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The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.



The Kampong Notes

CATHERINE HAUBERG SWEENEY
Editor

4013 DOUGLAS ROAD
COCONUT GROVE, FLA. 33133

February 16, 1970

Dear Wilson:

Thank you for your nice letter. How kind of you to send me Terra's book on "Tropical Vegetables". I shall look forward to receiving it.

I have a book, given to me by friends, "Plantas Utiles de la Flora Mexicana", which is written in Spanish. It is a marvelous book, a paper-back book. Are you familiar with it?

Thank you for letting me to quote your letter on the chaya. I'm trying to work up the next issue of The Kampong Notes for the beginning of March.

Best wishes to you.

Sincerely,

Catherine H Sweeney
Mrs. Edward C. Sweeney

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Dr. Wilson Popenoe
Antigua
Guatemala C. A.

MRS. EDWARD CLEVELAND SWEENEY
4013 DOUGLAS ROAD
COCONUT GROVE, FLORIDA 33133

February 27, 1970

Dear Wilson,

How greatly I appreciate your sending me the book on Tropical Vegetables by Terra. It certainly is a good long list of edible foods.

Several of his vegetables I find some surprise in -- such as the leaves of the mango. Also, he seems to recommend using the baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) as a hedge! Gracious, it would soon -- depending on the water supply -- outgrow a whole yard, not to mention one fence or hedge.

Several years ago, the Explorers Club Journal (a quarterly) had an article on the growth of the baobab tree. How strange it seemed to read of estimated age of them in their native Africa, when one the same size as their illustration is right here on The Kampong, and the seed for this one of mine was planted only forty-one or forty-two years ago. One this size in Africa would be a real patriarch. But, this is all due to suburban Miami water supply!

My son, John, aged fifteen, Dr. William T. Gillis of the Fairchild Garden staff and I are looking forward to a trip to Honduras late in March.

Dr. Gillis is a friend of Dr. Barklay who is on the staff of your Escuela Agricola in Tegucigalpa. We will see what there is to see there, then go down to Tela and Lancetilla. It is a trip of eleven days, not very long at all, but it is my

Sean's

Mrs. EDWARD CLEVELAND SWEENEY
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spring vacation from school here.

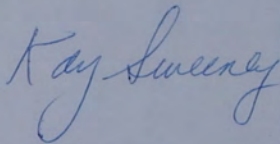
I can get some of the Bonavist beans there in Tegucigalpa, and bring them back. Would it, as a cover crop, do as a ground cover in bright sunshine? And at the same time, produce edible beans? The account of it in the new book by Terra is a long one.

I'm afraid our little trip won't take us to Antigua. This will be for another time.

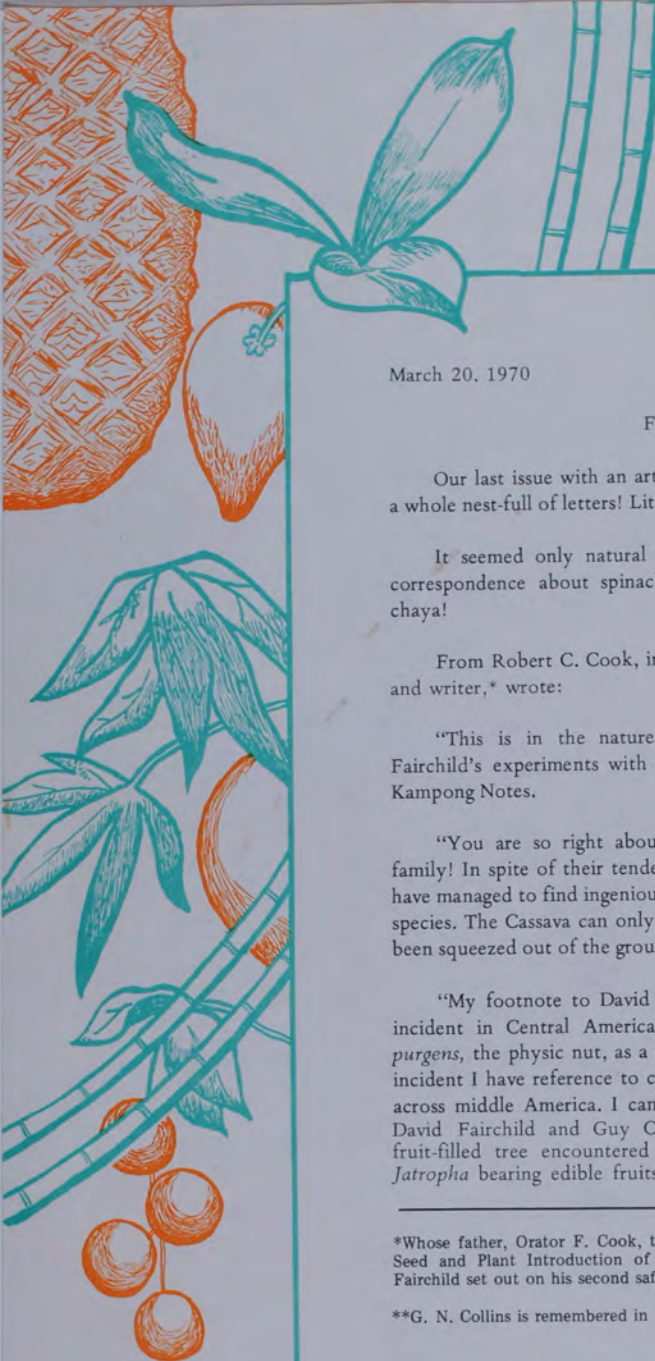
The new Kambong Notes is about ready. It will be an interesting issue.

All my best wishes.

Sincerely,



dke



Kampong Notes

March 20, 1970

Volume 5, No. 2

FOOD AGAIN!

Our last issue with an article on chaya, the spinach tree, brought out a whole nest-full of letters! Literally from all over the world!

It seemed only natural to share with you the new and animated correspondence about spinach! Not common spinach, you know, but chaya!

From Robert C. Cook, in Washington, D. C., Population Consultant and writer,* wrote:

"This is in the nature of a footnote to your account of Dr. Fairchild's experiments with the "spinach tree" in the December 1969 Kampong Notes.

"You are so right about the euphorbias who are a most versatile family! In spite of their tendency to be virulently poisonous, we humans have managed to find ingenious ways to eat a good many even of the toxic species. The Cassava can only serve as food after the poisonous juice has been squeezed out of the ground-up roots.

"My footnote to David Fairchild and *Jatropha* history concerns an incident in Central America many years ago. You mention *Jatropha purgens*, the physic nut, as a close relative of David's "tree spinach." The incident I have reference to concerns a "pride" of botanists on the move across middle America. I can only recall that among those present were David Fairchild and Guy Collins. Either David or Guy identified a fruit-filled tree encountered in their ramblings as being a species of *Jatropha* bearing edible fruits. The party did eat thereof and the results

*Whose father, Orator F. Cook, took Dr. Fairchild's place as head of the Office of Seed and Plant Introduction of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, when Dr. Fairchild set out on his second safari with Barbour Lathrop in 1898.

**G. N. Collins is remembered in Florida through the Avocado cultivar "Collinson."

were sudden, devastating and virtually paralyzing. None of the botanists were able to go for help, if any had been available; and none of them knew the prognosis of their ill-advised gourmandizing. There was nothing to do but wait and this they did, agonizingly and hoping for the best. The story had a happy ending, fortunately, with all recovering from the gruesome ordeal.

"Could the moral of this woeful tale be: never trust a botanist under or over thirty?"

"Several years later, a group of David Fairchild's colleagues became involved with another of the euphorbias. These botanists had established a residential community in the environs of Lanham, Maryland. There were two enclaves, separated by an impassable, swampy area. In the year of this happening, circa 1914, Washington's birthday was spring-like, even balmy, ideal for a cooperative venture long pending: to build a causeway across that swamp. The botanists — among them that same Guy Collins who had eaten the physic-nut some years before — decided that this was the day and assembled their forces.

"By mid-afternoon, the botanists were putting on the finishing touches when the eighty year old Nestor of this particular colony, Professor Emeritus Wheeler of the University of Michigan hobbled out to pass judgment on the work.*** After reviewing the labors of his younger colleagues, he said, in the reedy voice of the aged; "I find it very odd that a group of botanists would use poison sumac for the hand-rails of this admirable structure." Poison sumac is another euphorbia closely related to the lacquer tree of Japan. It is many times more toxic than poison ivy.

"Succor was close at hand this time but it did not do much good. All the botanists broke out abundantly; and one of them spent two weeks in the hospital. He recovered, but two months later, he absent-mindedly put on the same work clothes he had worn that fatal day and he went through the same ordeal all over again.

"The moral of this might be stretched a bit: never trust a botanist under eighty years of age!"

A letter from Dr. Wilson Popenoe in Antigua, Guatemala:

"The 'Chaya' story is excellent. Another example of things we are overlooking. Some months ago, I secured through my son, Hugh (who lives in Gainesville, Florida) several copies - which I am distributing among friends here - of 'Tropical Vegetables,' an extensive descriptive list by G.J.A. Terra, published by the Royal Tropical Institute in the Netherlands. It is based on Indonesia, but includes plants from all over the world. *Jatropha Urens* is mentioned, also *J. curcas*, (which I don't think I shall try) and *J. aconitifolia*. I have eaten chaya in Honduras, but I don't recall having heard of anybody else doing so.

"Terra does not mention that interesting Mexican weed, I believe a Malva, which Bob Harris of M.I.T. brought to our attention many years ago. Louis Williams and I saw it at Puebla. It tastes like nothing at all, but is rich in many elements humans need. How the Mexican Indians, whose knowledge of minerals and vitamins is almost nil, learned to put it in their soup, I don't know,

***William Morton Wheeler, famous for his work on Ants.

"Nobody knew better than David Fairchild how hard it is to get people to eat new foods. Did you ever hear of the time he put fine grafted mangos on the luncheon tables at the Cosmos Club, together with a little card asking members to give their opinions? One man gave his in three words: 'No damn good!'"

The following quotation comes from Eleanor Adam (Mrs. Claus Adam), in New York City:

"I enjoyed the Spinach and Sculpture article very much. Dr. Fairchild's *Épinards en branche baignés* was not to be found in any of my French recipe books, including the great Julia Childs, and I finally located one in an Italian book. However, Larousse Gastronomique has one called "*Subrics D'Épinards*," which sounds very good. Larousse also writes about a giant spinach tree that grows in Mexico and is seven feet tall, with leaves seven to nine inches long. That must be Dr. Fairchild's Chaya tree. I am going to try to cook them for Claus when he gets back (from his present tour)." Claus Adam is the cellist of the Julliard Quartet.

Here is a footnote on Euphorbiaceae, the family of milkweeds, from John Gerarde's Herball, 1636 A.D.: "Euphorbium mingled with oyle of Bay and Beare's grease cureth the scurfe (dandruff) and scalds of the head, and pildnesse (baldness), causing the haire to grow again, and other bare places, being annointed therewith."

An interesting sequel to Glenn White's article on Fairchild Tropical Garden in the November issue of AMERICAN FORESTS magazine was the letter of Mr. George W. West of the West Lumber Company of Atlanta, Georgia, to the Editor of AMERICAN FORESTS:

"I have read with great interest the article by Mr. Glenn White on principally the palm trees in Florida in your November issue.

"A friend of mine owns several thousand acres in Ocoola County and for many years he would invite us to go hunting there. A native who had lived there all his life and really knew the Florida woods would prepare the most delectable dish from what I knew to be the cabbage palmetto. I am sure the average man would not know how to attack this plant with a common axe, but with a few knowledgeable licks, he would produce the bud. I would call it cone-shaped a little bit, and about three or four feet long, some five inches in diameter, and about the size of a 105 mm. shell. When cooked, it was a cross-taste between carrots, parsnips and bananas and it almost would make a full meal for anyone -- a most delicious food."

The Editor of AMERICAN FORESTS, Mr. John B. Craig, made this reply to Mr. West:

"Palms are slightly amazing and have many uses. GI's in such places as New Guinea during World War II learned how highly they are regarded by aboriginal tribes. A chief's wealth was measured in terms of the number of palms, pigs and wives he owned, and the palms had top priority."

And we got permission to reprint both letters!



The cabbage palm or palmetto (*Sabal palmetto*) can grow to ninety feet high, according to James C. McCurrach in "Palms of the World." The leaf is costalpalmate. (See THE KAMPONG NOTES, April 16, 1969.)



The existence of each palm is destroyed when this growing bud is removed.

I mentioned our new Balinese carvings at The Kampong, around the dining room entrance in the last issue, and that we probably would never know just what the figures represented.

We were lucky in learning just exactly what they are. Claus and Eleanor Adam had the information. (Claus Adam was born in Indonesia, on the island of Sumatra.) The figure at the top, a sort of demon figure with long fingernails, is a Rangda. The middle figures, which I had thought were male dancers, represent Ardjuna, or a prince.

We were fortunate in having Glenn White from Washington, D. C. down for two weeks, to help out with some publicity programs for Fairchild Tropical Garden. Mr. White is a professional writer, and the author who wrote the wonderful article on the Garden in AMERICAN FORESTS. He is currently with the U. S. Department of Agriculture in Washington.



Glenn White, taken on a recent trip to Beltsville, Maryland.

I am off on a trip to Lancetilla Botanical Garden, near Tela, Honduras, and perhaps other countries in Central America during the Easter school vacation. My son, John and Dr. William T. Gillis, Botanist from Fairchild Tropical Garden, whom I introduced to you last issue, will accompany me.

My best wishes to you.

Catherine H. Sweeney

Catherine H. Sweeney

MRS. EDWARD CLEVELAND SWEENEY
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January 17, 1973

Dear Wilson,

I hope all is well with you and that you had a nice Christmas. I've just returned from an eighteen-day safari in Kenya, and am planning to leave next week for a cruise to the South Pacific islands and Australia - be gone about five weeks.

Very good friends of mine will be in Antigua, whom I think you would enjoy meeting. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Cotlow - a member of the Explorers Club. Lewis has written many books, among them, *Passport to Adventure*, *Amazon Head-Hunters*, *In Search of the Primitive*, and *Twilight of the Primitive*. He is very well-known, and has been on television many times. They will be in Antigua on Sunday, February 25th, and will be in and out of Guatemala City for four days. I don't know the name of their hotel in Guatemala City, but it is the best one there. I hope you will have a chance to meet. Lewis is really worthwhile knowing.

I wish you the best for the New Year, and hope to see you sometime soon.

Sincerely,

Kay Sweeney

MRS. EDWARD CLEVELAND SWEENEY
4013 DOUGLAS ROAD
COCONUT GROVE, FLORIDA 33133

February 26, 1973

Dear Wilson,

I hope you have been keeping well. I've just returned from a four-week trip to Australia and New Zealand, down by boat, back by plane. It was very enjoyable, but it will be a long time before I take another cruise. There really isn't enough to keep one busy, - the sort of things I like to do.

I have some very good friends coming your way - Charlotte and Lewis Cotlow. I told them to look you up if they could. Lew is an author. His latest book, IN SEARCH OF THE PRIMITIVE, received very good reviews. He's written several others - Amazon Head-Hunters, etc. He is very highly regarded. He's a member of the Explorers Club, a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society, Adventurers' Club of New York, and the Circumnavigators Club. You will find him most interesting to talk to. I promised them I'd write to you that they were coming. I hope this letter reaches you before they do.

Looking forward to seeing you the next time you're in Miami. All good wishes,

Sincerely,

Kay Sweeney