

XI. CAN GREENHOUSE PALMS OF OLD AGE BE SAVED BY MARCOTTING?

Greenhouses appear frequently too low for large palms which outgrow them. This seals their fate and they are removed and destroyed. This seems a pity, as they are sometimes rarities which have served for scientific purpose or description.

The idea has come to me that it might be possible to rejuvenate them by marcotting, because so many palms are capable to throw roots from the lower parts of the stem, some being even distinctly stilted, as pandans. It has not come to my knowledge whether it has ever been tried if this method could be successful.

It would mean of course building a scaffolding round the palm and attach the marcottage as high as possible. It may be necessary to make incisions in the bark to stimulate the formation of adventitious roots. From what material the marcottage should be made is also subject to trial and error; possibly a mixture of cocos fibre, earth, and sphagnum might prove suitable. The marcottage should continuously be sprayed. The forming of roots may take a long time, maybe a year, or even more. If roots would have been formed it might be advisable to make a ring-shaped incision below them, in order to stimulate their growth, cutting off part of the ascending sap, to promote their physiological adjustment with the foliage. Then also the amount of earth in the marcottage should be increased to allow their further growth. It might further also be useful to have a slight pruning of the primary root system to stimulate them. If that would have succeeded, the supreme moment would come that the palm top with its new root system would have to be removed by sawing it from the main

stem, with simultaneous pruning of all leaves except the very youngest, in order to keep transpiration at the lowest.

I direct the plea of doing some experimenting to both curators of temperate greenhouses and to curators of tropical gardens who have in general so many palms at their disposition, small and large.

I think that the experiment, which does not require much money, but will require a great deal of care and continued observation, is worth while to try out. Positive results would be distinctly favourable to grow palms even in greenhouses of moderate dimensions.--C.G.G.J.van Steenis.