

VIII. INSTRUCTIONS FOR COLLECTING PANDANUS

The genus Pandanus is a very large one, now with 654 accepted species, and many more are being discovered. It occurs in the tropics from Hawaii to West Africa, and Malesia is especially rich in species.

As many herbaria contain a large percentage of specimens so incomplete that they are unidentifiable and worthless, instructions for collecting are desirable.

All Pandanus species are dioecious. Probably the staminate plants exist in most of the species, but they are very rare in some, and they are unknown for about 90% of the species. These male plants should be collected, but only if the field collector finds them near to and like the females. Unless the collector can pair off the staminate with a similar pistillate, the staminate are not worth collecting. When unpaired the males can be identified only to the section, not to a species.

In Pandanus there is great diversity of habit, from small herbs, to acaulescent plants, to shrubs, to epiphytes, and to trees up to 30 m in height. The critical and most necessary part to collect is the fruit, without which a specimen is of little value. The syncarps are heads, solitary or in spikes, bearing many drupes or compound phalanges. The heads may be from 2 to 80 cm in length, and the single fruits from 6 mm to 15 cm in length. A part of each fruit is fleshy, and becomes soft and juicy when fully ripe. One or more complete infructescences should be gathered. If the heads are large, they should be split lengthwise before drying (or bottling); this mostly prevents them from falling apart. Other parts of the plant or tree have diagnostic structures. The leaves are important and several whole ones are wanted. A complete leaf includes all of the sheathing base and an unbroken apex. The older leaves usually have the slender tip dried up and fallen off. A good method of getting complete leaves is to cut and place a leafy branch on the ground, cut it off near the leaf bases, then chop successive disks off the stem to allow peeling off more leaves, until complete ones are obtained.

Other desiderata are slabs of mature bark, several lengths about 30 cm long of the prop roots, which can be dried like sticks of wood.

Wanted are photos (together with a rule to demonstrate size) of the tree habit, of the trunk, of the trunk base and prop roots, of a leafy fruiting branch, and of a fruit head, on the ground. Also needed are descriptive notes of the habit, stature, habitat, vernacular names, and uses.

Color notes are wanted of the bark, spines, leaves, leaf spines, inflorescence bracts, fruit head (state of maturity, size and shape) and individual drupes. The prickly or spiny leaves should be handled with care, and I am not trying to be humorous, or to protect the botanist. My concern is for the

specimens. There are specific characters in the leaf prickles which commonly occur on the leaf margins and on the midrib below. They should be preserved, not cut or scraped or broken off. Very long leaves are best pressed after folding back and forth, accordion-fashion.

For staminate specimens the desiderata are similar. Again mature foliage leaves are needed, as the bracteal leaves of the inflorescence do not reveal the diagnostic foliage characters.

It takes about an hour to collect adequate specimens of one good sized tree. Because the specimens are bulky and spiny, they have been much neglected. Except in a very few completely botanized areas the species of Pandanus are incompletely known. In other areas, if collected, they yield a gratifying percentage of novelties.

The first 15 parts of a monograph of the genus have been published by Prof. H.St.John of the Bishop Museum, Honolulu, and additional parts are appearing quarterly. He is ready to identify collections.

Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu.

Harold St.John.

VARIA

Well-earned groin rupture

One of the staff members of the Rijksherbarium was successfully operated on a groin-rupture. According to medical science this inconvenience may befall babies younger than three years, gentlemen above sixty, and porters and dockhands of any age. Our opinion is that our colleague asked for it, firstly being past sixty, secondly submitting himself to the Rijksherbarium routine, which includes the shifting of piled-up boxes in the overcrowded rooms, thereby outdoing porters and dockhands. He should have let the boxes be, till the new buildings were ready!