

11 MAR 1985

Sub
due

SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS PALM STUDY GROUP

FEBRUARY - MARCH 1985, ISSUE No 4.

Leader: Len P. BUTT - Ph. No. 07 8483515

Assistant: Brian RUNNEGAR - Ph. No. 07 3907577

Well members once again the newsletter! It is indeed very encouraging to find such good Australian literature now available on our principles!

Let us make this group a really active one, and I do thank the one or two members who wrote and asked for the little seed we did have, mostly by the courtesy of Bob Dinte a very active member. Lets have lots of letters and the occasional picture of palms you see in the rainforest or on your Australian travels. Maybe some of the mysteries will be cleared up this way.

For instance, I need lots of information on *Caryota rumphiana* and also *Carpentaria accuminata*.

The species CALAMUS in Australia

The much maligned climbing palms of Australia and New Guinea have long been regarded here as "wait-a-while", "come backquick" and lawyer-cane. (lawyer because the inferences is that both never let you go)! The armed flagella of many species are infamous for removing hats and catching clothing for those who venture into our rain forests.

The species is seldom grown here as an ornamental. It is highly regarded overseas, being grown as potted plants and for indoor decoration.

They also have a highly commercial use overseas, the dried cones are very flexible and are the main source of rattan canes in basketweaving and cane furniture weaving. This is seldom utilised in Australia, except perhaps in the community groups that are involved in art and craft courses.

A potted Calamus is best kept in a highly organic mixture and this must be well drained. Flagella should be removed if kept as an indoor plant.

The seed of calamus is notoriously slow to germinate which also makes it not a good proposition with nurseries. Some of the

In fact Calamus motii from north Qld. has very attractive cream seed which forms in strings, each seed has a net pattern of fine brown lines which makes it desirable as a floral art material.

Calamus motii has large arching fronds to about 3 to 4 metres long and the rhachis is often golden spined and the palm stems are highly thorned, the thin golden thorns cover much of the climbing stems and the palm has very long flagella which eventually form large thickets. Definitely a house or understorey species.

Calamus australis has definite similarities to motii but the spines are greenish - to brown large and rigorous climbed with fronds very large but not quite as long as motii the seed on the flagella are also cream, a plant of the north-east rain forests.

Calamus caryotioides or fish-tail calamus. This very slender rigorous species has leaves about 1.5 metres long and the tips are broad and truncate. Possibly the least offensive of the lawyer canes. Useful as a pot plant.

Calamus muelleri - This widespread vigorous climber is well known to rainforest walkers from North N.S.W. to perhaps Mackay in Queensland. Covered in short bristly spines, its long thorned flagella are probably the most well known to south-east Queenslanders. The fruit is also cream. I have often seen dry clumps of the canes and can well understand their basket making qualities.