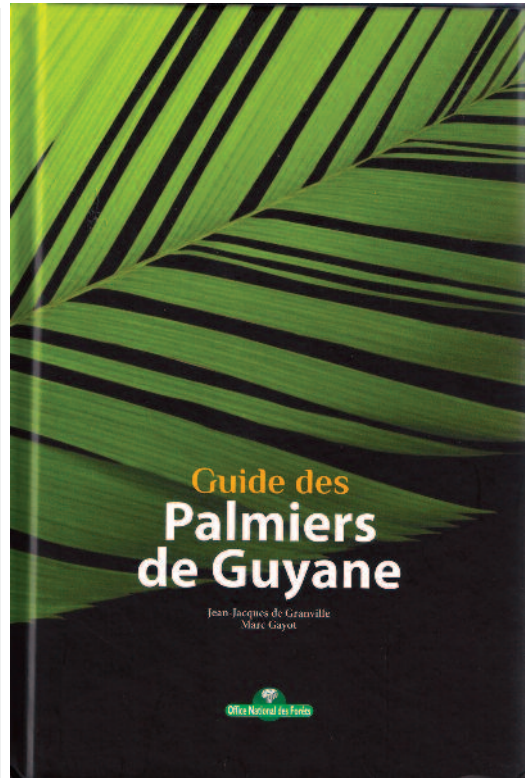


PALM LITERATURE

GUIDE DES PALMIERS DE GUYANE – Jean-Jacques de Granville and Marc Gayot. Office National des Forêts, Guyane. 2014. ISBN: 978-2-84207-374-9. Price: €29. Pp. 273, profusely illustrated. (Contact dr.guyane@onf.fr)

Guyane, or French Guiana, is an overseas department of France, bordered by Suriname to the west and Brazil to the south and east. There has been an active presence of palm botanists in Guyane for several decades with a consequent substantial legacy of published research on many aspects of palms, ranging from taxonomy and ecology to population dynamics. From an identification perspective, fieldworkers in Guyane have had the *Field Guide to the Palms of the Americas* by Henderson, Galeano and Bernal at their disposal, but this field guide is now out of date, and as it covers two whole continents, Guyane is somewhat lost in the book. Now comes a fantastically good field guide, perhaps the best palm field guide I have so far come across and one that will no doubt inspire other guides in the future. Field botanists, palm lovers, ecologists and conservationists now have at their fingertips a source of information on the palms of this country. No doubt, the guide will also serve those in Suriname and perhaps Guyana (old British Guiana) too.

What is abundantly clear is that the authors know the palms of Guyane inside and out. This extraordinary knowledge underpins the wealth of illustrative material in the book. Every palm species is illustrated in amazing detail, with illustrated keys, silhouettes of whole palms and leaves, inflorescences and fruit, and this intimate knowledge of the palms has allowed the construction of wonderful comparative tables of, e.g. fruit, with every species in the book organized in one big composite plate allowing easy comparison. There are similar plates of illustrations – diagrams, colored photographs or silhouettes – allowing instant comparison. Such tables could only be developed with the authors' detailed knowledge of Guyanese palms.



The book begins with introductory material covering the country, its climate and vegetation, palm morphology and evolutionary history, Guyanese palms in a global context, ethnobotany, followed by how to identify Guyanese palms, with keys to genera and species and one of the best illustrated glossaries I know. Each species receives a generous two-page spread. Finally there is a bibliography and a list of contributors, besides the principal authors, eight more.

The whole book is beautifully designed, well printed on paper that will probably survive well in field conditions and at 23.5 × 16 cm will easily fit into a day sack.

Enthusiasts interested in all aspects of palms, whether francophone or not, will enjoy this superb book. At a cost of a mere €29, it is a steal!

JOHN DRANSFIELD