

50652 to 50678—Continued.**50678. ASCLEPIAS CURASSAVICA L. Asclepiadaceæ.**

"(No. 367a.) *Viborana*. Described as a small tree which produces small red flowers in March."

50679 to 50681.

From San Jose, Costa Rica. Collected by Wilson Popenoe, Agricultural Explorer of the United States Department of Agriculture. Received June 26, 1920. Quoted notes by Mr. Popenoe.

50679. GUILIELMA UTILIS Oerst. Phœnicaceæ.**Palm.**

(*Bactris utilis* Benth. and Hook.)

"(No. 391a. June 7, 1920.) *Pejibaye palm*. Seed of a remarkable food plant, of ancient cultivation in Costa Rica, and certainly deserving of wide dissemination in the Tropics. Pittier says: 'The Indians [of Costa Rica] have cultivated it since a remote period, and it is not now known in the wild state.' And Gagini quotes Alcedo to the effect that the fruit is almost the only food of the Guaimies and the Indians of southern Talamanca, in this country. It is to-day grown commercially in the vicinity of Tucurrique, on the Atlantic side, and is also known on the Pacific side, though not so abundant there. In the markets of San Jose the fruit is always in great demand and fetches a high price. The name is sometimes written *pejivalle*, *pjivay*, and *piabay*; it is pronounced pe-he-vy-e, with the e's short.

"The palm is a beautiful pinnate-leaved species, with a slender trunk reaching to 50 feet, though commonly not more than 35 feet. The leaves resemble those of *Cocos plumosa* and other palms of that type, while the trunk is armed from top to bottom with thin, sharp spines about 2 inches long. Flowers are produced in spring, from March to June (occasionally at other times of the year), and are followed by stout racemes of fruit which matures principally in the autumn. The racemes sometimes weigh 25 pounds, and as many as five or six are produced by the palm in a single crop. The individual fruits are top shaped, up to 2 inches long, yellow to deep orange, with a thin skin, and a hard seed in the center surrounded by abundant flesh of orange or yellow color, firm texture, and dry, farinaceous character. Seedless varieties are known, and since these can be propagated, like date palms, by means of offshoots, of which the plant produces several in the course of its life, the establishment of superior forms should be simple.

"The pejibaye, which is one of the most popular of all Costa Rican fruits (though it should not, perhaps, be called a fruit, except in the botanical sense), is prepared for eating by boiling it for three hours in salted water, after which the skin is pared off with a knife, and the flesh, which strikingly resembles boiled chestnuts in appearance and flavor, is eaten without seasoning of any sort. Doubtless the fruit would lend itself to many uses, such as stuffing for fowl, but it is so good in its simple form that Costa Ricans have not sought to improve it by bringing it under the influence of the culinary art.

"The palm is said to come into bearing at 6 to 8 years from seed, and to live at least 50 years. It is found in Costa Rica from sea level up to 5,000 feet elevation, but in extremely wet regions above 4,000 feet some of the palms do not bear. The ideal region for it seems