



The Drifting Seed

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THE DRIFTING SEED

A triannual newsletter covering seeds and fruits dispersed by tropical currents
and the people who collect and study them.

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The 14th Annual International Sea Bean Symposium will be held at the Cocoa Beach Public Library,
October 16th-17th, 2009.

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Just Another Jack-Bean

Jerry Sullivan and Ethel Mortimer

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A note from octogenarian ethelmort: "Just finished reading *The Drifting Seed*. Enjoyed your article on Cathie's bean. During the 1970's I found a bean on the Wabasso Beach and stuck it in a drawer with other beans and forgot about them. Took it to the 2003 symposium and lo and behold, someone said it might be a black Cathie's bean.



Unfortunately, after hurricanes Frances and Jeanne and health problems (age 81), I had to leave my home at the Wabasso Beach area. I keep in touch through *The Drifting Seed*. Happy seabeaning, you guys. Ethel Mortimer, Coconut Creek." Response: It's definitely not a Cathie's bean, see picture. Your seed is lower right and somewhat resembles the black *Canavalia cathartica*, (Mauna loa), lower left, but they are not the same. I really wanted it to be a black Cathie's bean!

"Dear Gerry, Sorry about the bean, but don't feel bad as I take these things in stride. I wasn't too sure about it myself. One thing, it is old and shriveled. Thanks anyway. If you don't mind, send the seed back to me and it will go back into the drawer. Thanks so much for your time and information. You are a Great Seabeaner. Ethel Mortimer."

Under close scrutiny, through computer magnification, it was demonstrated that the ethelmort-bean

was not shriveled but bore subtle minute grooves or channels radiating away from the hilum almost identical to the illustration by Paradine, depicting the unidentified brown *Canavalia* found on Florida beaches and reported by Gunn & Dennis in *World Guide*, page 131. Seemingly, it has not been mentioned again since 1976. Ethelmort's seed does not resemble the unidentified *Canavalia* pictured on page 78 of Perry and Dennis' *Sea-Beans from the Tropics*. It is speculated that ethelmort's rich dark brown, almost black bean was originally several shades lighter brown prior to being stored in a dark drawer for 30 years. Perhaps Beerensson might unknowingly have one or more of these seeds in his vast Brevard County beaches collection. Chances are that ethelmort's bean is the same as reported by Gunn and Dennis. If not, it's just another unidentified Jack-bean.

Just for the novice, Jack-bean is the common name specifically applied to *Canavalia ensiformis*, but many times incorrectly used for other species. Many *C.* species have specific common names; such as, Coastal Jack-bean, Common Jack-bean, Molokai Jack-bean, etc. In the interim until definitive information on its identity, Ethel's seed will be unofficially recognized as Ethelmort's Jack-bean.



Listening is an acquired art form. Long ago I became aware that I learned nothing as I spoke.
Navillus

Wood-Rose or Moonflower? . . . that is the question!

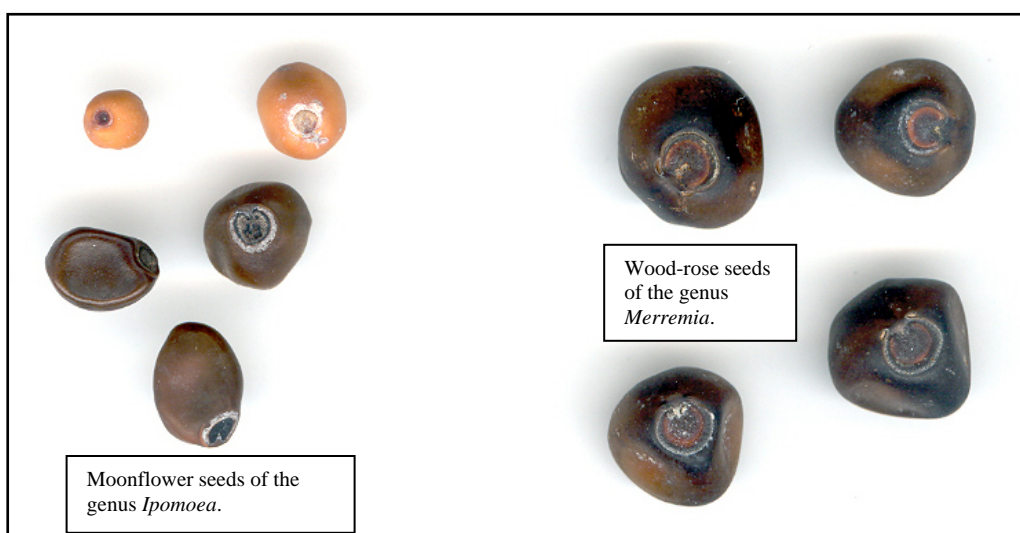
by John Beerensson, beerensson@bellsouth.net

Merritt Island, Florida

Wood-rose or moonflower? Many sea-beaners who come across a wood-rose (*Merremia tuberosa*) ask the Shakespearian question . . . *is it is, or is it ain't?* I'll admit that I too was once confused. Thanks to Ed Perry's guidance, I am no longer walking the beaches scratching my head.

My first wood-rose sure looked like the Gunn and Dennis *World Guide* drawing of a big white moonflower (*Ipomoea alba*). To confuse me more, on the book's wood-rose page, the maximum size given is 25 mm. Mine was shy of 12 mm. Twenty-five mm is more than twice as big as 12mm!! Surely my little sea-bean couldn't be in the same league as the 25 mm monster?

To digress for a moment, because the wood-rose is in the same family as the Mary's Bean (*Merremia discoidesperma*), they both share the same page in the *World Guide*.



Anyway, after collecting 75 of these babies over the past few years, and after Ed's help, I can now say I'm a wood-rose wizard. Color ranges from black to a dull orange/yellow. This is the same hue that can also be found on some Mary's Beans. Many of my wood-roses share a combination of the black and orange/yellow. Most are close to 12 mm. The biggest is just shy of 13

mm, with the smallest being 11 mm. I'd love to see one that's 25 mm!

Pertaining to the white moonflower, normally the largest moonflower you'll find on Florida's east coast beaches, the biggest that I've seen is shy of 9 mm. Therefore, allow me to reach the profound conclusion that . . . once again . . . size does matter. Less than 10 mm—bet'cha it's a moonflower. Bigger than 11 mm—bet'cha it's a wood-rose. Ten mm—flip a coin.

Now that you are no longer confused, here comes the challenge. Bring me a 25 mm wood-rose and I promise, as the wood-rose wizard, to not only give you a heart, a diploma, and a medal for courage, but I will also send you back to Kansas. If you really want to go.

Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.
Victor Borge

The Lantern Tree

by John Beerensson, beerensson@bellsouth.net
Merritt Island, Florida

The lantern tree (*Hernandia sonora*) is a great find for sea-beaners, considering its beauty and its infrequent appearance on Florida's east coast beaches. This globose, dark reddish brown seed is a true keeper. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the term *keeper*, it means the opposite of *leverite*. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the term *leverite*, it means *leave her right where you found her*, referring to the likes of hog-plum, tropical almond, etc. But I digress.

At the Sea-Bean Symposiums, a sampling of Ruth Smith's wonderful sea-bean jewelry is usually exhibited; with a lantern tree necklace being one of the highlights. It's too bad that this seed is so uncommon on our shores. For most beaners, collecting enough lantern trees to make such a necklace would be quite a task.

Aside from its scarcity, another reason beachcombers find so few lantern trees is that they tend to wash ashore looking like ugly ducklings. Most are covered by a papery-like coating that makes them resemble a small laurelwood (*Calophyllum calaba*). Look at the picture in Ed Perry's book, *Sea-Beans from the Tropics*, to get a better idea of this coating. By the way, if you are a Florida beaner, the laurelwood is a leverite. One of the few people I know who pick up laurelwood is Bill Blazek. He polishes them, and believe it or not, they turn out quite nice.

One quick way of getting rid of the papery coating is to rub it with some wet sand between your palms. In sixty seconds or less you will have a lantern tree ready for your future necklace.



If there is not much of the papery-like coating left when the lantern tree comes ashore, then it is often confused with a small nutmeg (*Myristica* spp.), another leverite (unless you want to pound the nutmeg silly to pulverize it for use in your egg-nog). The lantern tree may even be confused with a large soapberry, a.k.a. black pearl (*Sapindus saponaria*); or confused with the little marble, a.k.a. "Oxy" (*Oxyrhynchus trinervius* or *O. volubilis*). But . . . hey! . . . that's all right. Both the black pearl and the oxy are major keepers, and they would look great mixed in with the lantern tree if you wanted to make a necklace.

The good news is that once you develop an eye for the lantern tree, you will find them; although sparingly. Should you still not find them, that means you slept too long and I beat you to the beach.

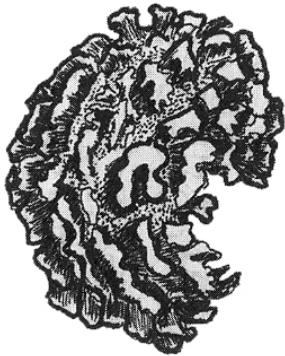
How Big is Your Porcupine??

by John Beerensson (beerensson@bellsouth.net)

Merritt Island, Florida

Yes, I'm talking about the porcupinseed. I'm not interested in your weird pet. It's that time again when size does matter. As always, big is defined as length. Looks like the winner is going to be the smooth porcupinseed (*Caryocar glabrum*). I've got quite a few of the *C. microcarpum* variety, the prickly porcupine, and with few exceptions they are all smaller than the smooth porcupines. See Ed Perry's and John Dennis' *Sea-Beans from the Tropics* (pp. 143-145) for details on the porcupinseed.

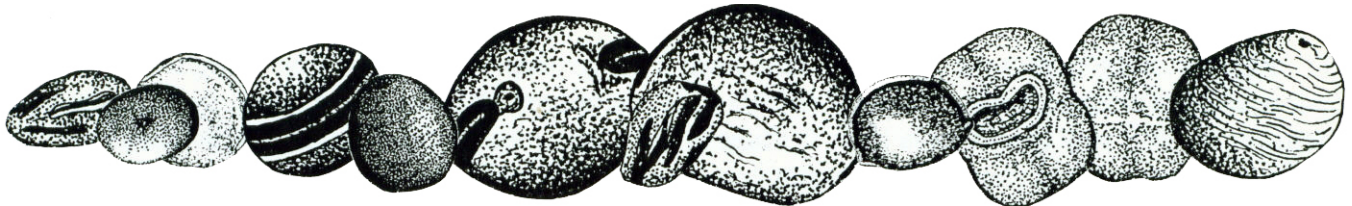
My biggest smoothie is 44 mm (see below drawing by Pamela Paradine). My biggest prickly is 31 mm (see the fold-over ID cover page of this newsletter). However, most of my prickleys are in the range of 20 to 25 mm, while most of my smoothies are in the range of 30 to 40 mm.



Let me digress for a moment. Remember my mention of Kansas in my article on the giant bay-bean? Well . . . I never did hear back from any Kansas sea-beaners. Looks like Kansas has no beaners. Too bad. But I did hear from a café owner in Alaska. She claims to have found a sea-bean near Seward, Alaska. Ed Perry, did you throw a sea-bean into Alaskan waters when you were there on a fishing trip??

Anyway . . . Ed Perry, Barbara Rolph, Michele Kelley, Nan Rhodes, Margie Mitchell, Bill Blazek, Christopher Boykin, Alice Lowe, Alice Surrency, Mary Bowman, Paul Mikkelsen, Deb Trachtman, Pat Frazier, Blair and Dawn Witherington, Jim Angy, Marge Bell, Matt MacQueen, Ray Dickinson, Mary Canada, Cecelia Abbott, Elaine Norton, Steve and Stephanie Bernstein, Mike Stewart, and all you other Florida beaners; Mike and Sam Burnett, Jerry and Carol Sullivan, John Williams, and all you other Texas beaners; Curt Ebbesmeyer and Alan Rammer in Washington; Bob Gunn in North Carolina; Wayne Armstrong in California; Bill and Nancy Eastlake in Missouri; Dennis Doucette in Michigan; Sue Bradley in Tennessee; Cathy Yow in Illinois; Jeremy Smith in Australia; Izumi Hanno and Jim Godfrey somewhere in Southeast Asia; Charles Nelson in the UK; Gerhard Cadée and Wim Kruiswijk in the Netherlands; Liliane Hosten-Willems in South Africa; Murry Gregory in New Zealand; and all you other beaners, wherever you live . . . **how big is yours, and is it prickly or smooth??**

One last digression. Seward, Alaska is the home of *The Sea Bean Café*. Believe it or not—seabeancafe@gmail.com. It's located in a former brothel, and the building (ca. 1908) is one of the most historic properties in Seward. According to my daughter-in-law Dr. Ashley Beerensson, who was recently there, the food and atmosphere are great. But the bean soup was a tad watery. Then again what can you expect when you have only one bean to work with.



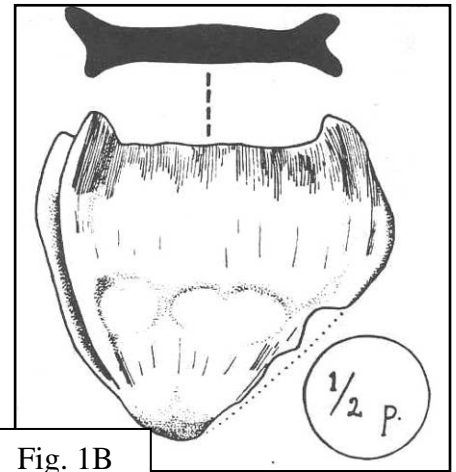
We are all here for a spell, get all the good laughs you can.
Will Rogers

Fossil Driftseeds and Fruits from Southeast England
 by Ed & Biddy Jarzembowski, EdJarzembowski@maidstone.gov.uk

Driftseeds have a long history in southeast England. The famous London Clay flora accumulated on a clay bottom when the Early Eocene sea covered southern England some 55 million years ago. It consists of drifted and waterlogged fruits, seeds and wood as well as associated insects. A link with the present is provided by the fossil occurrence of *Nypa* (*Nypa burtoni*; often spelled *Nipa* in the fossil literature). Today's *Nypa fruticans* has a drift fruit (see Sea-Bean Guide) and early naturalists speculated that an ancient waterway must have connected southeast England with the tropics to explain the fossil record. We now know that global warming and plate tectonics were active in the Eocene so that *N. burtoni* need only have drifted a few tens or hundreds of miles rather than thousands.



The geological formation in which *Nypa* occurs is well developed under London and outcrops in the UK on the coast in north Kent, Sussex and Hampshire/the Isle of Wight where it often yields fossils preserved in iron pyrites. This mineral has its origin in the activity of ancient bacteria but is unstable when exposed to air, hence its common name of fool's gold. We enclose a picture of *N. burtoni* found on a building site near our former home in West London and



subsequently deposited in the Natural History Museum (Fig. 1B; Jarzembowski, 1983). The whitish areas in Fig. 1A are incipient pyrite decay, which could destroy the entire fossil, therefore a photographic record is important!

Younger driftseeds found on the Channel coast include hazelnuts (*Corylus avellanus*). Some of these could originate from prehistoric forests submerged by the postglacial rise in sea level because in Sussex, hazelnuts have occasionally been found *in situ* in foreshore deposits which are four or five thousand years old.

Captions:

Fig. 1A, B. Photo and drawing of *Nypa burtoni*, pyritised fruit, London Clay, Hammersmith, London.

Reference:

Jarzembowski, E. A. 1983. Geologic Hammersmith. *Neighbours*, June, [p. 2].

Pictured right: a modern seed of *Nypa fruticans* found on the beach in Melbourne, Florida, about 7/8 actual size.

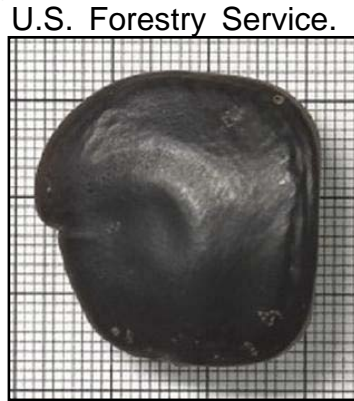
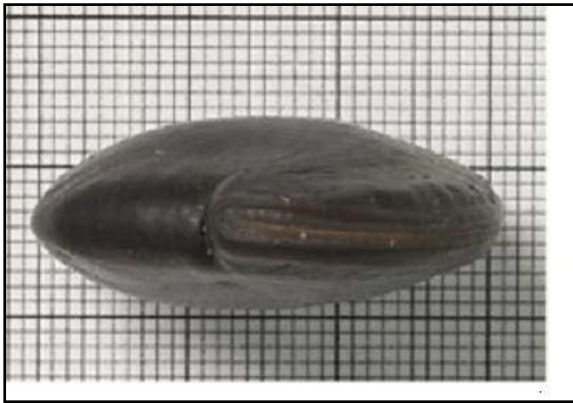


Drift Seeds from a Lonely Beach in Micronesia

by Jerry Sullivan & Tim Flynn

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For a two-week period in Jan/Feb, 2005, Tim Flynn (1) and Dr. David U. Lorence, (2) ventured into Micronesia for the purpose of conducting a plant survey in a specific area of Kosrae Island for the



U.S. Forestry Service. Kosrae is located just 6 degrees north of the equator, hot, humid and



visited nightly by a vast army of mosquitoes.

Following a hard day's work in the field, Tim found it relaxing and intriguing to engage in this newly emerging sport of seabeaning introduced to him in Kauai in 2004 by Carol and Jerry Sullivan. He was only able to monitor a one-half mile strip of sandy beach in front of his lodging because visitation to other beach sites would require motorized transportation which was not available.



Fantastic results were obtained during this relatively brief time spent on a single, short, sandy strand. The following was found in the wrack:

Aleurites moluccana, kukui/candlenut
Barrentonia racemosa, powder puff tree
Bruguiera gymnorrhiza, tuma
Calophyllum inophyllum, tamanu
Cocos nucifera, coconut
Cordia subcordata, sea trumpet
Derris trifoliata, common derris
Guettarda speciosa, bua bua
Heritiera litoralis, puzzle fruit
Hernandia nymphiifolia, lantern tree
Horsfieldia nunu, no common name
Inocarpus fagifer, Tahitian chestnut

Mucuna sp.
Neisosperma oppositifolium, uaoko
Nypa fruticans, nypa
Pandanus fischerianus, screw pine
Pandanus tectorius, screw pine
Rhizophora spp., mangroves
Smythia lanceata, no common name
Sonneratia alba, pornupan mangrove
Terminalia catappa, tropical almond
Terminalia spp.
Xylocarpus granatum, cannonball

The finding of an *Aleurites moluccana* seed was especially interesting because this tree does not exist on the island of Kosrae. The nearest island with a population of kukui is Pohnpei. In order for the nut to reach Kosrae, the prevailing current would have to flow east by southeast and would have to travel in excess of 350 miles or it may have originated from one of a cluster of smaller islands even further away. Perhaps the kukui nut should have been allowed to remain undisturbed, allowing it the opportunity to sprout and possibly establish a colony of candlenuts on this island.

The black *Mucuna* seed was 34 mm in diameter, 6 to 13 mm thick, somewhat flattened and with a 1 mm brown midline dividing the hilum. The seed also displayed a very obvious ebony colored SMILEY (3). This seed appears nearly identical to Paradine's illustration of *M nigricans* (4).

Horsfieldia nunu and *Pandanus fischerianus* were not previously reported in "A World of Drift Seeds," (5) thereby, represent two new drift disseminules.

References

1. A transplanted Texan from Lubbock, who is an associate of Allerton Gardens in Kauai and has participated in similar plant surveys on fifteen or more islands in the South Pacific over a twenty year period.
2. "Numero Uno" plant taxonomist at the National Tropical Botanical Gardens in Kauai.
3. Sullivan, G. and J. Williams. 2008. Smiley. *The Drifting Seed*. Vol. 14 (1).
4. Gunn, C.R., J. M. Andrews and P.J. Paradine. 1999. *World Guide to Tropical Drift Seeds and Fruits*. Quadrangle/New York Time Book Company, New York 1976. Reprint. Krieger Publishing Company, Malabar, Fl.
5. Sullivan, C.J., J. Williams, and G. Sullivan. 2008. A World of Drift Seeds. *The Drifting Seed*. Vol 14, (2).

London Planetree Yields Mysterious Fruit

by Roger A. Hewitt, 12 Fairfield Road, Eastwood,
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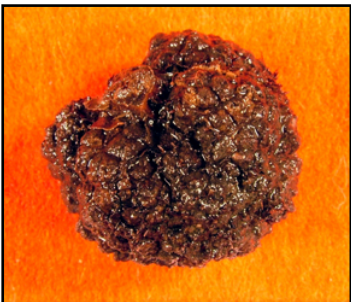
The London Planetree, known either as *Platanus acerifolia* Willdenow, or *P. x hybrida* Brotzen, is a hybrid of the American sycamore with the Oriental Planetree. It is commonly known as a street tree in Europe and North America (Brockman 1979).

The American species was imported from Virginia by tradesmen in 1640. Some of the oldest examples of the hybrid are those planted in Berkeley Square, of Nightingale singing fame, in 1789 (Goode 1986). The fruit of the oriental species become sexually dimorphic balls seen hanging by strings in the hybrid trees in winter. It was not until I visited Regent's Canal at Stepney in London on January 23rd, 2009 that I understood that these fruit decompose in the freshwater to yield different blackberry and sub-spherical, harder, brown cores (presumably respectively from female and male flowers).

In the canal they were still joined to the strings blown down from trees along the canal. The harder parts had dimensions of 21.4 x 21.1 x 18.7 mm on

a 175 mm long string (blackberry shape), and 20.1 x 18.8 x 17.0 mm on a 130 mm long string (softer and more spherical). The seeds had separated from these central cores, within 0.5 km of canal transportation and also by impact on the towpath.

What is interesting is that the blackberry-shaped denser woody cores, when separated from their string, become the mysterious objects which I found when collecting from a 65 m length of the North Sea surge tide strandline of November 8-9, 2007 at Chalkwell in Essex. Most of these have continued to float in seawater for over 14 months.



References

- Brockman, C. F. 1979. *Trees of North America*, Golden Press. New York. 280 pp.
Goode, D., 1984. *Wild in London*, Michael Joseph Ltd, London. 186 pp.
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Seabean Hunting in El Cuyo
by Margie Mitchell, margiemitchell@cfl.rr.com



It started with a surprise email from Betsy Fagan popping up in my inbox on a Sunday afternoon last November, “Can you make a quick trip to Mexico next weekend for 4 days??” Hmm. Now there’s an interesting idea! It turned out that Betsy and fellow Drifter Alice Surrency had been hatching a plan for a quick recon trip to El Cuyo, on the north coast of the Yucatán Peninsula, to check out the beachcombing possibilities. Alice had a connection to a beach house for rent there and it looked like a good spot. We would spend two days getting there and back

and two full days at the beach. I didn’t hesitate long to jump on that opportunity.

El Cuyo is a fishing village of 1500 on the northeast tip of the Yucatán, just where the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea meet and mingle. Its north-facing location creates the interesting possibility of seeing both sunrises and sunsets over the ocean. The area is most famous for its nesting flamingo colonies, but we had high hopes for good seabeaning. We figured we had a good shot at grabbing all those seabeans coming north from tropics, as they turned west into the Gulf, before the Texas beachcombers could get to them!

To get to El Cuyo, we caught a flight from Miami to Cancun, drove west on the expressway to Valladolid, turned north on a two-lane road to Tizimin (the heart of Mexico’s cattle ranch country), and finally angled back northeast to the coastline. We arrived in El Cuyo well after dark. At the far edge of town we turned onto a dirt avenue, and finally arrived at our weekend beachfront paradise. Hearing the surf, I couldn’t resist a quick run down to the beach in the dark, just to see what might be there. Lots of wrack! Under my foot was a tropical almond. Not the most exciting find, but a start.

The next morning’s light revealed a deserted beach stretching for miles to the east away from town, with not another human in sight. There are a few other vacation homes along the beach, but almost all of them were empty. El Cuyo is not exactly a major tourist destination, and in November it’s really empty. We saw pretty much no one else on the beach the whole time we were there.

By late morning we set off for some serious beachcombing. The weather was perfect: blue skies with a few puffy clouds, temperatures in the high 70’s. And, yes, there were seabeans! Lots of them. Most were in the dried wrack, which looked to be a couple of weeks old. Clearly, no one had been collecting them. They were everywhere. We probably only walked about two miles, but we were slow and it took a long time. I found the first Mary’s bean, in a very unpromising line of dirty,

foamy stuff that had just washed in. Everybody found treasures. We passed up everything but the “shinies” and the rarities. I had vowed not to collect any shells, but found I simply couldn’t resist a few of the many perfect beautiful specimens.

We returned to the house for a late lunch by mid-afternoon. Alice opted for a siesta in one of the many available hammocks, while Betsy and I checked out the beach in the direction of town. We actually saw some people there, and not so many seabeans, so we decided to head off to the east again the next day.



On our last morning, we enjoyed the peace and quiet of a leisurely breakfast looking at the water before setting out again to beachcomb. Our idea was to drive down the dirt beach road until we reached our stopping point from the day before, thinking we could park somewhere and pick up walking where we’d left off. However, we soon came to a place where a car was blocking the road, with four men lurking nearby who looked none to happy to see us. At that point we thought the better of Plan A and backtracked to the house.

We walked a much longer way than the day before, so as to get to some untouched territory. Again we found lots of seabeans, many in the same area we’d walked previously. On the way

back, Betsy and I decided to go for a swim in a nice sandy area. We didn’t last too long in the water, though, after some bait fish joined us and the birds started diving around us. The water was clear, but we didn’t want any sharks having to make a quick judgment about what to eat first.

When we got back to the house, we spent a long time sorting out the “keepers” from two days of beachcombing. We left way more seabeans on the beach than we picked up. We also had a few interesting shells, and some odds and ends of manmade drift that Curt Ebbesmeyer, head of the Drifters’ Floating Trash Sub-chapter, would find interesting. All but the shiny beans and shells went into the trash after we took some photos. Some of those things were hard to leave behind, for example, the beautiful black coral we found everywhere, and a nice sea-pig for Curt. But we did not want to have to do any explaining at Customs in Miami, so we chose our imports carefully. Fortunately, there were no questions asked and we came home with a good haul from such a short trip.

A few other notes about the area and the trip:

We were fascinated by the enormous flocks of great-tailed grackles gathered in the trees in the town square in Tizimin just before dark. What a racket they make! I had not seen these birds before, but I’ve since read that this roosting behavior is a common sight (and sound) in the central squares of small towns throughout Central America.

Our hosts for the weekend had recommended that we make a detour into Cancun to buy food and supplies at Wal-Mart before we headed west. This turned out to be a very valuable tip. El Cuyo is not what you’d call a shopper’s paradise. If we’d had a map with the Wal-Mart on it, we might have actually been able to find it on our own, but Alice resourcefully flagged down a taxi driver in the middle of Cancun traffic, who was happy to show us the way, and we were able to stock up on the essentials.

Our adventures in local dining were made all the more interesting by the fact that not one of us speaks Spanish. At La Conchita, the only restaurant we could find open in El Cuyo, the “pollo” Alice ordered did not much resemble chicken, and the name of the dish that did resemble chicken was not in our dictionary. All the same, the ceviche was excellent and no one got sick.

El Cuyo is definitely off the beaten path. If you are looking for peace and quiet, and a beach full of seabeans all to yourself, it’s worth the trip. Just be sure to stop at Wal-Mart on the way.

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Prioria mannii from the Dutch Beach, Identification Solved, Mystery Remains

by Gerhard C. Cadée, cadee@nioz.nl

Identification of one of the unidentified fruits from the Dutch beach pictured in *The Drifting Seed* of December 2007 (p.10) is solved, but how in 2007 in total five of these fruits ended up on our beach remains a mystery.

In 2007 I pictured two fruits I was unable to identify (Cadée, 2007). Number one was a flat pod, which probably cannot be identified at all. Of the second one, in total now five were found on our coasts and reported to me. Since 2007 no more were found as far as I know.

My hope that some of the readers would recognize the two 'mysteries' was not fulfilled. Accidentally, looking through a sample of drift seeds and fruits, collected for me in January 2006 by Sytske Dijkse (Texel) along the coast of Loango National Park in Gabon (W. Africa), I noticed a fruit absolutely similar to the five ones found of the second mystery fruit. Now I knew that Xander van de Burgt not only has an interest in drift seeds and fruits (van der Burgt, 1997, 1998), but also has specialized in the West African Flora, using recently Kew as his base. Therefore I sent him the picture by e-mail and immediately he recognized the fruit as *Prioria mannii* (Harms) Breteler. He also gave the reference to a recent revision of the genus *Prioria* (Breteler, 1999). He did know the fruits also from drift in West Africa.

Prioria mannii fruits are variable in size; the length of the Dutch specimens varies from 39.1 to 61.4 mm. They are of a dull brown color, with an irregularly lumpy surface. They are somewhat flattened, with one side convex the other more concave, the tip is pointed towards this side (Fig. 1). This typical shape makes them easily recognizable and different from other species of *Prioria*.

Prioria belongs to the Caesalpinionidae, one of the subfamilies of the Pea Family, the Leguminosae (also called Fabaceae) and thus related to well known drift seeds such as the nickar nut *Caesalpinia bonduc*. According to Breteler (1999), *Prioria mannii* is a tree c. 30 m tall and 70 cm DBH (diameter at breast height) with a West African distribution restricted to the coastal area of the Bay of Biafra from Southern Nigeria to Northern Gabon. Its fruit is different from the other species of *Prioria*, of which some are winged (comparable to those of the maple), others glossy and flat as *P. buchholzii* (synonym *Oxystigma buchholzii* Harms). Drift fruits of the latter species were also found by Sytske Dijkse along the coast of Loango National Park, Gabon, and appear there to be common in drift (Fig. 2).

On later inspection of my library I found Gunn (1991) gives a picture of the fruit of *P. mannii* (p. 275 fig. A), albeit under the genus name *Oxystigma*. Breteler (1999) included this under *Prioria*. Charles Nelson e-mailed me that with more DNA data becoming available, the



Fig. 2

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Fig. 1

taxonomy of the Fabaceae is still changing. I keep to Breteler (1999) for the moment and hope the species name *mannii* will not change.

Why five (and probably more, but not collected) of these drift fruits reached the Dutch coast remains a mystery. It is very unlikely that they made the trip by ocean currents. There is no direct current from West Africa to Europe. African seeds first have to cross the Atlantic to be picked up there by the Gulfstream. If they cross the Atlantic, they should be found also on the Caribbean and American coasts. This is not the case: Perry & Dennis (2003) do not mention them from there, nor did Ed Perry recognize the fruit. The fact that it was found in Europe only on the Dutch coast and only in 2007 (and not just one but five specimens) points to transport by man as is so often the case in tropical fruits and seeds from our coast (Cadée, 1997; Brochard & Cadée, 2005). Why these fruits were transported at all remains a mystery to me.

Fig. 1 *Prioria mannii* from the Dutch coast, size: 61.4 x 67.5 x 28.3 mm, found by Michel Rühland, Castricum aan Zee, Netherlands 25th October 2007.

Fig. 2 *Prioria buchholzii* from the coast of Gabon collected by Sytske Dijksen. Fruits glossy and much flatter (10 and 14 mm resp.) than in *P. mannii*. (squares 5 x 5 mm)

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the finders who reported the fruits to me and in particular to Michel Rühland who not only found three specimens but also donated them to me. I am also very grateful to Sytske Dijksen for material from Gabon and, to Xander van der Burgt for his help with the identification and to F.J. Breteler for sending a reprint of his revision of *Prioria*.

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*The universe is like a safe to which there is a combination,
but the combination is locked up in the safe.*

Peter de Vries

News and Notes



A Drift Curiosity—Pictured is the meager drift collection made on 5-25-08 by Jerry Sullivan on Mustang Island, TX. Encircling the collection is an 18-inch yellow sea whip coral, permanently affixed to an intact 1 ½ inch sand dollar.

Sea whip coral consists of a colony of tiny polyps which grow upon one another forming long strands of coral. Its planktonic larvae float for 3-to 20-days before they settle and search for a hard substantial surface such as a rock, reef, piling or other durable surfaces, but generally not a small lightweight fragile sand dollar.

From Kim Mosher (Kmbythesea@charter.net):

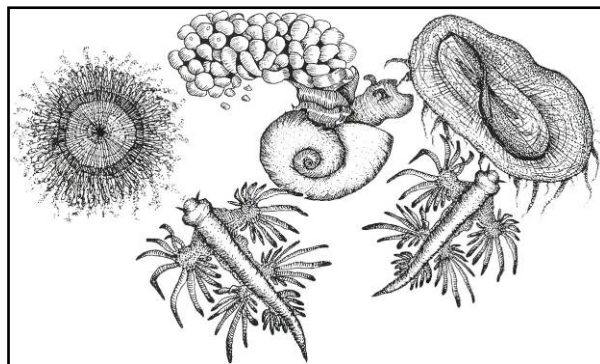
I live in Buxton, North Carolina where the Cape Hatteras lighthouse stands. The Noel storm in November (2007) brought a huge swell with good waves for the surfers (a big, tropical, n'oreaster storm). I went beachcombing in lots of sargassum weed. I found 5 seahearts plus a Jamaican navel spurge! I also think I may have found a starnut palm. It was a day I'll never forget. I read and learned about it in the book *Sea-Beans from the Tropics*. I have meant to tell you about this before. I am an avid collector and finder. I have found four sea pearls here too (nickernuts). You never know what gifts you might find from the sea!



photo by Blair and Dawn Witherington

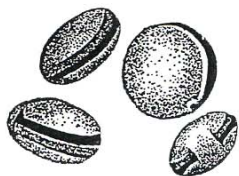
absorb their poisonous cells to use for their own defense. Blair and Dawn Witherington report after finding a few on an afternoon beachwalk to "look for little blue peas on the beach; upon placing them back in seawater they return to their original shape."

In December of 2008 there was a bunch of correspondence about this little guy—a blue glaucus sea slug—on the Sea Bean List Serve (SEABEAN@LISTS.UFL.EDU; go to www.seabean.com for directions to subscribe). Mild but steady east winds for several days stranded blue buttons (*Porpita porpita*), Portuguese man-of-war jellyfish (*Physalia physalia*), by-the-wind-sailors (*Velevella velevella*), purple sea snails (*Janthina* spp.), and this fellow (*Glaucus atlanticus*), which is a shell-less invertebrate mollusk, about an inch and a half long, that floats upside down clinging to the *underside* of the surface of the water. They eat the tentacles of toxic creatures such as blue buttons and

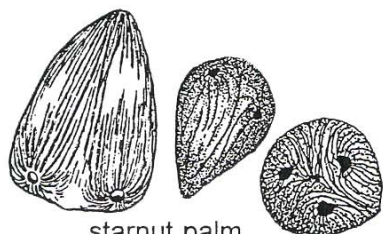


Simple Guide to Common Drift Seeds

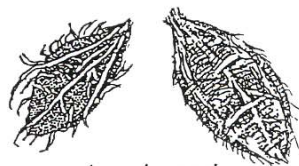
(Illustrations by Cathie Katz and Pamela J. Paradine)



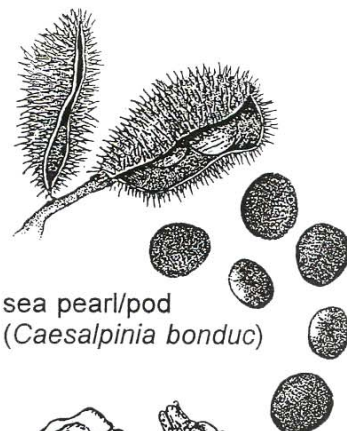
hamburger bean
(*Mucuna* spp.)



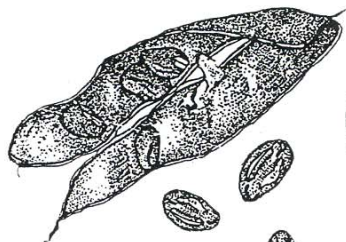
starnut palm
(*Astrocaryum* spp.)



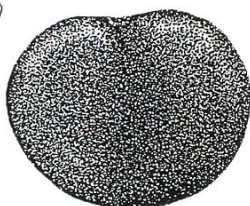
country almond
(*Terminalia catappa*)



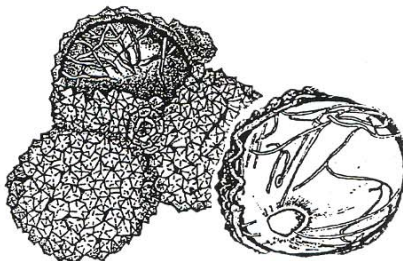
sea pearl/pod
(*Caesalpinia bonduc*)



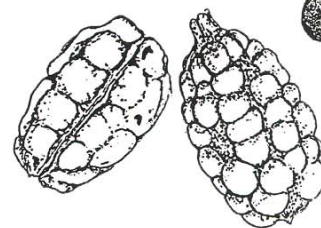
bay bean/pod
(*Canavalia rosea*)



sea heart
(*Entada gigas*)



golfball/pod
(*Manicaria saccifera*)



hand grenade
(*Sacoglottis amazonica*)



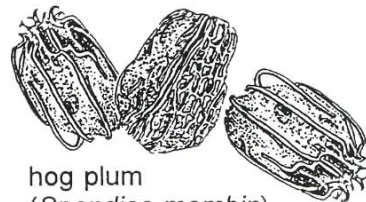
Mary's bean
(*Merremia discoidesperma*)



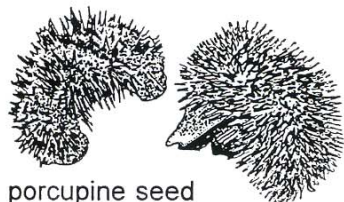
coin plant
(*Dalbergia* spp.)



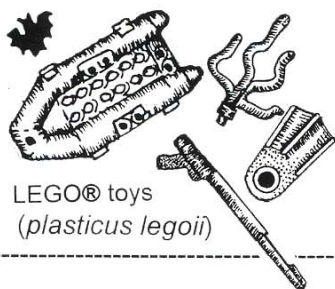
sea purse
(*Dioclea reflexa*)



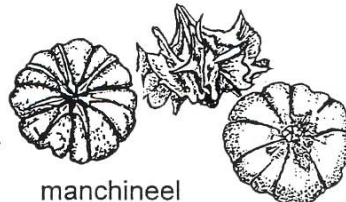
hog plum
(*Spondias mombin*)



porcupine seed
(*Caryocar microcarpum*)



LEGO® toys
(*plasticus legoii*)



manchineel
(*Hippomane mancinella*)



white/black/red mangrove
(various genera)



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