

SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

INDIGENOUS PALM STUDY GROUP


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Leader: L. BUTT - Phone No. 07 8483515

Assistant: Brian RUNNEGAR - Phone No. 07 3907577

IMPORTANT NOTICE

WELL WE ARE NOW INTO MAY AND SGAP FINANCIAL YEAR ENDS.  
AGAIN A REQUEST FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE, IF THE BOX HAS  
A RED DOT 

We covered quite a bit of cultural ground last newsletter and let us hope it can continue. This issue we are using cultural information published 1929 by an Australian grower.

Australian rainforests, those that are left to us, still harbour a large quantity of palms, and it is to be hoped every species will be preserved in cultivation, because it does not seem at all likely our various Governments are conservationist enough to save them. Along with the dwindling rainforest Australia does not have a large quantity of the rainforest palms as is evident in other tropic environs. Some 40 species occur mostly in our north.

Aboriginal man and the later Europeans have not used our palms to the economic potential evident overseas. The climbing calamus did come into use as rattan cane for baskets, but it is a dwindling industry, and most people only think of the plant as a imitating "wait a while" lawyer cane. Actually some of the species are very attractive and make excellent potted plants.

There is also great potential for building in the trunks of many palms, as the stems consist of numerous fibres in fine strands imbedded in a spongy tissue. In tall palms this arrangement has developed to a high degree of refinement. The fibrous tissues forming a dense array of steely hard cable like strands. There is a big similarity to the structural strength of a palm to a pre-stressed steel reinforced concrete pylon.

THE CULTIVATION OF PALMS IN POTS - G.K. COWLISHAW  
FRHS.

There is no more useful or attractive pot plants than a well-grown Palm, and no home should be without a good selection of varieties and sizes. They are easy to manage and need but little attention to keep them growing and in good health.

They will do well either in a bush-house or a glasshouse (green-house), according to the climate and variety grown.

In coastal N.S.W. and Queensland a very large selection of excellent Palms can be grown, and in Melbourne and similar climates all the hardy species and quite a number of others can be grown in a warm bush-house.

The bush-house must be so constructed that no direct rays of the sun can fall upon any part of the Palm, but only the subdued diffused rays may reach them. In order to bring about this condition the house must be made of "bush" and not laths or lattice work. The latter type of house is very ornamental, no doubt, but a very poor structure for growing Palms. For bush we use in Sydney the "Tee Tree", as it has closely set, stiff foliage, and is very bushy. When we lived in Queensland, the Wild Rosemary was found excellent, and no doubt other suitable wild shrubs can be easily found wherever you are living. The foliage, however, must be fine and close set. Put the bush on your house rather more heavily than it will be needed, as a certain amount of foliage will fall when dead. I have seen a well built house last 20 years or more without re-covering.

Except in Victoria, Tasmania and New Zealand, Australian Palm growers can well dispense with a glasshouse. Where it is necessary, however, it should be well built, and shaded in the summer months. A large house is always easier to manage and keep in condition, as well as being more attractive than a small one.

Palms under glass need spraying with the hose or watering twice a day in the summer, so as to keep up a nice warm moist atmosphere.

Palms are easily managed and their treatment is summed up in a few words. Those species which are quite hardy and will grow in a cool temperature are all the better, however, for the protection of glass in their young stages in the colder districts of Australia and even in a climate like Sydney for the warmth will not hurt them, rather it encourages the rapid growth and formation of a good specimen. When they attain to a good size they may be hardened off and placed in the bushhouse. Larger specimens will be thus obtained in a shorter time than those taken straight into the bushhouse from the seed bed.

See that the pots in which the Palms are to grow are well washed and clean. The drainage must be perfect, and is arranged by placing a large piece of cork over the hole in the bottom, then a layer of rather large broken pieces over that again, and then a thin layer of smaller ones, and finally some rough fibry stuff to stop the compost blocking the drainage by getting amongst the crocks.

The question of drainage is not regarded as seriously as it should be. I would say quite fifty percent of the failures in plant growing can be traced to faulty drainage, and a lack of an adequate means of carrying off the water.

For potting soil use a good fibrous loam with plenty of sharp sand and well decayed cow manure mixed with it in equal proportions. Close compact soil is no good at all.

In potting the soil should be pressed all about the palm with the potting stick, and if large specimens are needed the plants can be potted on from size to size as soon as they fill the pot with roots.

In repotting see that the ball of soil is not broken up more than can be helped as palms dislike being disturbed.

Watering is one of the most important items in palm growing. The amount of water each palm needs depends upon whether the plant is in full growth and good health, and also as to the amount of roots in the pot, for a plant which has filled its pot with roots and exhausted the soil will need double the quantity one would need which has not filled the pot with roots. Generally speaking all palms will need plenty of water when making new growth.

Spray the bush-house twice a day in the summer time so as to moisten the foliage, and give the roots water when the soil in the pot seems to be drying out. Palms need less water in the winter months than they do in summer.

Palms are generally free from disease with the exception of one or two varieties of scale which attack them very freely at times. However, scale is nothing to worry about for it is easily controlled in pot plants. Each week the leaves and stems of the plants should be sponged over with water and Sunlight soap. Use a soft cloth. After washing with the soap they should be sprayed with the hose and then dried with a clean rag. This treatment never allows the scale to obtain a foothold and at the same time removes all the dust and other impurities that lodge on the leaves particularly in cities. Palms regularly washed have a wonderfully green, fresh appearance.

### Repotting Palms

Palms that need attention may be repotted during September or October. The smaller the pot the better in health do Palms remain. They should not be allowed, however, to remain in a pot so long that the plant is hoisted above the level of the pot by the pressure of the matted roots on the pot.

The following directions can be followed for repotting. First of all remove the Palm from its pot, and unless it has been in the pot for three years, can be returned to it again. Wash the pot well. Take the Palm and trim off the lower roots and break away as much of the old soil as possible. Don't cut more roots away than necessary.

The pots should be well drained by placing a piece of broken pot over the hole in the bottom and several other pieces above and about it. Place the Palm in the pot, keeping it upright, and fill in fresh soil round about, ramming the soil well down.

If, however, the Palm has outgrown its pot, take one a size larger and follow the same method. The soil must be well rammed about the plant and the pot well drained.

A biennial shift into a larger pot is advisable for very young fast growing species, in fact some of the most vigorous growing sorts should have a move into a larger pot every year. When, however, the Palm attains a size which necessitates the use of a six inch or larger pot then it may remain in this for many years with the triennial repotting.

Don't give your Palms too much root room, for you will find the best specimens are those whose growth has been steady and slow, for thus only do we get those plants with the deep green foliage so much admired by all.



ASSIMILATED RAINFOREST CREEK WITH  
INDIGENOUS PALM BACKGROUND.



PALM GROVE - EUNGELLA  
RANGE WEST OF BUCKRAH



LIVISTONA SP. CANARVON GORGE