

**ASSOCIATED SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS STUDY
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CYCAD, ZAMIAD and PALM STUDY GROUP - MAY - JUNE 1997

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Well folks, here I am again, better late than never, but still ticking. This is May. Please remember June 1st is the day for this years subscriptions. I guess 15 years with this group has hardened me a bit, so subscription renewals will be accepted all June, but after July 1st unfinancial members will not be sent newsletters. We still are only \$5 annually.

I seem to be making progress with the task of getting a new leader. One may come forward this year.

It is good to be getting about again and visiting other collections. Remarkable to see just how palm and cycad enthusiasts are growing really difficult species very well.

Although an exotic palm, I spied two huge trunked Pigafetta at least 20 metres high growing in a well furnished rain forest outside Nambour. Knowing its growing difficulties here, it was good to see it doing so well.

At a recent weekend expo of the P.A.C.S.O.A. group it was good to see seedlings at last of the seven newer section Parazamias on display, plus some for sale. At last also cultivated crosses are beginning to emerge among them. Although I am a great believer in botanical names being used in naming nomenclature, it is also good to see the names of people you know being put on newer cycads, i.e. cycas maconochiei, cycas tuckeri, sect parazamia cranei and sect parazamia machinii, all having done splendid work among the indigenous orchids (in the case of Crane) and the smaller cycadales. - (The last statement does not include Dr Maconochie, whose expertise and study with the cycas was uncompleted by his untimely death) - considering that as little as only a decade ago there was much nomenclature confusion among this family, and farmer/grazier eradication was the call of the day.

One thing I personally have discovered is that critical comments against researchers and teachers in the field of cycadale taxonomy make the perpetrator small in the eyes of others, and, in my case, I am grateful for having gained knowledge by any error made, determining not to do so again.

Quoting extracts from notes of Dr Ken Hill of Sydney, a botanist now actively doing research on the cycas in the Northern Territory and also Far North Queensland, he notes that hybridism amongst cycas in the NT and again in the eastern Queensland coast population generally occurs where the populations of cycas species mingle at the borders of their respective habitats or actually grow into each others habitats. Where geographic separation is too great, hybrids would not appear.

With plants in close proximity, it has been noted hybrids between *C. armstrongii* and *C. maconochiei*; *C. calcicola* and *C. conferta*; *C. armstrongii* and *C. conferta*; *C. arnhemica* and *C. orientis*; *C. basaltica* and *C. lane-poolei*; *C. calcicola* and *C. conferta* - all these in the Western Australia and Northern Territory regions - while in Queensland intergraded crosses so far noted are *C. media* and *C. platyphylla*; *C. media* and *C. ophiolitica*; *C. ophiolitica* and *C. megacarpa*. There possibly will be more. (Editor's note: Although not officially recognised as yet, I still state *C. normanbyana* does occur in the upper Normanby Range and further down to the coast at the base of the range. The difference was noted by Vince Winkel and myself in 1994 and is probably an intergraded cross with *C. media*.)

I noted specifically in Ken Hill's Revision he gives credence to the existence of *C. lane-poolei* once more, although Maconochie put it into synonymy. Hill states it is distinguished by the glossy green to slightly bluish new growth, and the discolourous pinnae with midrib equally prominent above and below. The leaves have marked similarity to *C. armstrongii*, but the plant is more robust in all aspects.

Further, cataphylls are coated with thick wool similar to *C. canalis* and *C. lanata*, but not found in *C. armstrongii*, hence a separate form. It is known for several populations in the north-west of the Kimberleys in Western Australia, mostly in savannah forests on sandy soils; caudex generally 4-5 metres, but can reach eight metres occasionally.

Cycas tuckeri, a newer edition, was first spotted by Robert Tucker, a keen naturalist and enthusiastic cycad researcher. It was only named recently, in his honour, and is extremely localised and restricted to the one population near Coen in North Queensland, growing in open savannah woodland on gritty soils and granitic slopes. There will be more about this cycas later.

Len Butt.

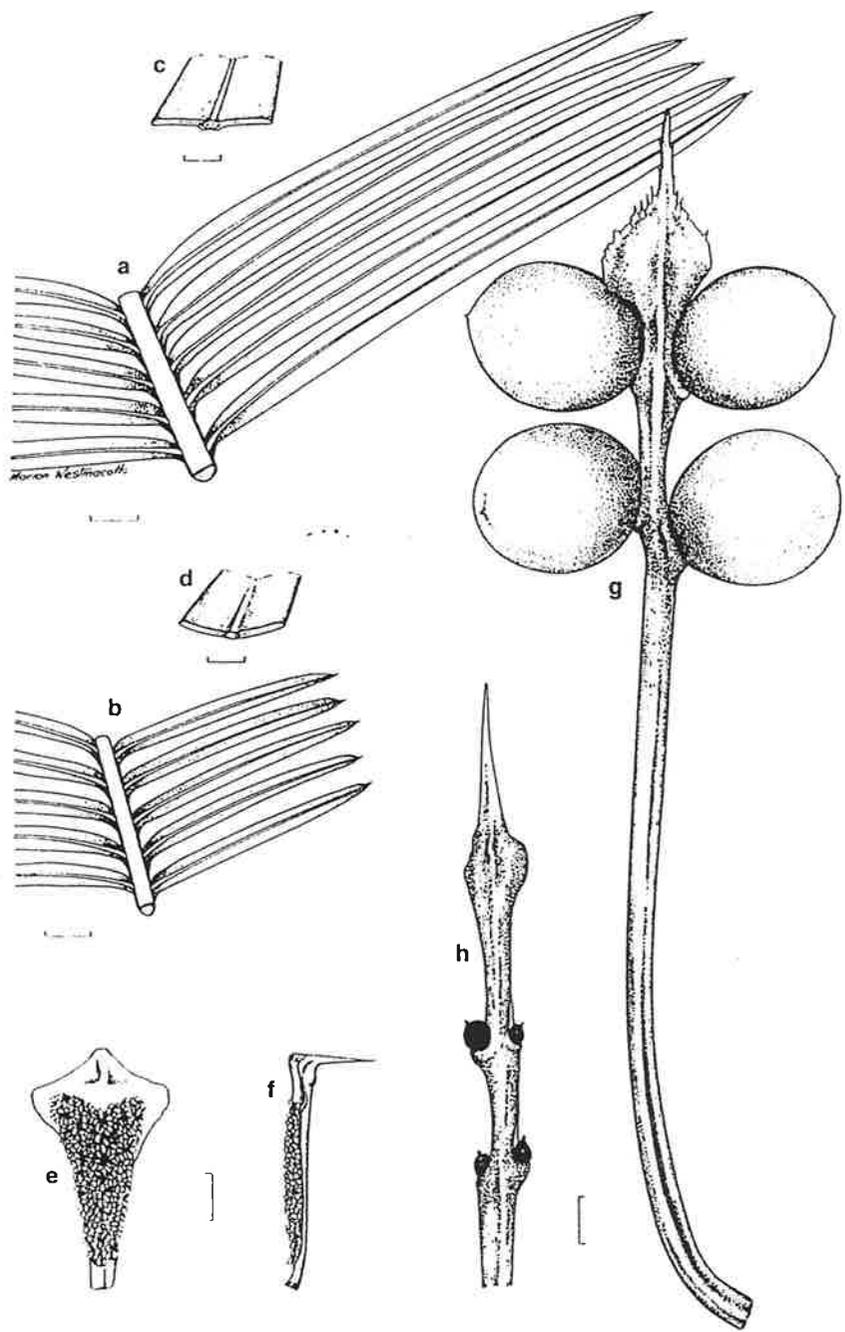


Fig. 17. *C. armstrongii*. a, b parts of leaves. c, d, sections of pinnae. e, f, microsporophyll. g, megasporophyll with seed and stipe. h, tip of megasporophyll (a, c, e, f from Parker NSW137882, b, d, g from Blaxell 88/087, h from Stone 10658). Scale bar: a, b, g, h = 1 cm; c, d = 2 mm; e, f = 5 mm.

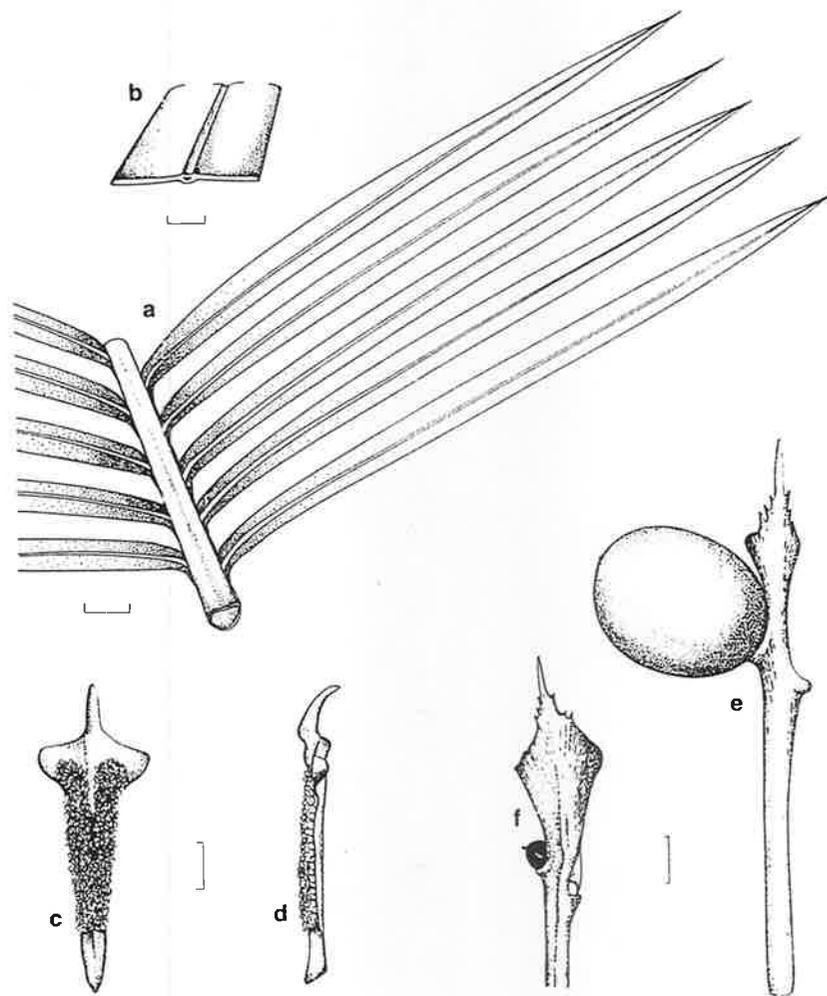


Fig. 18. *C. lane-poolei*. a, part of leaf. b, section of pinna. c, d, microsporophyll. e, megasporophyll with seed and stipe. f, tip of megasporophyll (a, b, e from Hill 4077, c, d from Macouchie 1283, f from Lullfitz 57). Scale bar: a, e, f = 1 cm; b = 2 mm; c, d = 5 mm.