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SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTSCYCAD & ZAMIAD STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER NO. 8NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1981

Dear Friends,

In answer to my request for more activity within the group we did stir up a little enthusiasm. Margaret Telfer came to the fore with an interesting letter about her own personal "back-yard" of cycads out Upper Brookfield way.

I have seen these beauties first hand and believe they are another form of *Macrozamia miquellii*. The seed is smaller than the Fraser Island type and the foliage very like a blue version of *Macrozamia communis*. Just has to be another variety of *miquellii*.

Large seed obtained this year of *Macrozamia macdonnellii* still shows no signs of germination as yet. Mine are planted in a morning sun situation. No hassles however as cycad seed is erratic in germination at the best of times.

My proposed booklet on cycads "Cycads of Australia" has been finished this past year but so far have not done much about it. Seems from one publisher it warrants publications, but interest in the subject would make it a limited publication risk. I am now having line drawings done to cut costs of having all color transparencies as first planned. Plan to submit manuscript to S.G.A.P. in 1982.

In accordance with a suggestion given to me in regard to upgrading our Cycad and Zamia study group, I have compiled a questionnaire for all members to endeavour to answer and return to me before December, 31st, 1981:-

- (1) Please state if you grew cycad/zamia seedlings and what varieties are indigenous.
- (2) What is your particular favourite species in the Australian genera.
- (3) During 1981 have you been on any field trips or even journeys where the cycadales are known to grow.
- (4) Did you observe any species growing in their natural state (if so) and if species not known, please give area concerned.
- (5) Have you ever tried hand pollination of the cycadales, i.e. placing pollen from male cones to cones on centre leaves of female plants.
- (6) How successful have you been with rooting offsets taken from *Cycas* etc. (give details).

Since last time of writing, I have had news from various sources of the sawing off and re-rooting of growing heads of the genera within the cycadales. Quite obviously this is successfully carried out in the U.S.A.

Other sources tell me that caudices are multi sawn or even log-layered in part of New South Wales.

I would like to get more accurate information about this practice.

Hopefully my ambition is still to organise a trip north to Bundaberg to view the very interesting cycad on Noel McCormack's property.

This appears to be *macrozamia pauli-guilielmi*, but the pinnae are definitely much thicker than is the type plant from around Gympie.

Question is that maybe here we have a cross with some others *macrozamia* where populations merge, or we have a possible new variant.

Because of nil activity in the way of letters etc., the hoped trip before Christmas did not eventuate, but I am hopeful we can arrange something early in 1982.

Yours sincerely,

LEN BUTT,
LEADER.

1 Grundy Street,
ALICE SPRINGS. N.T. 5750.

21st November, 1981.

Dear Mr. Butt,

Firstly:- Cycas armstrongii occurs in North Queensland, from around Weipa and north of Moreton Telegraph Station. This is in the same latitude as the Top End of the Territory. C. media stops just south of Coen.

Cycas from Mt. Morgan.

Going from Rockhampton on the coastal plain, up into the hills at Mt. Morgan you climb up the steep slopes. The Cycas growing there resembles C. media but it has very large seeds. John Maconochie was inclined to describe it as a new species but had to review all his collections before coming to a final decision.

M. macdonnelli.

The Macdonnell Ranges consist of a number of ridges running roughly ESE to WNW. Each main ridge is itself called a range, e.g. Chewings Range, Heavitree Range. The ranges extend for two to three hundred miles, east and west of Alice Springs. There are outlying ranges to the N.E. and the S.W.

In the western Macdonnells, various creeks rise in the north and cut their way through the ranges in a series of gaps and gorges. The cycads grow in many of these gaps or in small gullies on the southern slopes of these ranges. The Chewings Range has many such sites:- Simpsons Gap, Standley Chasm, Hugh River Gorge, Serpentine Gorge. The Cycads also occur in Palm Valley, and at King's Canyon, in the James Range, to the S.W. of the Macdonnells.

The cycads have a scattered occurrence in the Eastern Macdonnells. There are only two plants left in the Heavitree Gap on the southern edge of Alice Springs, They occur near Arltunga, an old gold mining town about 50 miles east of Alice. Also on the southern slopes of Mt. Riddock and the Hartz Ranges to the N.E.

The plants grow in comparatively sheltered sites in gullies or on the southern, shady side of steep hills. It is a massive cycad. The trunk can grow up to 2 metres long, with a diameter of 60 to 80 cm. The trunk is usually procombent, i.e. it bends over and lies on the ground.

It resembles a small date palm in appearance, with numerous leaves, unto 220cm long, by 32 cm. The female cones are upto 50 cm long by 25 cm wide. The male cones are narrower. Fresh seed including pericarp weighs about 100 gm.

The literature states that there is a 6 month dormancy period, from the time the seed leaves the cone. Most seed ripens and drops in April. In August 1980, after good winter rains, seed was germinating at King's Canyon.

Problems in collecting seed in any quantity are:-

1. Pricky leaves. They are not unique in this
2. Inaccessibility. Sites with reasonable road access are National Parks.

Outside of Parks, road access is poor. Hugh River Gorge is about 1½ miles from a very rough road. The gorge extends for about 1 mile. Most plants grow on steep hillsides or up rocky gullies.

3. The seed is heavy and large. Collecting at Hugh River can involve collecting the seeds 50 feet up a steep hillside. They carrying the seed for up to a mile down a rocky creek bed, and then for a mile and a half to the road. 200 seeds will weigh 20 kg. To collect 1,000 seeds will take 5 such journeys.

These are some comments on the species. Feel free to edit and reduce my ramblings for your newsletter.

Please let me know how your germination goes. And that of your fellow members. Especially if you or anyone else have poor results.

Yours Sincerely,

ROD HORNER.