

The Drifting Seed

September, 2012

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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 17th Annual International Sea Bean Symposium will be held at the Cocoa Beach Public Library,
October 12th and 13th, 2012.

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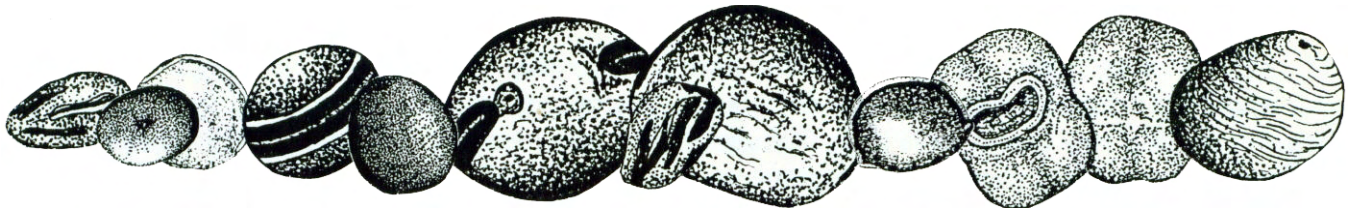
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Tropical (drift) Seeds on a Flemish Painting of 1617

by Gerhard C. Cadée, gerhard.cadee@nioz.nl

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A painting in the Royal Collections, London, by Frans Francken the Younger (1581–1642) made in 1617, shows a collector's cabinet with some tropical seeds among a rich variety of collector's items of that period. The painting is pictured and described in a catalogue by Shawe-Taylor & Scott (2007), but the seeds are not mentioned.

In collector's-cabinets of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, natural history specimens: shells, stones, fossils and seeds, and artifacts such as paintings, antiquities, porcelain, arms, coins were collected. These objects reflected an encyclopedic interest in the products of nature and culture. Many such collector's cabinets were in Antwerp and other Low-Country cities. An aesthetic element influenced the collectors: they concentrated on colorful insects (butterflies, for example) and tropical shells, not on the smaller and less colorful shells from the nearby North Sea. Trading with the East and West Indies provided these tropical naturalia. Therefore, ports such as Antwerp and later Amsterdam were the best places to obtain tropical shells and seeds from ships just arrived.

On Francken's painting one can easily recognize a sea heart (*Entada phaseolides*) and two nickar nuts (*Caesalpinia bonduc*) indicated as 1 and 2 on the sketch of part of this painting I made. The other seeds are most probably a coral bean *Erythrina* sp. from tropical America, a black-eyed Susan, *Abrus precatorius* (pan-tropical) and a seed of red sandalwood *Adenanthera pavonina* (East-Indies). The sketch moreover pictures tropical shells, a shark tooth, an open book, some folded letters and two bezoar stones, all typical for collector's cabinets of that period. The picture itself can also be found on www.royalcollection.org.uk. A fuller account is given in the Archives of Natural History (Cadée, 2011). For those interested I can send a pdf of that paper.

Nelson (2000) gives an excellent review of the history of drift-seeds. He mentions the countless exotic seeds imported into Europe, for example for use in medicines. He states that the well-known botanist Carolus Clusius (1526-1609) obtained different tropical seeds from mariners returned from America and Africa. Among the so-called *fabae purgatrices*, used to make purgatives, was the sea heart *Entada*, which was described and illustrated in 16th and 17th century herbals. Nelson (2000) also mentions Ole Worm (1588-1654), who wrote in 1644 to Arngrim Jonsson in Iceland that he had two different kind of beans from the Indies *fabae Indicae* in his collections, the largest being a heart-shaped purgative bean from St. Thomas (West Indies). Worm described his collections in *Museum Wormianum, seu historia rerum rariorum* published in 1655 by Elsevier, Leiden.

It is clear that tropical seeds were already imported in Europe since the 16th century, both for use in medicines and for curiosity collectors, hence their appearance on Francken's painting of 1617 of a collector's cabinet. They were probably too precious at that time to become refuse on our beaches as they do now (Cadée, 1997; Nelson, 2000).

References

- Cadée, G.C., 1997. Tropical drift disseminules from the coast of the Netherlands. The human factor. *The Drifting Seed* 3(2): 3-4.
- Cadée, G.C., 2011. Sea heart and Nickar nuts in a Flemish painting of 1617. *Archives Natural History*, 38(2): 363-366.
- Nelson, E. C., 2000. *Sea beans and nickar nuts*. Botanical Society of the British Isles Handbook no. 10: 1-156, London.
- Shawe-Taylor, D. and Scott, J., 2007. *Bruegel to Rubens, masters of Flemish painting*. London. 200p.

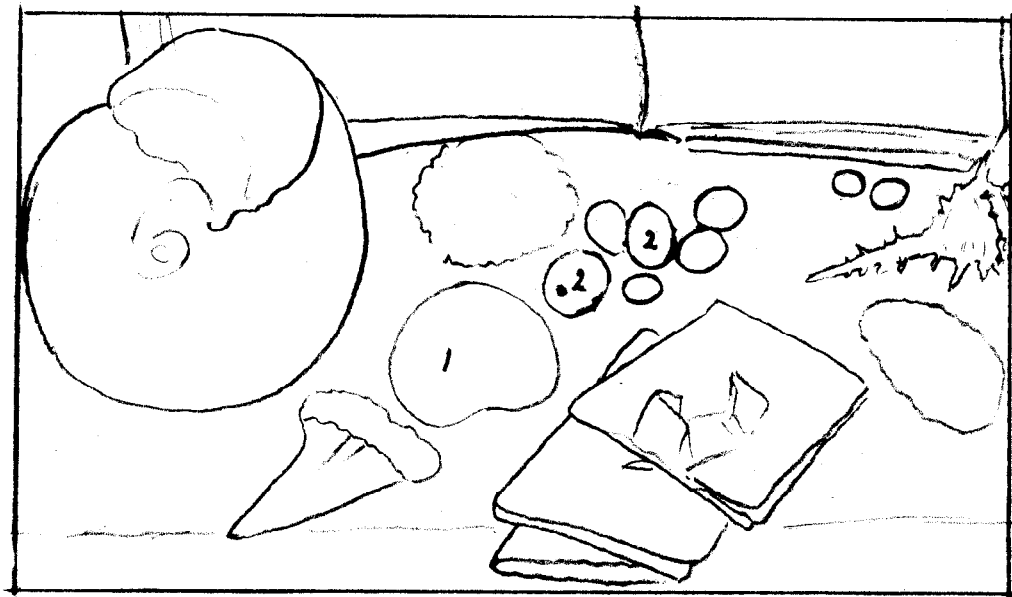


Figure 1. Detail of 'A collectors cabinet', painting by Frans Francken II, 1617
Between shells stones and a shark tooth are a seaheart (1) and nickernuts (2)

African and American Boats Orbit the Atlantic
—26-foot sport fishing boat; 2-foot Moroccan toy boats—
by Curtis C. Ebbesmeyer, CurtisEbbesmeyer@comcast.net

In the 1800s, ocean currents transported scores of sailing vessels left disabled and abandoned around the North Atlantic Ocean. Vessels sailing the Atlantic repeatedly sighted many derelicts. In December 1883, the *U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office* began publishing monthly Pilot Charts showing the locations of derelicts. This series of positions provided the first transocean trajectories of drifting objects. In 1985, **Phil Richardson**, an oceanographer at the *Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution*, provided a comprehensive compilation of these historic trajectories.

Today, derelicts wander Columbus Gyre, albeit usually smaller ones not posing hazards to navigation as the derelicts once did. Here I describe two such small craft: 1) a sport fishing boat (*Queen Bee*) lost off Nantucket, Massachusetts; and 2) hand carved wooden toy boats from Morocco, Northwest Africa.

Queen Bee Sports Boat. On January 17, 2012, twenty miles off Spain's northern coast, the Coast Guard spotted the bow of a partially submerged sport fishing boat. The sighting might have stirred little interest except that amongst the rust and barnacles the boat's home port remained discernible (Nantucket, Massachusetts). With that clue, Spanish authorities contacted the U.S. Coast Guard who tracked the boat to **Scott Douglas**.



Scott remembered August 15, 2008, three years earlier when he lost his beloved fishing boat the *Queen Bee*. The fish weren't biting in the rough sea off Nantucket. Despite the big rollers, he and his brother-in-law **Rich St. Pierre**, kept fishing. In a moment of inattention, a rogue wave swamped their boat throwing them overboard.

The *Queen Bee* quickly drifted out of sight leaving the pair about an hour's swim from shore. Scott, 58, swam the distance, but Rich, 68, required assistance since he'd undergone open heart surgery a year earlier. Fortunately, a survival kit containing an inflatable device floated to his side. Scott made it to shore on Smith's Point, walked to a cabin and asked to make an emergency call. Not long afterward, Rich walked by the cabin. Both men were OK.

After their swim, Scott thought he'd never again see the *Queen Bee*. She's a 26-foot center console sport fishing boat made by *Regulator Marine* founded in 1988 to produce high-quality offshore sport fishing boats. "To have this boat show up three and a half years [later], all the way across the Atlantic, is nothing short of amazing. This is a testament to the great hull design by **Lou Codega** and our dedicated manufacturing team," said *Regulator* president **Joan Maxwell**.

The *Queen Bee* stayed afloat for more than three years because *Regulator Marine* employs thick foam to increase the hull's rigidity. Flotsam floats lots longer than most people think. Boats (e.g., *Boston Whalers*) with foam flotation similar to that in the *Queen Bee* have been documented to drift 20 miles per day over three thousand miles across the Pacific Ocean from Hawaii to the Philippines.

In the records of derelict vessels, a schooner drifted between approximately the same start and end points as the *Queen Bee*. In the late 1800s, mariners reported the derelict schooner *Twenty-one Friends* at 22 locations as it drifted at 13.8 miles per day between New England and Spain (3,525 miles in 255 days). The *Queen Bee* drifted 1,250 days (August 15, 2008, to January 17, 2012).

Where had the *Queen Bee* drifted all those other 995 days (2.7 years, the difference in elapsed times of the *Queen Bee* and the *Twenty-One Friends*)? Applying the average speed of *Twenty-one Friends* to the *Queen Bee* yields 17,250 miles, distance enough to drift twice around Columbus Gyre perhaps redoubling the path of another derelict schooner *Fannie E. Wolston*. Thus I hypothesized that the *Queen Bee* may have orbited twice around Columbus Gyre.

African Toy Boats. At their booth during the 15th annual *Symposium* (October, 2010), veteran naturalists **Blair** and **Dawn Witherington** displayed a distinctive, two-foot long wooden toy boat they'd discovered while beachcombing the eastern Florida coast (see illustration). It was hand carved in a style I'd heretofore not seen. Neither had anyone else I interviewed at the *Symposium*.

Two years later, a film crew from the Canary Islands visited me in Seattle to film an art project by **Pedro Deniz**. He'd enlisted the help of fellow artists to fill 105 bottles with unique and artistic contents. In the years after their release in August 1998 in the Canary Islands (El Hierro, nicknamed the Meridian Island, is the smallest and farthest southwest of the Canary Islands off Northwest Africa, two miles from the Ordilla Sea Light, site of the former 0th meridian), Pedro received ten replies scattered along the route of Columbus's first voyage from the Canary Islands to the Caribbean and back to Spain. The ten



percent reply rate from beachcombers is tenfold higher than normal for transoceanic bottles, a result undoubtedly inspired by the bottles' beautiful contents.

On Tuesday, March 20, 2012, the crew filmed me in my previous digs in the offices of Evans-Hamilton, Inc., while I narrated the voyage of Pedro's bottles against the backdrop of Columbus' inaugural voyage. During an interlude in the filming, I handed Pedro a back issue of the *Beachcombers Alert*. Paging through it, he noticed a photograph of the toy boat Blair and Dawn had discovered in Florida (*Beachcombers' Alert*, January-March, 2012).

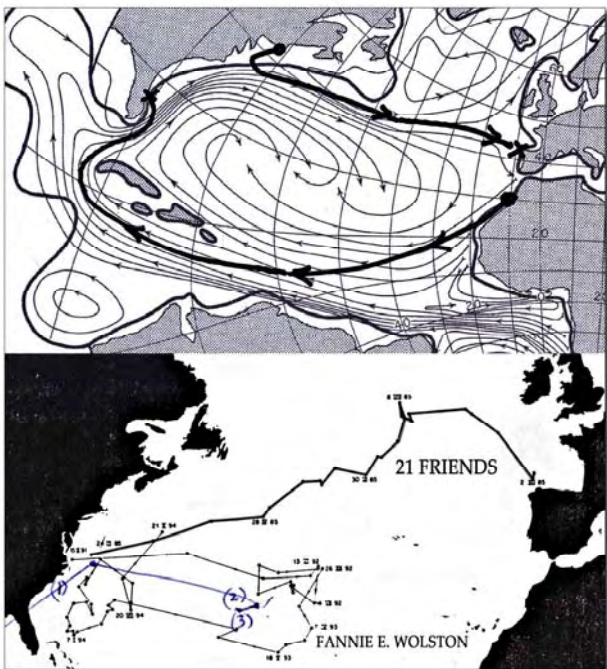
Pedro remarked that it is a fairly common toy from a coastal area in Morocco not far from Casablanca. Pedro found the toy boat on the coast of Morocco where he was living at the time (1993; see circle in illustration map). He thought it originated from Moulay Bouselham, a town in Kénitra Province, Gharb-Chrarda-Béni Hssen, Morocco, an area where he observed pink flamingos during their annual migration.

Moroccan toy boats yet swirl about the great Atlantic Gyre, as numerous now as derelicts were a century ago. The *Queen Bee* might have floated from America to Spain in the presence of a tiny fleet. Judging by their medieval design and given long standing traditions in northern Africa, Moroccans may have carved these boats for centuries. They probably have orbited the Gyre for years. It is a fascinating prospect that they accompanied the drift of derelict vessels. Perhaps toy boats arrived in America before Columbus?

Acknowledgments. *Queen Bee*: Information from **Becky Bratu** (msnbc.com). **Moroccan boats**: Producer **Jana Díaz Juhl** (cineticproductions.com) translated Pedro's remarks and his messages in bottles. **Witherington Books**: *Florida's Living Beaches: A Guide for the Curious Beachcomber, Living Beaches of Georgia and the Carolinas*. **Derelict vessels**: Phillip L. Richardson, 1985. Drifting derelicts in the North Atlantic 1883-1902. *Progress in Oceanography*, Vol. 14, pp. 463-483.

Captions:

Nantucket Sport Fishing Boat. Top panel: Unknown boat similar to the *Queen Bee* in better days; **Middle panel:** *Queen Bee* as recovered in Spain; and **Bottom panel:** The origin (Nantucket) of the *Queen Bee* was discovered after some of the marine growth was scraped from her hull. (U.S. Coast Guard photos).



Moroccan Toy Boats. Top panels: Two views of the toy boat Pedro Deniz found in Morocco (Pedro Deniz photos); **Lower right:** Toy boat Blair and Dawn Witherington found in Eastern Florida (Ed Perry photo); and **Lower left:** Circle on map showing coastal location where Pedro found the Moroccan toy boat (Map by Pedro Deniz).

Atlantic Drifters: Schooners from the 1800s, Moroccan Toy Boats, Nantucket Sport Fishing Boat. Top: Heavier lines, drift of 26-foot sport fishing boat *Queen Bee* (Nantucket to northern Spain), and 2-foot Moroccan toy boats (Morocco to Florida). Background lines, surface ocean currents for August from **Athelstan F. Spilhaus** (*Geographical Review*, 1942, 32: 431-435). **Bottom:** During March 24, 1885, to December 4, 1885, the derelict schooner *Twenty-One Friends* drifted from New England to northern Spain, approximately the start and end points as those of the *Queen Bee*. Also shown is the 1,100-day drift (October 15, 1891, to October 21, 1894) of the derelict schooner *Fannie E. Wolston* around the Columbus Gyre.

Seventeenth Annual International Sea-Bean Symposium and Beachcombers' Festival
Cocoa Beach Public Library—550 North Brevard Avenue, Cocoa Beach, Florida 32931
Open Free To The Public, October 12th & 13th, 2012
Schedule of Events*

Through the weekend: Sea-bean collections and displays, experts, sea-bean polishing, the famous Bean-O-Matic, jewelry, T-shirts, slide-shows, speakers, books, authors, international guests, raffle and contests (including the ever popular "ODD-BEAN" contest, and the Saturday morning "BEAN-A-THON" beachcombing bonanza!).

We are pleased to announce that our very own Deacon Ritterbush (Dr. Beachcomb) will be our featured Keynote Speaker for this year's event. Deacon is an avid beachcomber and runs the International Beachcombers' Conference which will be in Lewes, Delaware, at the Virden Retreat Center, on October 4th –7th (www.beachcombingconference.com). She has written *A Beachcomber's Odyssey: Treasures from a Collected Past* and plans to have her second book in the series available, entitled *Strands in the Sand*. Deacon will be onsite with us all weekend to sign books and share knowledge. As Saturday night's Keynote Speaker she will present *Beachcombing as a Portal to History*.

Krieger Publishing Company will be pleased to present *Sea-Beans from the Tropics: A Collector's Guide to Sea-Beans and Other Tropical Drift on Atlantic Shores*, by Perry/Dennis (reprint edition 2010). Ed Perry will be on-hand to sign copies. Blair and Dawn Witherington are the authors of *Florida's Living Beaches* (Pineapple Press, 2007) which is a guide to anything and everything you may encounter on Florida's beaches, featuring not only sea-beans, but also shells, fish, plants, birds, and even the "green flash!" Blair and Dawn will be at the Symposium with copies of their Florida book as well as their recently released *Living Beaches of Georgia and the Carolinas, A Beachcomber's Guide*. The ever-popular *The Little Book of Sea-Beans* will also be available. Jim Angy, Marge Bell and Matt MacQueen of Still Nature Productions will be offering their digital books and *Beach Basics* packages. Also present will be Dr. Curtis Ebbesmeyer with his book *Flotsametrics and the Floating World*, and Beach Hunter David McRee with his book *Florida Beaches*. This year we will again also make available for sale Cathie Katz' beautifully written and illustrated *The Nature of Florida's.....series*.

Thursday, October 11th (3-5pm)

Everyone is invited to the main conference room at the Cocoa Beach Public Library for an informal get-together and introduction, discussion of symposium plans, and to set up displays for the weekend. We need lots of help setting up tables, chairs, and displays, so please feel free to donate time and suggestions. At 6pm those interested can meet at Roberto's Little Havana Restaurant (1/2 mile south of the library at 26 N. Orlando Ave.—this place has GREAT Cuban food, and has become a Symposium tradition).

Friday, October 12th (9am-6pm)

Displays and collections open to the public all day, free, from 9am to 6pm. Enter your seeds for the ODD-BEAN contest (see 13th).
11 to 11:45 am: *Basic Beachcombing and Sea-Beans*—by Margie Mitchell
2 to 3 pm: *Beach Survival Guide*—by David McRee
4 to 5 pm: *Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About Sea Glass* (slide show)—by Dr. Beachcomb Deacon Ritterbush
6 pm: The library closes.

Saturday, October 13th (8am-9pm)

Displays and collections open to the public all day, free, from 9am to 5pm. Enter your seeds for the ODD-BEAN contest (see 4:30).
8:00 to 10:00 am: Bean-A-Thon 2012—You are on your own; don't come to the library first if you participate. Collect sea-beans and or toys/trash/sea-glass on any beach between Canaveral National Seashore and Sebastian Inlet. You MUST have your beans/toys/sea-glass at the library by 10:30am. Contest is judged/tallied per individual effort in the 2hr. time frame, please. No doubling-up.
9:00 am: Library opens.
10:30 to 11:30: Judges will tally Bean-A-Thon entries outside in front of the library (awards at 7pm that night).
11:30 to Noon: *Plastic, Garbage Patches and Tsunamis* (slide show)—by Dr. Curtis Ebbesmeyer
1:00 to 2:00 pm: *Drifters from our upstream Gulf: sea-beans, oil, and other drifters*—Blair and Dawn Witherington
4 to 4:30: **GROUP PICTURE OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY! Be in it! Bring your camera!**—photos taken by Jim Angy
4:30 pm: ODD-BEAN contest judging (for entries submitted all through the weekend). In a baggie with your name, address/phone number place your **bluntest starnut, reddest hamburger bean, and flattest sea purse** from an existing sea-bean collection. "Oddness" will be determined by the judges. These entries DO NOT have to be found in the Saturday morning Bean-A-Thon. Please enter!!!!
Dinner Break: 5:00pm to 7pm: Tables and displays will be taken down in main room in preparation for the keynote presentation.
7:00 pm: Prompt! Bean-A-Thon and contest awards and certificates presented. Raffle winners chosen.
7:45 to 8:45 pm: **Keynote Speaker** Dr. Beachcomb Deacon Ritterbush talks about *Beachcombing as a Portal to History*.
9 pm: Library closes for Symposium.

Sunday, October 14th (9-11am)

Take down displays; small business meeting to discuss and schedule dates/help for next year's symposium.

*October is still HURRICANE SEASON in Florida, so our schedule is at the mercy of the powers beyond our control. Hurricanes are wonderful for beanning, but can be dangerous for beachwalkers. Our beachcombing and Symposium activities may be cancelled because of severe weather, in which case we'll follow evacuation procedures to the mainland. In the event of a hurricane, information will be available at your hotel and at the library.

Travel and Hotel Information for Symposium 2012 in Cocoa Beach

Cocoa Beach is about an hour drive from Orlando International Airport.

Beach Place - 1445 S. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach. 783-4045

La Quinta: <http://laquinta.com/lq/properties/propertyProfile.do?ident=LQ622&propId=622>

Luna Sea: <http://www.lunaseacocoabeach.com/reservations.php>

Pelican Landing: <http://www.angelfire.com/on2/pelicanlandingresort/main.html>

South Beach Inn: <http://www.southbeachinn.com/accommodations.htm>

Anthony's On The Beach - 3499 S. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach. 783-9892

Beach Island Resort - 1125 S. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach. 784-5720

Crawford's Cocoa Cabanas - 1901 S. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach. 799-0307

And finally, here's a link to a list of lots of local lodging. <http://cocoabeach.com/lodging.html>



Sea-Bean T-Shirt for 2012

100 % cotton shirt

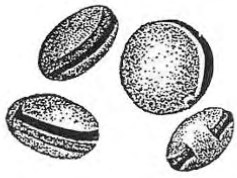
all shirts are a \$20 donation each

► available at the **17th Annual Sea-Bean Symposium and Beachcombers' Festival**, Cocoa Beach, Florida ◀
(or to mail-order only while supplies last contact Alice at floridaal@cfl.rr.com for instructions and shipping)

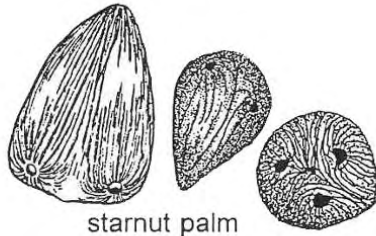
This year's T-shirt features the artwork of our own Dawn Witherington and proclaims the beachcomber lifestyle and attitude—the "Wrack Life!"

Simple Guide to Common Drift Seeds

(Illustrations by Cathie Katz and Pamela J. Paradine)



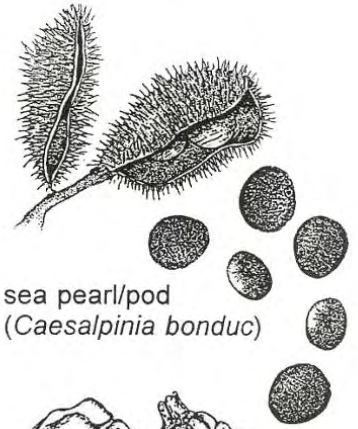
hamburger bean
(*Mucuna* spp.)



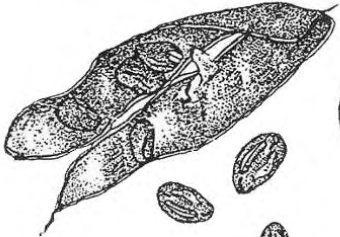
starnut palm
(*Astrocaryum* spp.)



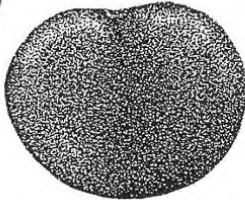
country almond
(*Terminalia catappa*)



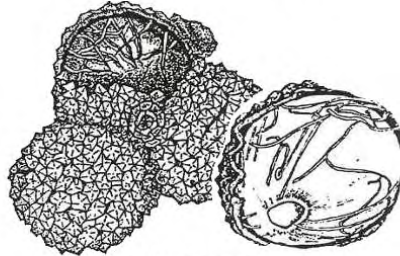
sea pearl/pod
(*Caesalpinia bonduc*)



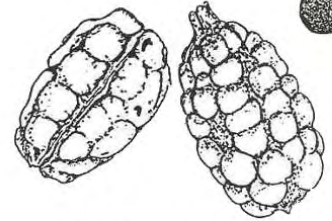
bay bean/pod
(*Canavalia rosea*)



sea heart
(*Entada gigas*)



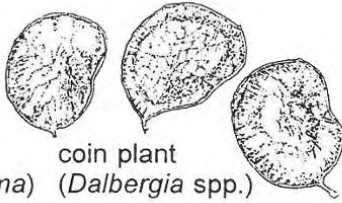
golfball/pod
(*Manicaria saccifera*)



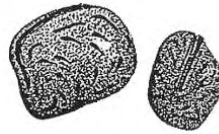
hand grenade
(*Sacoglottis amazonica*)



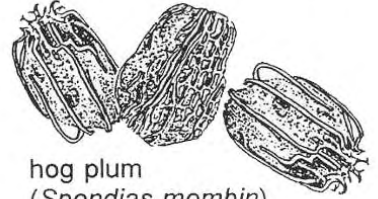
Mary's bean
(*Merremia discoidesperma*)



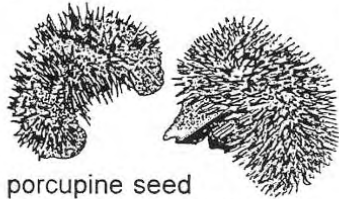
coin plant
(*Dalbergia* spp.)



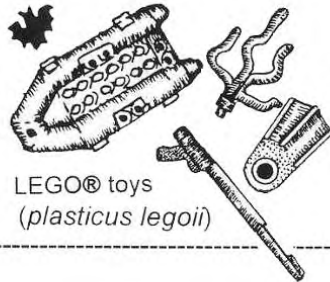
sea purse
(*Dioclea reflexa*)



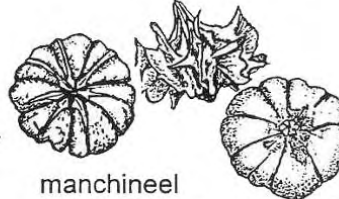
hog plum
(*Spondias mombin*)



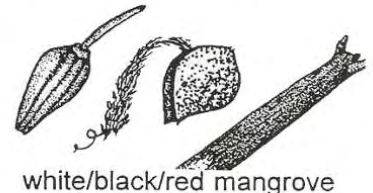
porcupine seed
(*Caryocar microcarpum*)



LEGO® toys
(*plasticus legoii*)



manchineel
(*Hippomane mancinella*)



white/black/red mangrove
(various genera)



The Drifting Seed

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