



The Drifting Seed

December 31, 1996

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THE DRIFTING SEED

A semiannual *Newsletter* covering seeds and fruits dispersed by tropical currents and about the people who collect and study them.

Dr. Charles R. (Bob) Gunn and Cathie Katz (CoEditors)

SPECIAL EDITION

This special edition is being published to report the presentation of the
**Lifetime Achievement Award to honor
Dr. Charles R. Gunn**
at the
1996 First Annual Sea-Bean Symposium
on December 4, 1996.

This issue also includes a review of the symposium and the results of our group's informal business meeting on December 5, 1996.

And for all the readers who asked for help identifying some of the most commonly found drift seeds in the southeast U.S., we've included two illustrated pages of sea-beans found during the days of the symposium.

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FROM YOUR EDITORS

From Bob

Our September 1996 issue (an early issue of our regular November 1996) was mailed on time. Starting with this issue (December 1996) we will be publishing our *Newsletter* three times a year: May, September, and December. Please send your notes and comments and disseminules to me. Please send your articles on either 5¼- or 3½-inch disks using WordPerfect for an IBM-based system, if possible.

Our *Newsletter* is the result of a fortunate meld of Cathie and my talents, but its success still resides in your hands. Except for this special issue, we need to fill the following columns three times a year, and only you can do this: **Feature Articles** (mainly about collectors, collections, and contributors), **News and Notes from Readers**, **Recent Literature**, and **Collector's Gallery** (photographs). We welcome ideas for other columns.

I was very sorry to miss the first meeting of **The Drifters**. While the surgery for the pacemaker was routine, the next day operation to solve a hematoma problem was anything but routine. This is the operation that slowed me down and caused me to miss the meeting. Thankfully, I do not fall over like a ton of bricks any more. This caused me to stop driving and eventually to even stop going up and down stairs and walking without someone. I was being treated for epilepsy (the best diagnosis at the time), and I repeatedly passed all heart tests. Until I passed out in the emergency room, they did not know what was happening to me. I feel so much better now and though it was a bad summer and fall (especially for Betty), I am pleased that I had something that the doctors could more or less cure.

I believe that **The Drifters** should start publishing a series of separate numbered pamphlets (about 24 pages, including literature citations) on a specific drift subject. These should be sold, and authors should be asked to pay page charges when financially able. The *Merremia* paper with proper illustrations by Dennis, Sr. et al might be one to be published. I, for one, will be preparing a pamphlet on tropical drift seed collectors: Each page will have the text and photograph for one major collector, domestic and foreign. If you have nominations, please let me know.

Pete Zies and I are working on establishing the **Robert Mossman Tropical Drift Seed Collection** in a Cocoa Museum. This collection will feature tropical drift disseminules that have been collected from the Atlantic coast beaches of Florida. We hope to have the collection ready by our October meeting.

I will be working on my revision of the *World Guide*, and I am preparing a PC File of my drift disseminule accessions, their photographs (color and black and white), and their literature. The latter will be put online.

From Cathie

To begin the **1996 First Annual Sea-Bean Symposium** on December 4, I read a letter from Dr. Gunn in which he explained his last-minute cancellation. At the end of the letter, he wrote, "I am with you in spirit - well actually I am out on the beach gathering all the sea-beans while you are at the meeting." (Some people will do anything to avoid public speaking.) So we missed our keynote speaker beyond words, but we hope this newsletter will capture the sense of wonder at the symposium for Dr. Gunn and the others who missed it.

Pete Zies helped get all of us together at the symposium and contributed his writing talents to this newsletter. After endless whining on my part, Pete offered to write up the events of the symposium and put together the two pages of sea-bean identification at the end of this newsletter. (By the way, Pete is an attorney in Central Florida with a busy law practice; he also has a growing family -- another baby on the way! -- and he still manages to beachwalk, write, draw, and keep us organized!) So, once again I've managed to avoid any work, and once again I have the easiest job in the house. This issue introduces our readers to the wonderful cast of characters who contributed to an amazingly magical event. **Gwen Birch and Ray Dickinson** from the Cocoa Beach Public Library generously hosted our gathering. Ray approached me just before the event started when the conference room had already filled beyond capacity: He shook his head in disbelief and said, "All these people came to hear about *sea-beans??*" Yes. As our friend Frank Seymour says, **believe in the magic!** The magic was definitely with us. (Even sea-bean season started right on schedule this year with the long-awaited *armada* arriving the first week of October, so our sea-bean collecting during the symposium was successful too!)

The Worst and the Best: The most disappointing part of the program was Dr. Gunn's cancellation because of his emergency surgery -- but the best part of the program was the presentation by Pete Zies of **The Lifetime Achievement Award** to our absent member, and of course the presentations by Curt Ebbesmeyer, John Dennis, and Ruth Smith. Thank you all! The following page was written by Pete Zies as our way of re-capturing the moment for our much loved friend and advisor, Dr. Charles. R. Gunn.

Presentation of Lifetime Achievement Award

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

presented to
DR. CHARLES R. GUNN
in grateful appreciation
for three decades
of dedicated effort
in the fields of
sea-bean research
and education.

December 4, 1996

Text and Presentation by Pete Zies

Many moments in history have been lost to us in time; the Fall of Rome, Columbus landing, the first shot of the Revolution, and despite our best efforts, the presentation of Dr. Gunn's Lifetime Achievement Award at the 1996 Symposium has joined them. The following few words are our second attempt to share that moment with our friends who could not attend the conference.

Over a century ago the great American writer, Henry David Thoreau said:
**"I have great faith in a seed. Convince me that you have a seed there,
and I am prepared to expect wonders."**

Dr. Gunn has taught us all to see the wonder of these seeds, and for that we thank him. Thirty years ago the seed of curiosity was planted in Dr. Gunn's mind and that has grown into numerous articles on drift disseminules, a World Guide co-authored with Mr. Dennis, this newsletter, our first symposium and a soon-to-be-named international organization. A mighty oak has truly grown from a tiny acorn. Beyond his own personal achievements, Dr. Gunn has helped so many others. He has spent as much time sharing his knowledge and educating others as he has researching and identifying our botanical treasures. In this way Dr. Gunn has helped knowledge about drift seeds expand much further than he could have ever done alone. Our individual achievements in this field are also his. To the degree that we are literate in this field, we owe our thanks to him. We all stand on Dr. Gunn's shoulders, and as we carry this organization into the next year, we carry on with Dr. Gunn's most cherished work. More than any plaque or prize, that is the best way we can honor him. From all of us, Dr. Gunn, please accept our most sincere thanks for all of your efforts.*

*[Eds. Note: This award was presented before our group had chosen a name.]

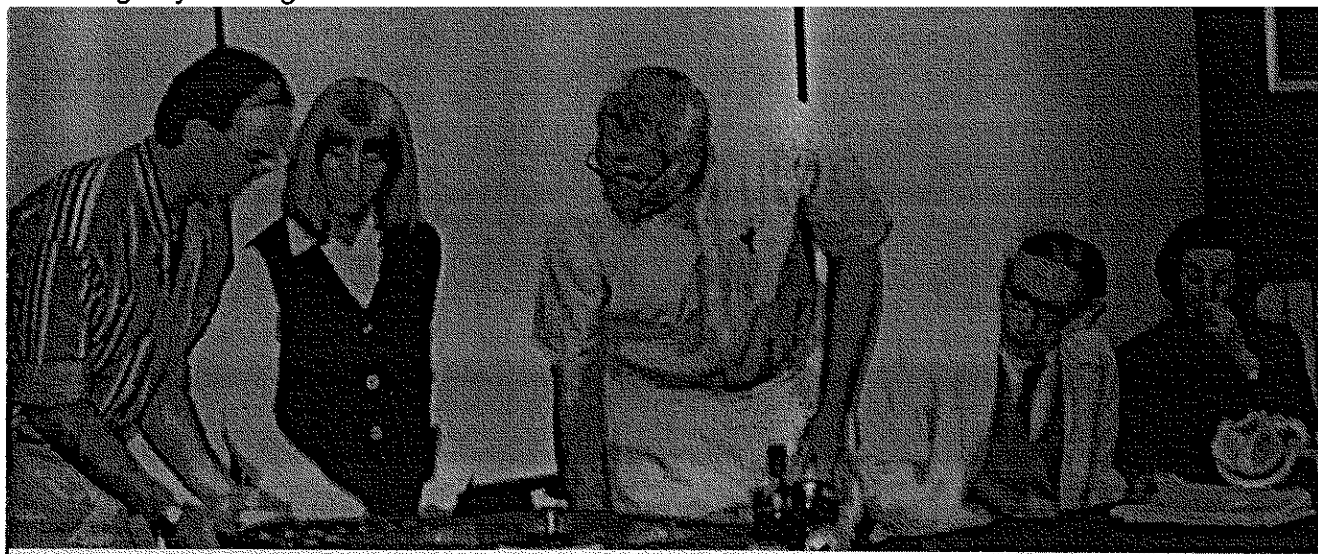


Shown above is the panel of speakers at the 1996 First Annual Sea-Bean Symposium in Cocoa Beach, Florida. From left: Pete Zies from Lake Mary, Florida; Cathie Katz from Melbourne Beach, Florida; Curt Ebbesmeyer from Seattle, Washington; John Dennis from Princess Anne, Maryland; and Ruth Smith from Arlington, Virginia.

1996 First Annual Sea-Bean Symposium in Review by Pete Zies

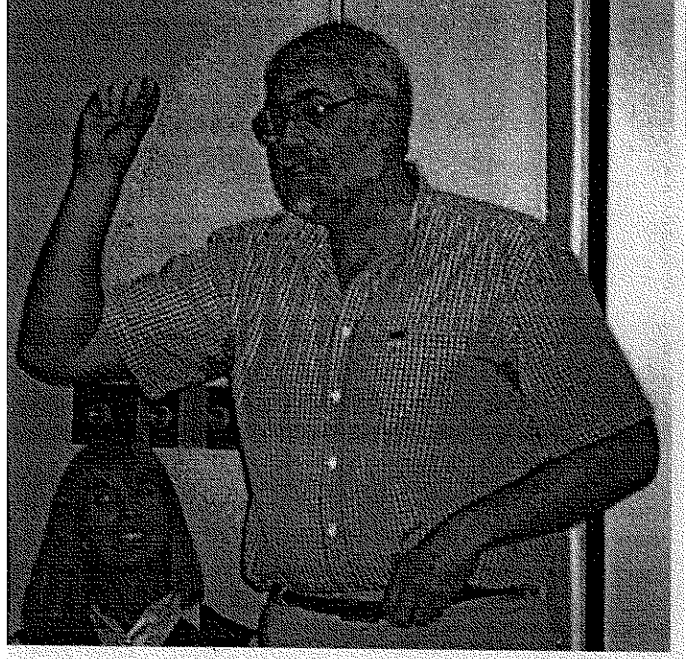
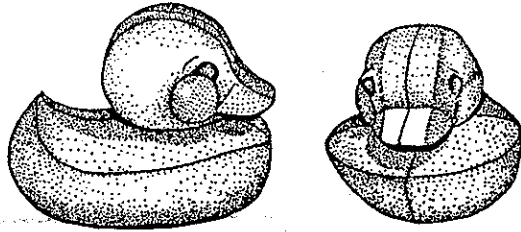
As it was my video camera that broke down at our conference, it becomes my honor to create some "verbal snapshots" of the events. Our meeting was very well attended and although the Fire Marshall only wanted 85 people in the lecture hall, 98 was the official count. The crowd was so anxious for answers that a spontaneous question and answer session sprang up well before our official start time, and only a concerted effort drew us back to our formal program.

Cathie Katz started the program as organizer and moderator. You could hear the excitement in her voice that we all felt. Cathie asked me to begin the panel discussion and it was my fine pleasure to make the presentation in absentia of Dr. Gunn's Lifetime Achievement Award. (It was at this point that my video camera broke, thus bringing about this article). I also briefly discussed the new Seed Survey Forms that Mr. Dennis and I collaborated on and urged the audience to share their collected knowledge by utilizing them.



The symposium panel was rounded out by three other guests from across the U.S. First, **Dr. Curtis Ebbesmeyer**, visiting from Seattle, enchanted the audience with stories of floating duckies, sneakers, and hockey gloves. He showed how political and human rights issues are associated with ocean-drifting items. He challenged our group to keep our eyes open for rare finds on the east coast, such as drift net floats. (Imagine my shock when I found my first drift net float on nearby Canova Beach the next morning!) Curt painted a picture foreign to us of the American west coast where human-made items take the place of our familiar drift seeds.

Shown to the right is Curt Ebbesmeyer discussing plastic duckies, sneakers, bottles, trash, and soccer gloves.



John V. Dennis, Sr. brought such enthusiasm with him from Maryland, that he made his fourth decade of bean collecting seem like his first. Although Dr. Gunn's inability to attend the conference was a disappointment, it was obvious that those in attendance were happy that the co-author of the "Sea Beaner's Bible" was present. John brought with him his latest publication about beachcombers -- a real work of art. A true sea-beaner, John was ready to hit the beach first thing on the second morning of the conference, and we found 32 species of drift seeds!

Shown to the left is John V. Dennis, Sr.

Ruth Smith of Arlington, Virginia completed our list of speakers. She dazzled the crowd with her truly spectacular collection of seed necklaces from around the world. Ruth blended botanical, cultural, artistic, and historical aspects of seeds into her lively talk, bringing to life each piece she held up and discussed. Any attempt to describe her treasures would fall flat, but many were truly museum pieces. It was obvious that the crowd enjoyed her descriptions as well as being able to touch the hundreds of pieces on view at the symposium.

Shown to the right is Ruth Smith holding one of her beautiful seed necklaces.



Throughout the night, members of the audience sat on the edge of their seats, cameras flashing, and pens scribbling on note pads. Their thirst for knowledge was intense. After the introductions, we went into a training session where the 30 most common seeds found on our beaches were shown, identified and discussed. This led to a question and answer session which wrapped up with the audience mingling with the speakers and engaging in show and tell exchanges. We invited the group back for the next day after lunch, but the crowd that night didn't completely melt away until an hour and a half after the library closed. As we all left for the night, participants were pairing up for beachcombing in the morning, or discussing where to hunt.



Standing from left: Curt Ebbesmeyer, Scott Boykin, Tim Kozusko, Cathie Katz, David Williams, Pete Zies, John Dennis. Sitting from left: Rita Crane, Janice Scott, Sue Bradley, Ruth Smith. Not shown are Cathy Ferrell, Rhonda Theobald, and of course, Dr. Gunn.

When we reconvened the second day, a core group of about fifteen was present. After spending a few minutes socializing and comparing the morning's finds we got straight to business. Listed below are some of the key issues discussed:

Contributions: Since distribution of *The Drifting Seed* now approaches 300 readers and institutions, we all readily agreed to ask for contributions to help continue publishing. **Contributions will be \$5 in the U.S. and \$7 international.** The money will be used to pay for paper/printing and postage. **Sue Bradley** was elected Treasurer and graciously offered to help with printing and mailing production. Thanks from all of us, Sue, for all your generous help! Checks can be made out to **Atlantic Press** and mailed to **Sue Bradley at PO Box 510366 Melbourne Beach, FL 32951.**

Identity Crisis: Trying to pick a name proved more problematic as the names ranged from the light-hearted (Bean Heads) to the whimsical (Vacuum Cleaners) to the ornate (Fava Marina Society) and everywhere in between. The decision was put on hold for the day.

[Eds. Note: Because we didn't want to wait any longer than necessary to have a name, an executive decision was made the following week: **THE DRIFTERS**, suggested by Rita Crane of Coral Springs, Florida was chosen for its descriptive simplicity and its connection to our newsletter name. Thanks Rita!]

1997 Second Annual Sea-Bean Symposium: The suggestion to have a second annual meeting met with unanimous and popular approval. **October 16 through 18, 1997** will be the dates for the gathering to allow for maximum beaning. Cocoa Beach will probably remain the home base of the conference for at least another year, but the idea of holding future meetings at other locations with good beaning beaches was discussed (even Africa - start drifting now!).

December 5, 1996 Informal Business Meeting

A Home For Us? The group was advised of Dr. Gunn's desire to find an appropriate home for his Florida drift seed collection; sites were listed. No objection was heard about having the collection housed at the **Brevard Museum of History and Natural Science in Cocoa**, which has already voiced an interest in receiving the seeds. We hope they can be on display for next year's meeting.

Re-publication of *World Guide to Tropical Drift Seeds and Fruits* (Gunn, Dennis, Paradine). The most challenging item on our agenda was tackling the re-publication of the legendary Gunn and Dennis *World Guide*. The consensus was that the new book should include photographs and/or color illustrations (with even Mr. Dennis agreeing). Additional objectives were to increase the number of items included and illustrated. Those of us experienced with book publication realized the magnitude of the task at hand, so after much discussion it was decided that a simpler, more compact Field Guide to Southeastern U.S. drift seeds (and other beach things) could be compiled initially. Depending on how easy or excruciating that was, the *World Guide* could follow. (Remember that the original took a decade from start to finish). The brainstorming will continue with Dr. Gunn.

Making History: Our informal group of botanists, biologists, beachwalkers, scientists, jewelry makers, artists, and editors made history at The First Annual Sea-Bean Symposium. Trying to get such a wide-ranging group together might seem impossible, but we all came together as naturally as the strange seeds that roll onto our shore in the fall.

Guidance: Not only did we manage to gather our bodies, beans, and stories, we also elected/volunteered a steering committee to guide us through this initial development:

John Dennis:	Counsel/Consultant
Pete Zies:	Secretary
Sue Bradley:	Treasurer
David Williams:	Graphics Advisor
Rhonda Theobald:	Technical Advisor
Rita Crane:	Willing Volunteer
Janice Scott:	Willing Volunteer
We still need:	Survey Form Reviewer/Compiler

Business eventually gave way to more socializing, show and tell, and picture taking. When we adjourned at the end of the second day, it seemed quite appropriate that the last things we heard were plans for getting onto the beach one last time for a bit more seed hunting.

Bean Me Up Scottie: Thanks to the many folks who came from out of town, especially **Scott Boykin** who returned to Florida via Hawaii and New York to share his beautiful sea-bean jewelry with us. And a very special thanks to **David Williams** from Virginia, an outstanding graphic artist and naturalist who has volunteered his art talents to help us with our endeavors. We also enjoyed meeting **Faith, Ken, and Mark Bartlett** from Englewood, Florida who brought their seed collection from the Florida Keys. We had a chance to welcome **Marianne and Indian Huston** back from Guam. The **Florida Native Plant Society** honored us by attending, as did representatives from **The Astronaut Trail Shell Club** and **The Melbourne Beach Gardeners' Club**.

We owe thanks to **Janet West**, who didn't know she'd be our photographer until just before the conference. (The photos' grainy quality is the fault of Cathie's cranky scanner, not Janet's photographic abilities.) And last but not least, thanks to **Don Bradley** for being so willing to be our official videographer and handling the technical problems so heroically. Next year we'll be better prepared!

Frank Seymour, we really missed you and look forward to seeing you at next year's meeting. Your spirit was with us during the entire conference.

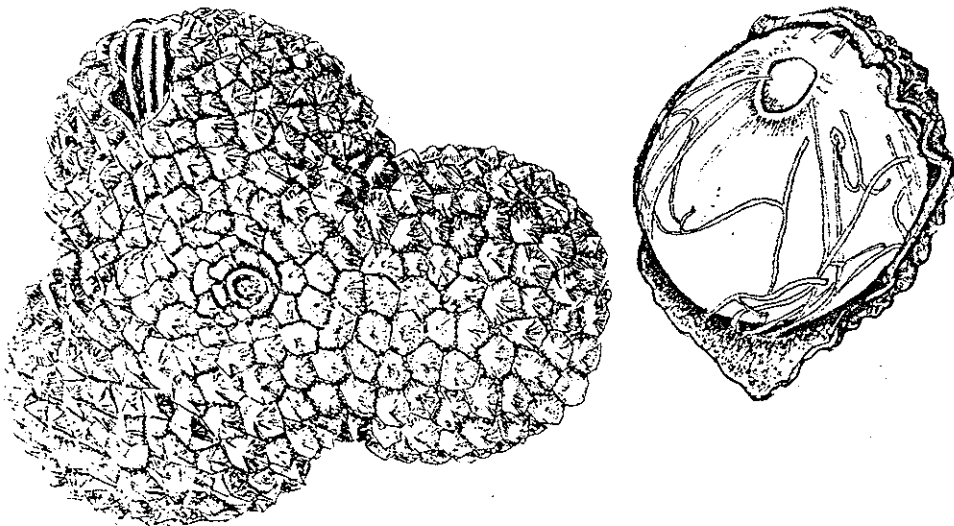
Sea-Bean Identification

Text by Pete Zies and Illustrations by Pamela Paradine

All it takes is meeting people from other places to realize how much we take for granted. I was amazed at how excited our out-of-state visitors were about the seeds that our beachwalkers here consider "junk." With that, we'll try to familiarize you with the drift seeds we found on the beach at conference time.

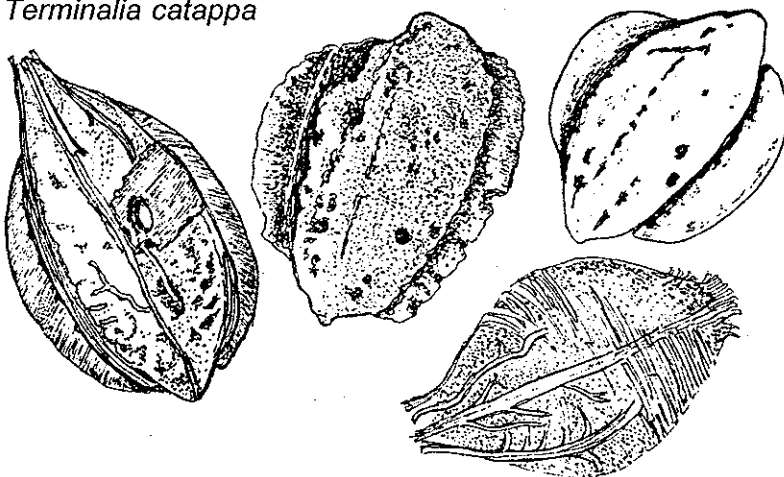
Sea Coconut (a.k.a sleeve palm or golf ball bean) *Manicaria saccifera*

Round brown balls, slightly larger than golf balls, sea coconuts wash onto Florida's beaches by the hundreds during our fall sea-bean season. They originally leave their Orinoco delta home in light grey casings in single, double, or triple groupings. The casings are covered with a pattern of tiny bumps as shown in the illustration. Once out of the casings, their color fades from mahogany red/brown to almost white. John Dennis said he had never seen so many on a beach.



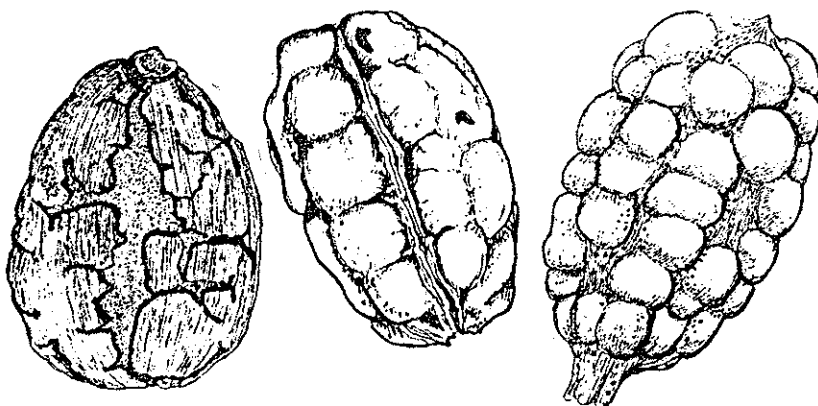
Tropical Almond (a.k.a. Indian almond) *Terminalia catappa*

These almond-shaped fibrous seeds are also commonly found during sea-bean season. They may still have their dark, smooth outer skin or they may be worn down to their corky interior. They grow throughout the Caribbean, but since their husk is absorptive, the seed rarely is able to grow by the time it reaches our Central Florida shore. Dr. Ebbesmeyer mentioned that a single tropical almond is the only drift seed ever reported to be found on the U.S. Pacific Coast.

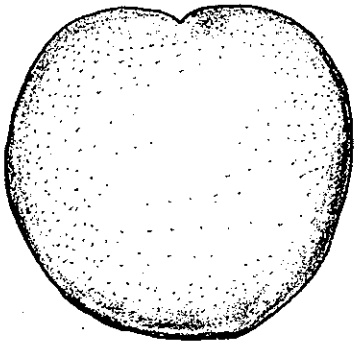


Blister Pod (a.k.a. hand grenade or cojon de buro) *Sacoglottis amazonica*

The Spanish name for this seed brought laughs from those in the audience who understood its crass translation. They are gray egg-sized pods covered in blister-like bumps. They are light, as the bumps are hollow and assist in buoyancy. These also float to us in large numbers from a restricted range on one of the Amazon River's tributaries in South America.



Sea-Bean Identification (Continued)

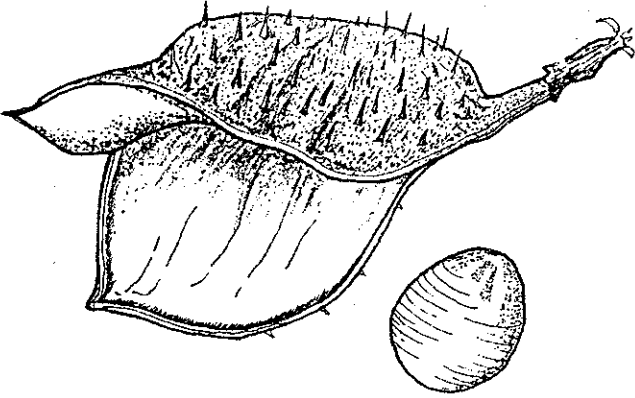


Sea Heart (a.k.a. snuff-box bean) *Entada gigas*

These are a favorite among local beachcombers. They are easily spotted because of their comparatively large size and their dark mahogany-to-burgundy color. They are circular and flat, but thick, and the best ones do have a shape reminiscent of a heart. They are shiny and hard, thus qualifying as one of the seeds in the "keeper" category. They grow in long pods (some more than a meter long) that hang from vines throughout South and Central America. Each pod contains 10 to 15 sea hearts.

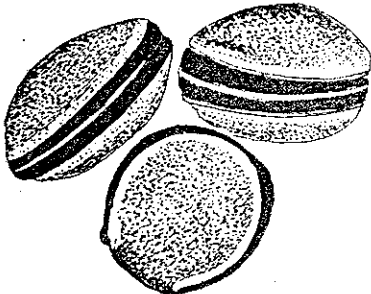
Gray Nickernut (a.k.a. sea pearl or nickerbean) *Caesalpinia bonduc*

These marble-sized gray seeds are hard and shiny and are a fairly common "keeper" on our shores. Their parent plant is a sprawling shrub with branches covered in thorns. One or two seeds grow inside each of the brittle pods which are also covered with tiny razor-sharp spikes. The tree is adaptable and grows throughout the tropics, as well as along both Florida coasts. Two related species with yellow and brown seeds are much rarer, but are found occasionally along Florida's shores or inlets.



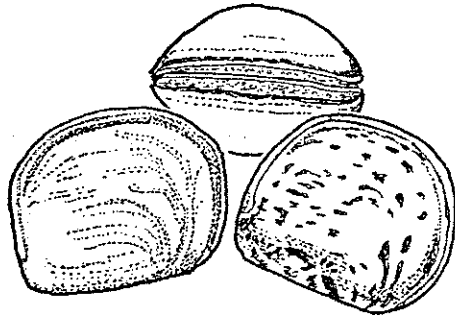
Hamburger Bean (a.k.a. horse eye or true sea-bean) *Mucuna spp.*

These are probably the favorite "keeper" seed found on our beaches. They are shaped like an overstuffed cough drop or hard candy with a black band running most of the way around the edge of the seed. They can be any shade between dark brown to light brown or burnt red, and mottled or not. The ones found on the east coast come from jungle vines in the Americas and the Caribbean, but this family is pantropic with 100 species worldwide. Ruth Smith showed us fascinating varieties in her jewelry display that we've never seen on Florida beaches.



Sea Purse (a.k.a. vultures eye) *Dioclea reflexa*

These look similar to *Mucunas* at first, but a closer examination reveals that they are "D"-shaped, rather than the "O" shape of the *Mucunas*, and the band around the edge is much thinner. Sea purses are usually orange-ish with dark speckles, although some come without flecks and can be lighter or darker. These beans also originate from tropical jungles.



Lack of space in this newsletter bars a complete listing of the items found during the conference, but representative groups include: dune vegetation (railroad vine, bay bean, sea grape, white inkberry), local flora (pine cones, oak acorns, and red/black/white mangroves), human refuse (mango and peach pits), and a laundry list of other tropical disseminules (coconuts, coin plant, starnut palms, manchineel, bloodwood, crabwood and others). The first beach survey form was filled out based on the weekend's finds. At next year's symposium we will present the collected results to give a more detailed picture of what is out there!