unsuitable strand lines as they are along the Atlantic beaches. However, Saint Lucia is unusual in that it has most of its mangrove on the Atlantic coast. There is mangrove on the main island within 400 m from where the sprouting fruit was observed.

LITERATURE CITED

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