JARDIN D'EDEN

L'ERMITAGE - ILE DE LA RÉUNION



THE GUIDE

82 SPECIES TO DISCOVER

PLEASE REMEMBER TO RETURN THIS BOOKLET TO RECEPTION.
THANK YOU !



WELCOME

Welcome to the Jardin d'Eden, home to nearly 300 plant species, including exotic, native and endemic varieties. These different species of plants are organised into seven distinct zones, identified by a colour-code system that you will find on the map, in this booklet and throughout the garden. Each plant is identified with a coloured label indicating its common name and Latin name. Feel free to stroll at your own pace along the winding paths that lead you through the different areas of this little private garden.

Created by Mr Kaufmant, the Jardin d'Eden was designed as a place that feels both intimate and dense, a kind of organised little jungle, inviting visitors to slow down and enjoy a peaceful walk.

Today, the garden team is committed to developing a responsible and sustainable approach to the layout and maintenance of the site, to recreate and preserve its ecological balance. As you explore, you may come across fallen branches, slightly overgrown paths or natural, untamed corners.
These features are intentional and reflect a commitment to giving nature back its rightful place, thus encouraging wildlife and providing a habitat for as much biodiversity as possible.

We kindly ask our visitors to respect the site, the plants and the educational material made available to them.

CONTENTS

YOUR DIGITAL JOURNEY

This booklet offers a digital trail featuring 82 plant and animal species.

In addition to the common name and Latin name, each species on the trail is identified by a number and a QR code displayed on its label.

Your visit is entirely self-guided !

You do not have to follow the numerical order — feel free to explore the garden at your own pace.

PLEASE NOTE :

A garden is a living and ever-changing space. Depending on the season of your visit, some plants along the trail may have been moved or removed due to weather conditions or garden maintenance and redevelopment.

We thank you in advance for your understanding.

1	The garden designer	p.5
2	The portia tree	p.8
3	The garden pond	p.9
4	Papyrus plants	p.10
5	Water banana	p.11
6	Water hyacinth	p.12
7	Water lily	p.13
8	The bittern	p.14
9	The lotus	p.15
10	A brief botanical overview	p.16
11	Bamboo : uses & application	p.17
12	Calumet bamboo	p.18
13	Bamboos of the garden	p.19
14	The chameleon	p.22
15	The creole garden	p.24
16	Palm trees	p.25
17	The royal palm	p.26
18	The coconut palm	p.27
19	The red latanier palm	p.28
20	Frangipani trees	p.29
21	The traveler's tree	p.31
22	The jade vine	p.32
23	Spices	p.33
24	Ginger	p.34
25	Tumeric	p.35
26	Curry leaf tree	p.37
27	Pepper vine	p.38
28	Cinnamon tree	p.39
29	Allspice tree	p.40
30	Combava	p.41
31	Sacred basilic	p.42
32	Bilimbi	p.43
33	The Judas tree	p.44

CONTENTS

34 Tropical flowers p.45
35 Héliconias p.46
36 Alpinias p.47
37 Torch ginger p.48
38 Strelitzias p.49
39 The bird of paradise p.49
40 White giant bird of paradise p.50
41 Medicinal plants p.51
42 Father Raimbault p.52
43 The clover p.53
44 Orthosiphon p.53
45 Ayapana p.54
46 West Indian thyme p.55
47 Rosat geranium p.56
48 Lemongrass p.57
49 Arnette wood p.58
50 Aloe verra p.59
51 Marjoram p.60
52 Arrowroot p.61
53 Lowland tamarind p.62
54 Vanilla p.63
55 Bismark palm p.64
56 Talipot palm p.65
57 Stunk tree p.66
58 White sandalwood p.67
59 Red kapok tree p.68
60 Ylang Ylang p.69
61 Vacoa p.70
62 Sponge tree p.71
63 Baobab p.72
64 Madagascar palm p.74
65 ICandelabre euphorbia p.75
66 Roucou p.76
67 Banana plant p.77
68 Carambola tree p.79
69 The vegetable garden p.80
70 Victoria pineapple p.82
71 The beehives p.83
72 Brazilian pepper tree p.84
73 Strawberry guava p.85
74 Camphor tree p.86
75 Vetiver p.87
76 Reed p.88
77 Benjoin tree p.89
78 Araucaria tree p.90
79 Veloutier p.91
80 Calabash tree p.92
81 Eucalyptus trees p.93
82 Kapok tree p.94

SMALL FAUNA OF REUNION GARDENS

Birds p.97
Geckos p.98
The tailness tenrec p.99
The musk shrew p.100

1



THE GARDEN DESIGNER

M. Philippe KAUFMANT

This garden is the realisation of a dream that Philippe Kaufmant had carried with him for many years. Of Lorraine origin, Philippe Kaufmant was born in Quimper on 2 June 1941.

Overflowing with imagination, young Philippe was curious about everything, in love with ideals and adventure, a poet in his spare time, and with all the ardour of youth, determined to fulfil his dreams. He studied agricultural engineering in Rennes, later specialising in tropical agronomy.

By the age of 24, he was ready to set off and explore the world. Drawn to Africa, his professional life truly began in Chad, as part of a cooperation programme where he completed his military service as a VAT. Combining work in cotton plantations with often adventurous explorations of the region, the joy of living in the tropics would never leave him. For ten years, he was responsible for the Madagascar-Reunion-Mauritius area for the Swiss company Ciba-Geigy (now BASF), putting his agronomic expertise at use to improve crop yields.

In Reunion, he discovers a concentration of the flora he had admired here and there during his travels throughout the tropics. He is also captivated by the ethnic diversity living in harmony on this small island. It was then that he decided to call Reunion Island his home.

1

In 1977, settled in Grand Tampon, he selects the strawberry varieties best suited to the area and begins growing them on a large scale. Then, always driven by creativity and diversification, he produces asparagus, melons and oyster mushrooms, crops that soon built his reputation in Reunion Island.

Yet one dream still remained – the most personal, the most imaginative and the most poetic of all. He would bring it to life in the Jardin d'Eden, an enchanting place he wished to pass on to his two children and to all lovers of nature.

By the end of the 1980s, he had created his own nursery from species collected from friends and in 1990 he began shaping the landscape.
The Jardin d'Eden opened in 1991 and was expanded the following year, with the addition of the aquatic garden and surrounding areas, to reach its present size of 2.5 hectares. (25,000m² / 269,000 square feet)
After a final farewell to Africa, where he climbed Mount Kilimanjaro with botanist friends, Philippe passed away on 19 February 1992, carrying with him forever the sight of his final dream fulfilled.
For many years to come, songs of birds and scents of flowers will continue to tell his story.

The Jardin d'Eden emerged from a sandy, rocky plain where only a few coconut palms and bamboo once grew.
It took remarkable vision to imagine the landscaped scenes that welcome you today!

Philippe KAUFMANT wished to make the Jardin d'Eden both intimate and lush, where visitors discover each scene one after another and can easily find quiet, secluded spots (benches are sheltered from view).
These are the principles of English-style gardens, in contrast to French formal gardens, whose perspectives and geometries can be grasped at a single glance.

1

Through the Jardin d'Eden, Philippe Kaufmant also wished to offer an insight into the island's extraordinary botanical wealth, selecting plants and trees not only for their rarity and beauty but also to ensure that the botanical heritage passed down through the various waves of settlement of this small island would not be forgotten. His garden would become an ethnobotanical landscape telling the story of the relationship between humans and plants : There you will find sacred, evil and anaphrodisiac plants, medicinal plants, plants to eat, to smell, to weave or to dye, plants for making paper, baskets, construction, canoes, and hedges... All of which also defines the Creole garden.

> *In 1689, the Marquis de Quesne published in Amsterdam a collection entitled « quelques mémoires servant d'instruction pour l'établissement dans l'Isle d'Eden » (Some memoirs serving as guidance for the settlement on the Isle of Eden) in which he celebrated Île Bourbon by calling it "the Garden of Eden". The Garden takes his name after this description.*

Today, the Jardin d'Eden features around 300 plant species within a landscaped garden. You will find endemic, indigenous and exotic plants. A brief note to recall classification of species:

- **Indigenous** species are those that arrived naturally, through birds, cyclonic winds or ocean currents, such as the coconut.
- Some of these plants evolved locally over time, developing their own specific characteristics — these are known as **endemic** species.
- **Exotic** species are plants that were introduced to the island by humans. Some cultivated plants escaped gardens and became naturalised, while others, considered invasive, pose serious threats to our local ecosystem.

The Mascarene archipelago — Reunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues — is home to over 1,000 endemic flowering plants and ferns.

2



THE PORTIA TREE, AS THE PAINTWOOD TREE

Indigenous

Thespesia Populnea

As you enter the Garden, the Paintwood tree, or Portia tree, displays its yellow and fuchsia flowers. Each flower blooms for a day. It opens with a pale-yellow colour and five brown spots at the base of the corolla, then gradually turns pink, and finally purple or red by the end of the day. Its fruit is a green capsule that darkens to black and then brown as it ripens, containing around six seeds. Its carmine-red wood gradually matures into a rich dark brown with warm tawny highlights after a few years. Easy to work, this wood is highly valued for fine cabinetmaking, marquetry and traditional wood carving.

In Reunion, this species is used as an ornamental tree and to help restore coastal backshore areas. Well suited to sandy and brackish areas, it is among the species replanted to restore sea turtle nesting beaches. Its fruits, flowers and young leaves are all edible. The tough, fibrous bark is made into rope in Hawaii and is also used for caulking boats in Malaysia. Several products are extracted from the plant, including a dye, tannins, oils and resins. Every part of this tree has medicinal properties. In Mauritius, crushed bark is traditionally used to treat dysentery and haemorrhoids. In southern India, the leaves are applied to treat arthritis.

3



Photographie meslibellules.fr
Ceriagrion damelfly

THE GARDEN POND

The garden pond was created entirely from scratch, extending the natural marshland already existing. The water that fills the pond is brackish, resulting from the meeting of salty underground seawater as the garden lies at sea level – and freshwater flowing in from the nearby Saint-Gilles ravine and surface runoff. The pond's water level naturally fluctuates with the seasons. In winter, during periods of strong swells, the water level rises, increasing the pond's salinity. In summer, heavy rains send freshwater runoff from the island's higher slopes down into the garden, flooding it.





Photographie Nicolas Huet

Mascarene frog

Dragonfly of genus Diplacodes

4



PAPYRUS PLANTS

Exotic

The Cyperus genus

Rising tall in the background, with a highly decorative head in the form of a large ball made up of fine, thread-like leaves arranged in a rosette, stands Cyperus papyrus.

It is not any kind of gigantic flower, but the “true” papyrus, the very plant once used by the ancient Egyptians to make parchment. The smaller ones are the “false” papyrus, Cyperus alternifolius, which often struggle to compete with their more imposing neighbours. Their leaves are thicker, broader and darker than those of the “true” papyrus.



Papyrus (Cyperus papyrus)



False papyrus(Cyperus alternifolius)

5



WATER BANANA

Exotic

Typhonodorum lindleyanum Schott

Standing proudly around the edge of the pond, the Via(s), Typhonodorum lindleyanum Schott, from the arum family (like taro), make a striking impression with their commanding presence.

They can reach up to 4 metres in height. The plant is native to Madagascar. Its seeds – after repeated boiling – and its roots, ground into flour, are edible but not particularly popular.
They were nevertheless widely used in times of food shortage.





Inflorescence

6



WATER HYACINTH

Invasive exotic specie

Eichhornia crassipes

Particularly well adapted to rapid reproduction, water hyacinth, although potentially useful (when composted or used as a water purifier), must be carefully controlled so as not to smother the environment in which it grows.

Since 2016, water hyacinth has been listed as an invasive alien species of concern in the European Union. This means it may not be imported, cultivated, marketed, planted or intentionally released into the wild anywhere within the European Union.



Inflorescence



7



WATER LILY

Exotic

Nymphéa sp.

In the middle of the pond floats the water lily (Nymphaea sp.). Its flowers bloom at night and will remain open during the day only if the weather is sunny. Its mode of dispersal is unusual: once pollinated by insects, the water lily's flowers produce a fruit that ripens, detaches and sinks to the bottom of the water. As the fruit breaks down, it releases seeds whose outer coating traps tiny air bubbles. The seeds then rise to the surface and drift away from the parent plant, carried by winds and water currents. Over time, the air-filled coating breaks down, and the seeds sink once more to the bottom, where they will germinate. Besides sowing seeds, water lilies can also be propagated by dividing their tubers every three to four years.

It is from the sacred use made of it by nymphs that this anaphrodisiac, soothing and calming plant takes its Latin name Nymphaea. Known as the "monks' herb" or "cold herb", it is also renowned for treating respiratory ailments, as well as diarrhoea and wounds. The water lily is also a dye plant: rhizomes from older plants produce greys and blacks with iron mordants, and yellows and browns with alum.

8



THE BITTERN

Endemic

Butorides Striata

In the heart of this protected environment, many moorhens come to nest, along with the bittern above all. Also known as the striated heron, the bittern (Butorides striata), endemic to the Mascarenes, is a rather discreet bird.

A small wading bird, it is at dusk or early in the morning, at opening time, that you are most likely to observe it. Carnivorous, it feeds mainly on fish, insects, amphibians, and occasionally small reptiles, mice and other small mammals.

Its ancestors, which once inhabited the island, have left their name to several localities: Le Butor in Saint-Benoît, Saint-Denis or Saint-Joseph are neighbourhoods whose names recall a time that they were once common. Today, they are more easily found near the Saint-Paul Pond. Today, a rich diversity of plant and animal species can be found there, but this ecosystem is extremely sensitive to climate change.

9



THE LOTUS

Exotic

Nelumbo Nucifera Gaertn *Flowering between novembre et mars*

From November to March, you can admire the sacred lotus (Nelumbo nucifera Gaertn) in bloom. The lotus flower opens during the day, closes at night, and blooms for only a few days. This aquatic plant thrives in warm conditions. It is propagated by dividing rhizomes and tubers, but it can also be grown from seed. Its large leaves resemble large bowls but unlike those of the water lilies, they rise well above the water's surface.

This plant, belonging to the order Nymphaeales, produces the sacred flower of Eastern religions. In Buddhism and Brahmanism, it serves as a throne for deities. The sutras say: "The lotus has four virtues: fragrance, purity, flexibility and beauty. If the world possessed these four virtues, I could consider myself truly blessed." The lotus plays a significant role in traditional Chinese medicine, where every part of the plant is used.
Flowers, seeds, young leaves, rhizomes and even the stalks are edible and highly appreciated in Asian gastronomy.

10



BAMBOO: A BRIEF BOTANICAL OVERVIEW

The Bambusa Genus

There are more than 1,200 species of bamboo worldwide. They are found on all five continents. Bamboo belongs to the grass family.
They can be classified according to their rhizome types (root system):

- Pachymorph rhizomes are short and thick, typical of clumping bamboos. These bamboos grow in dense clumps, such as Bambusa vulgaris, the tall green bamboo around you.

- Leptomorph rhizomes are long and slender and belong to running bamboos that spread easily and can be hard to control. They are better kept in pots!

You can see how the roots grow from the nodes of the rhizomes and from the base of the culms, firmly anchoring the plant in the soil. Branches emerge from the nodes of the culms and support the leaves, which carry out the chlorophyll function. Some leaves, known as sheaths, are specialised in protecting the fragile young shoots. Flowering is rare in bamboo. When it does, entire clumps bloom all at once, producing an impressive display that is often fatal to the plants. Fortunately, flowering is followed by fruiting and the miracle of germination, allowing new bamboo to grow. These dry fruits can even be ground into flour, as is the case with many grasses.

11



BAMBOO: USES AND APPLICATIONS

The Bambusa genus

Bamboo culms (or stems) mature in just three years and can then be harvested every two years for nearly 120 years. Because bamboo requires little investment, it is frequently used as a construction material in Asia. Moreover, bamboo fibres are ten times stronger than wood fibres. Much lighter and smaller, bamboo is widely used as a substitute for timber and widely used for making scaffolding in Asia.

Bamboo is also used to make paper, utensils, toothpicks, plywood, sculptures, baskets and fences, among many other items. Some species have large spines, making them ideal for protective hedges. Others produce tall, straight poles that act as perfect windbreakers and can be sustainably harvested every year.

Planting bamboo species in mountainous and deforested areas — where they can grow up to around 3,000 metres in altitude — helps retain water in the soil and reduces the risk of sudden flooding and landslides.

Despite their invasive nature, bamboos are increasingly used to remove dangerous pollutants from soils contaminated by wastewater or industrial waste. The young shoots of all bamboo species, also known as bamboo shoots, are edible. They are eaten all over the world, particularly in Asia.

12



Calumet Bamboo

BAMBOO: USES AND APPLICATIONS

The Bambusa genus

Harvesting must take place before the shoot reaches the light. Early in the morning, gently walking over the soil in slippers, you can feel the shoots emerging at the surface. Shoots are harvested every two to three days, using tools similar to asparagus gouges or small picks to gently lever and cut them a few centimetres below the ground. They are more or less bitter depending on the species. Certain shoots are particularly well suited for cooking, such as those from the Phyllostachys, Dendrocalamus and Bambusa genera, which are enjoyed fresh during the season (from early spring in Japan) and later preserved.

CALUMET BAMBOO

Endemic

Nastus borbonicus J.F Gmel. **ABSENT FROM THE GARDEN**

Reaching up to 6 metres in height, its culms forming clumps, produce small branches densely grouped at each node, similar to a rosary. You will not see it in the garden; it thrives in mid-altitude humid forests in the western and northern highlands, particularly in tamarind forests, where it can form dense stands. It was formerly used in the construction of huts. The slender poles of calumet bamboo are used by fishermen as fishing rods, but they are mainly employed in the highlands of Saint-Paul for weaving after being flattened, to make partitions and supports for thatched roofs.

13



Oldham Bamboo

BAMBOOS OF THE GARDEN

The Bambusa genus

The Jardin d'Eden is home to 12 different bamboo species. Among the most remarkable, you will first see the Black Asper bamboo, characterised by its chocolate-coloured culms. Classified as a giant bamboo, it grows relatively slowly but can reach up to 12 metres high at maturity, with culms measuring up to 20 cm in diameter.

COMMON BAMBOO

Exotic

Bambusa vulgaris

The common or green bamboo, that you can see lining the path, was already present here when the garden was created. It is the most widespread bamboo on the island, and its culms are used for construction.

OLDHAM BAMBOO

Exotic

Bambusa oldhamii

Native to Taiwan, this bamboo can grow between 12 and 18 metres tall, with culms reaching up to 10 centimetres in diameter. Highly resistant, which explains its use in construction, and its young shoots are edible.

13



Buddha Belly Bamboo

BUDDHA BELLY BAMBOO

Exotic

Bambusa tulsoides ventricosa

It owes its name to its short, swollen and glossy internodes, which resemble little bellies. However, Bambusa tulsoides ventricosa can also produce long, straight internodes. To obtain "Buddha belly" canes, the tightly packed new shoots must be stressed by depriving them of water and removing the protective sheaths as the shoots grow. Quite a skill!

GOLDEN BAMBOO

Exotic

Phyllotachys aurea

It can be recognised by its golden-yellow culms streaked with one or two green lines. It brings light to this part of the garden. Its young shoots are edible.

BROOM BAMBOO

Exotic

Thysanolaena latifolia

Despite its name, this plant is not a bamboo but belong to the grass family. It is found in the same regions as bamboo and often grows alongside them. Its name comes from the use of its inflorescences, but it also has many other uses, including medicinal, fodder and ornamental purposes.

13



Giant bamboo

GIANT BAMBOO

Exotic

Dendrocalamus giganteus

Near the bridge stands the giant bamboo, the most impressive of all tropical bamboos. It can reach 30 metres in height, with culms measuring 20 to 25 cm in diameter.

Its growth is rapid; in summer, shoots of 50 cm to 1 metre per day can be observed under favourable conditions.



Common bamboo



Golden bamboo

14



CHAMELEON

Furcifer Pardalis

Exotic - protected species

Seen from December to March

The Jardin d'Eden is a haven of peace for animals. One of its most emblematic residents is the endormi, the local name for the chameleon. There are around 200 species of chameleons across the world. It was introduced to the island at the end of the 18th century and has since settled along the coastal fringe up to an altitude of 800 metres (including the Jardin d'Eden). In Reunion Island, they are called "endormis" (sleepy): if you manage to spot one, you will see that even when frightened, they move as slowly as tortoises. You cannot mistake them for the lightning-fast lizards such as agamas! They are most often spotted among the bamboo or in the Creole garden.

Please remain discreet and avoid using flash photography, as it can blind them. Without eyesight, our insectivorous mascot can no longer hunt, which inevitably leads to death.

Sexual dimorphism is very pronounced in this species. Males display striking bluish-green colours with red and yellow markings and a pale stripe along the back, while females are a warm ochre-orange. They have two sets of fused toes, forming a strong grip to grasp branches, which they can also hold with their prehensile tail. They always move cautiously and are masters of camouflage.

14



Female

L'ENDORMI

Furcifer Pardalis

Exotic - protected species

Seen from December to March

They can slim down or puff up, remain perfectly still, and shift their colours from very pale to very dark. Their protruding eyes can move independently of one another in all directions. When their eyes converge, they achieve the binocular precision needed to judge the exact distance to their prey. They can then shoot out their tongue, as long as their body and coated with sticky mucus, trapping their prey, mainly insects and spiders.

From February to April, they enter their mating season. The female then lays around twenty small white eggs, who becomes highly aggressive and turns almost black in colour. She buries her eggs in the ground. If they are not eaten by red ants, the eggs hatch after 7 to 10 months, producing young measuring about 4 cm long. More agile than adults and grey-brown in colour, making them almost invisible, they fend for themselves.

The endormi lives between 2 and 4 years and is a good indicator of biodiversity and ecosystem balance; unfortunately, it is too often an unfortunate victim of mosquito-control campaigns and cats.

15



THE CREOLE GARDEN

Creole gardens are remarkable for their rich diversity of herbs, shrubs and trees, functioning as a pantry, a natural pharmacy, a spiritual refuge, a reservoir of biodiversity, and a feast for the eyes and senses.

Traditionally, the Creole garden was kept “clean”: no weeds, no dried leaves on the ground — everything was removed and taken away. With greater awareness of the impact of these practices on soils, biodiversity and plants, we now apply mulching around ours.

Mulching helps retain soil moisture (reducing water consumption), allows microfauna to develop and improves soil aeration. As it decomposes, it forms humus beneficial to plants — all in a completely natural way, without the use of fertilisers or other chemical inputs.

16



PALM TREES

Palms first appeared on Earth some 85 million years ago and now thrive throughout the world's intertropical regions, across very diverse environments from African savannas and Indian and Floridian mangroves to the Sahara Desert, the Andes and the rainforests of Amazonia and Asia. Botanically speaking, a palm is not a tree. Unlike trees, palms only grow taller once their trunk has reached its full diameter.

Palm trees can provide food, drink, building materials and products for personal care and hygiene. In Reunion, nearly fifty palm species are commonly found. Six palm species endemics to the island were present long before the arrival of the first settlers.

In the Jardin d'Eden, we have around twenty distinct species.To name just a few :

- Bamboo Palm
- Royal Palm
- Bottle Palm
- Cascade Palm
- Paul and Virginie Palm
- White Palm
- Poison Palm
- Bismarck Palm

17



ROYAL PALM

Exotic

Roystonea regia

As you leave the bamboo grove, this towering column on your left can rise up to 30 metres high. It was introduced in Reunion for ornamental use in gardens, along roads and in parks, but it can also be used as a source of thatch, as construction timber or as a medicinal plant.
Indeed, its roots are known for their diuretic properties and are used to treat diabetes. The palm heart of this species is edible, which unfortunately often leads to the tree being topped.



Inflorescence



Fruiting

18



COCONUT PALM

Crytogenic

Cocos nucifera

The coconut palm is undoubtedly the best-known palm tree, a symbol of the tropics. Look up and you will probably see its coconuts hanging above you. This palm tree only bears fruit after many years. In Reunion, it is said that whoever plants a coconut palm will not live to see it bear fruit. And to ensure it produces many coconuts, a coin should be placed in the hole before planting. Of course, it is preferable to harvest the coconuts at the full moon, when they are said to be at their fullest.

More practically speaking, the coconut palm is like a pig : nothing goes to waste. Its sap (collected by cutting the inflorescences) produces palm wine containing about 6% alcohol. Its wood is used for frameworks. Its coir (the fibrous husk surrounding the coconut) is used to make coconut brushes for polishing floors, as well as doormats and coconut rugs.
The liquid albumen found inside the nuts is a delicious drink: coconut water. The dried solid albumen (copra) is used in baking, snack mixes and to make coconut milk.

Coconut butter is also extracted, used in the production of vegetable fat, soaps, candles, cosmetics and sun-care products. The coconut palm heart is delicious in salads, but harvesting it means killing the palm tree.

19



THE RED LATANIER PALM

Endemic

Latania lontaroides

Each island of the Mascarene archipelago has its own endemic latanier palm. The one found on Reunion is Latania lontaroides, known as the “Red Latanier of Bourbon”. Adult palms show little trace of red, but on young plants the leaves are clearly veined, and sometimes coloured red, hence its common name. These young plants carpet the ground at the foot of the royal palm.

It is very rare to find them in the wild, however they are increasingly found cultivated. Full of resources, these trees were used to build the island’s first dwellings (known as boucans, like the small structure you saw beneath the bamboo), whose framework was made with their trunks and the roof with their dried leaves. They also provided sewing thread, fibre and stuffing for mattresses. The red latanier was also known for producing good palm wine. Its fruits, known as “latanier apples”, are edible despite their rather bland taste.

20



FRANGIPANI TREES

Exotic

The Plumeria genus

Flowering between November and January

The frangipani tree comes from Central America. The genus Plumeria was named in honour of the botanist Charles Plumier, while the common name “frangipani” is said to come from an Italian family of perfumers, the Frangipani, who created a fragrance based on Plumeria to perfume ladies’ gloves in the 16th century. You can admire many frangipani trees on the island, planted for ornamental purposes in gardens, parks, cemeteries and along roadsides.

The fragrance of these flowers is very subtle. The white frangipani is a symbol of immortality. Its flowers are used in offerings to Indian deities, particularly to “Mâryammâ”. In Asia, it is known as the “flower of the gods” or the “temple flower”, and it is believed to have the power to relax the body and elevate the spirit. Throughout Southeast Asia, it is part of the offerings during Hindu or Buddhist religious ceremonies.

In several Pacific archipelagos, beyond being used in welcome garlands, it can be worn by women to indicate their romantic status worn behind the left ear it shows the woman is taken, while behind the right ear means she is available.

20



Spanish moss

FRANGIPANI TREES

Exotic

The Plumeria genus

Many frangipani trees have been planted in the garden, the most common species being Plumeria alba and Plumeria rubra, with cream or pink flowers depending on the variety, and acuminate leaves, meaning pointed at the tip. Plumeria pudica has distinctive lyre-shaped leaves, while Plumeria obtusa has obtuse leaves, meaning rounded at the tip. Plumeria inodora is the only species whose flowers are scentless, but its leaves, arranged in rosettes, are particularly attractive.

Hanging from the frangipani trees is Tillandsia usneoides, also known as Spanish moss or air plant. It is an epiphytic species (using other plants as support without being parasitic) from the bromeliad family. It absorbs moisture from the air and nutrients in the form of dust particles. It is sometimes mistaken for beard lichen (Usnea). However, Spanish moss is not biologically a lichen or a moss.

21



TRAVELER'S TREE

Exotic

Ravenala madagascariensis

Native to Madagascar, the traveller's tree has become its emblem. There it is called "Ravinala" (Ravenale in French), meaning "the leaf of the forest". A member of the Strelitziaceae family, like the bird of paradise, its height – up to 20 metres – and shape make it easy to spot from afar.

Its large fan-shaped leaves form a cup at the base that collects rainwater, providing travellers with a source of water – hence its common name, "traveller's tree". Beware: they also act as reservoirs for mosquito larvae!

In Madagascar, flowering begins in early September, with lemurs and bats pollinating the large white flowers. In Madagascar, flowering begins in early September, with lemurs and bats pollinating the large white flowers.

The fruits are capsules which resemble woody bananas. They contain numerous seeds wrapped in an intense blue fibre that attracts birds. The traveller's tree is used to roof entire huts with its leaves, and also for medicinal purposes; Father Raimbault noted its use in treating generalised oedema.

22



JADE VINE

Strongylodon macrobotrys

Exotic

Floraison entre novembre et janvier

On the pergola in front of the traveller's tree, the jade vine (Strongylodon macrobotrys) flowers from September to December. Its striking bluish-green colour is quite unique in the nature. The claw-shaped flowers, curved upwards, can reach up to seven centimetres in length.

Its flowers in hanging clusters that can reach up to one metre long. In its natural habitat, it is pollinated by bats. Difficult to propagate, it can be multiplied by layering or by enclosed cuttings (a difficult technique). The jade vine begins flowering from its third year. It thrives in a humid, partially shaded spot and is best displayed on a pergola or a spreading tree, where its long cascading flower clusters can be fully admired.

23



Cinnamom

SPICES

Reunion's strategic position on the spice and East Indies trade routes makes the Creole garden a space that necessarily includes an "épicerie" (spice corner). Along the embankment and in the planters, you will find some of the many spices used in Reunionese cuisine: local saffron or turmeric, ginger, pepper, curry leaves, cinnamon, basil, etc.



Pepper



Basil

24



GINGER

Zingiber officinalis

Exotic

Visible from December to June

Native to India, it is the rhizome of this tropical plant that is consumed. In the 16th century, peddlers regularly sold ginger under the name “white spice”.

He was sought after for his stomachic and antiscorbutic properties. It was also recommended as an anti-plague remedy. Around 1880, aphrodisiac lozenges made from ginger, known as “seraglio lozenges” or “stimulating lozenges”, also began to be produced and sold in pharmacies.

Today, this “rhizome of love” remains widely used throughout Asia. But perhaps you enjoy ginger most for its distinctive flavour? It can be enjoyed as jam, candy or pickled in vinegar…and it spices chop suey, curries and other Indian dishes. Finally, after a hearty meal, when flavours linger or your stomach feels heavy, do not hesitate to chew a little ginger. The effect on the digestive system is immediate.

25



TUMERIC

Curcuma Longa

Exotic

Visible from December to June

A relative of ginger, turmeric is renowned both for its medicinal benefits and its use as a natural pigment, characterized by its vibrant yellow-orange hue. There are many varieties of turmeric; in the garden, you will find the most well-known species: Curcuma longa—also referred to as Indian saffron or "safran péi"—and Curcuma xanthorrhiza, also known as Temu Lawak. The former is distinguished by its orange flesh, while the latter produces a beautiful golden-yellow powder once ground.

Turmeric is primarily grown in India, the world's leading producer. There, the rhizome has been used since ancient times for its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

Studied since 1985 for its potential in cancer prevention, turmeric also helps lower cholesterol levels and regulates blood flow by slowing platelet aggregation. Furthermore, it provides vital protection for the cardiovascular system.

25



TUMERIC

Curcuma Longa

If you visit the garden between July and November, you are unlikely to see what ginger or turmeric plants look like, as, like many rhizomatous plants, at this time of year the plant has dried out to store all its reserves in the rhizome. This is generally the harvesting period. New shoots emerge again from rhizomes left underground at the beginning of summer.



Foliage



Grounded roots

26



CURRY LEAF TREE

Exotic

Murraya koenegii

Caloupilé or Curry leaf tree is an Indian spice whose leaves enhance all masalas. It was introduced to Reunion by Indian indentured workers after the abolition of slavery. It has adapted extremely well to the island and has even become invasive. This shrub can grow up to 7 metres tall but usually remains smaller in gardens. The leaves, used whole or crushed, have a strong, warm scent and release an aroma reminiscent of curry, which is why they are sometimes called curry leaves.

However, curry leaves (caloupilé leaves) should not be confused with curry powder, which is a blend of spices. Traditionally, the leaves are fried in oil before adding other ingredients, which enhances the diffusion of aromas into the dish. The leaves remain in the pan throughout cooking. They can be frozen or used dried, but their unique and hard-to-define flavour and aroma are more intense when used fresh. This tree gave its name to Reunion Island's first folkloric dance troupe.

27



PEPPER VINE

Exotic

Piper nigrum

Pepper (Piper nigrum) was the first spice known in Europe. Under the Roman Empire, it was used as a means of exchange to pay taxes and debts. This spice was in high demand, and its trade guaranteed wealth.
As late as the 14th century, a rich man was described as “es un pebre”, meaning sharp-witted and incisive. Pepper is a climbing vine that produces hanging clusters of 30 to 40 fruits after about three years.

When harvested green and preserved in brine, the fruits become green pepper. When dried, green fruits darken, giving black pepper. If harvested when ripe, meaning red, and soaked in hot water, the skin can be removed to obtain white pepper (100 kg of red berries yield about 25 kg of white pepper). The properties of pepper are multiple: medicinal, but also insecticidal. It is said to help preserve meat (hence its sometimes excessive use in sausages…).

28



CEYLON CINNAMON TREE

Exotic

Cinnamomum verum

The cinnamon tree has become naturalised in Reunion. It is a tree that can reach up to 15 metres tall. Its leaves are aromatic and are used to make highly fragrant infusions with a distinctly spicy and pleasant flavour. The cinnamon sold in spice shops, in rolled sticks or powder, is the inner bark of the Ceylon cinnamon tree.

In cultivation, cinnamon trees are cut every three years to obtain long, tender stems that are stripped of their bark, then dried and sold.
Cinnamon essential oil is prepared by crushing the bark, allowing it to soak in seawater before distillation. A spice originating from Sri Lanka, Burma and southern India. Cinnamon is mentioned in a botanical text dating back 2,700 years before Christ. It was long associated with ritual sacrifices and was used in the Egyptian embalming process.

29



ALLSPICE TREE

Exotic

Pimenta dioica

Native to the Caribbean, it is commonly found in Creole gardens because its leaves are used in many Creole recipes.
It is called “four-spice” because when its leaves are crushed, they release a subtle aroma of clove, ginger, nutmeg and pepper (as does its dried fruit). However, the “four-spice” sold in shops is actually a mixture of four spices, not the four-spice plant itself.



Foliage



Whitish trunk

30



COMBAVA (KAFFIR LIME)

Exotic

Citrus hystrix

The combava (Citrus hystrix) is a citrus fruit native to tropical Asia.
It was introduced in Reunion in the 19th century. The combava fruit is round and measures between 5 and 8 centimetres in diameter. It has a bumpy, knobbly appearance.

Extremely rich in essential oils, its pulp is acidic and contains seeds. Combava is used in cooking; its zest enhances the flavour of many dishes and preparations such as sausages, pâtés and bouchons. It is also used to make an excellent combava-flavoured rum. Its leaves can also be used to flavour meat and fish. The dark green, glossy leaves are evergreen, with a very broad winged petiole almost as developed as the blade, giving the impression of a double leaf, characteristic of the species.

31



SACRED BASILIC

Exotic

Ocinum tenuiflorum

Sacred basil, or tulsi, is a plant commonly grown in kitchen gardens. It is generally known in its herbaceous form, about 20 to 30 cm high, but this tropical plant can grow up to 2 to 4 metres high. It is characterised by its great diversity of varieties and the distinctive fragrance of its leaves. Its aromatic and medicinal uses have made it popular.

Known since antiquity, it is considered a royal herb. Hindus have dedicated tulsi to the worship of Vishnu. It is also a ritual herb used in funerary rites. Basil, sacred herb, aromatic herb... But did you know that basil is also an intestinal disinfectant? An infusion of 10 to 15 grams of basil leaves in one litre of boiling water helps digestion and can relieve nausea and dizziness (one cup is enough).

32



THE BILIMBI

Averrhoa bilimbi

Exotic

We couldn't resist sharing a local proverb recorded by Daniel Honoré: "**Bilimbi la di: mang lé eg**!"

As you may have guessed, it means that everyone, like the bilimbi, people often criticise others without looking at themselves... Even a green mango is certainly less sour than the bilimbi. So don't hesitate to taste it!

This fruit, shaped like a cucumber, grows directly on the trunk and branches of the tree, contains potassium oxalate...making it an excellent stain remover and metal cleaner. Just to give you an idea of how acid it is!

It is nevertheless appreciated by the Malbar (Indian) community and more generally across Reunion. It is prepared as achards, rougails, or preserved in sugar, salt, or vinegar. It pairs wonderfully with game and fish, and can also be used in marinades, compotes, or jellies. The flowers grow directly on the trunk and branches in a rather irregular way, forming long, branched clusters. Fruiting is abundant.

33



THE JUDAS TREE

Cossinia pinnata

Endemic

Following a cyclonic episode, the Judas tree near the bilimbi is no longer visible; another specimen can be found at the edge of the cactus area, opposite the sponge tree (62).

Like many Creole expressions, the common names of plants in Reunion can be very evocative. The Judas tree gets its name from its resemblance to Reunion's endemic Ironwood (Sideroxylon majus). Ironwood owes its name to the quality and strength of its wood; it is also rot-resistant and was widely used in construction. Today, it is classified as an endangered species. To make up for the shortage of Ironwood, which had become increasingly rare due to overexploitation, Cossinia pinnata was used as a substitute by some foresters in the past.

Indeed, when cut, the wood of both species shows the same appearance (grain, colour, etc.), which allowed foresters to sell Cossinia pinnata as Ironwood to obtain a higher price. The only difference — and not a minor one — lies in its long-term durability. The species was therefore named Judas tree, in reference to this deception and to the traitorous apostle.



Héliconia rostrata

TROPICAL FLOWERS

The main tropical understorey flowers belong either to the large ginger family, the heliconia family, or the banana family:

Among the Zingiberaceae:

- The genus Zingiber
- The genus Alpinia
- The genus Etlingera

Among the Musaceae:

- The genus Musa
- The genus Ravenala



Ginger torch



Lobster claw

35



Héliconia psittacorum

HELICONIAS

The genus Heliconia

Exotic

Flowering from November to January

Native to tropical and subtropical regions from Central America to South America, heliconia is a relative of the banana plant. They are perennial plants that can reach about 3 metres in height. They have a strong rhizome and leaves resembling those of banana plants. In Asia, they are used as packaging material to keep food fresh.

Heliconias have a terminal inflorescence that can be upright or hanging depending on the variety, with large floral leaves or bracts arranged tightly and displaying remarkable orange to red colours. The flowers are contained within the coloured bracts but are insignificant. Heliconia secretes nectar at the base of the petals, which mixes with rainwater and attracts many birds.

You can observe the magnificent Heliconia rostrata with its long hanging cluster of red floral bracts edged with yellow. Near the bilimbi stands Heliconia caribaea, one of the largest species, with a dark red, herringbone-shaped inflorescence about 50 cm long, not to be mistaken for a banana plant despite its size. The smaller Heliconia psittacorum displays a very dynamic, upright orange inflorescence.

36



Virgin's tears

ALPINIAS

The genus Alpinia

Exotic

Flowering May to September

The Virgin's Tears can hardly be spotted among the other tropical flowers. Other specimens can be found in the bamboo grove, opposite the rushes and papyrus (10, 11, 12) and along the path bordering the aquatic and marshy areas

Alpinia is a plant belonging to the ginger family (Zingiberaceae). Native to Asia, it was introduced to Reunion for ornamental garden use. It is a perennial herbaceous plant that grows from a rhizome. Alpinia inflorescences are spike-shaped, red, pink or white in colour, within which small, discreet white flowers appear.

In the Pacific Islands, its flowers are used to make garlands or crowns. In the language of flowers, Alpinia represents fertility; it charms with its simple appearance, deep colours and slightly tousled look.

The zerumbet variety, known in Reunion as "Larmes de la Vierge", has a hanging white inflorescence edged with pink and a yellow centre, and is renowned for its medicinal properties against migraines, fever, flu and stomach ailments, among others; in the Antilles it is also known as Atoumo.

37



GINGER TORCH

Exotic

Etlingera eliator

Flowering from December to February

The torch ginger is a relative of Alpinia. Native to Malaysia and introduced to Reunion as an ornamental plant and is found only in cultivated gardens. It is a "long-lived" species with a lifespan that lasts for many years.

Its flower, reaching up to 1.5 metres high, is one of the most spectacular tropical blooms, so perfect it is often mistaken for an artificial flower at the first glance. When the bud emerges, an unexpected fragrance is released. It is widely used by florists, with varieties bearing red, pink or white flowers.





38 & 39



STRELITZIAS

The strelitzia genus

Exotic

Flowering from June to September

The Strelitziaceae family is named in honour of Queen Charlotte of England (1744-1818), born Duchess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz.

THE BIRD OF PARADISE

Strelitzia reginae

The Strelitzia is no longer visible in this area; you will find a young Strelitzia near the water lily pond, opposite the traveller's tree (21).

Native to South Africa, the bird of paradise owes its name to its flower, which curiously resembles a bird's head. It is a plant that can reach 80 centimetres in height when grown in pots and over one metre when planted in the ground. In the wild, the bird of paradise grows near water sources. It takes three to five years to enjoy its first flowers.

It is a very sturdy plant, resistant to disease, with tough leaves that protect it from potential insect attacks. The bird of paradise captivates with its masculine appearance, proud and valiant, and its feminine, refined character expressed through its graceful curves. In the language of plants, it symbolises "exquisite pleasure" as well as good fortune, passion, joy and originality. This flower is the ideal gift for fulfilled lovers.

40



THE WHITE GIANT BIRD OF PARADISE

Exotic

Flowering from June to September

Strelitzia nicolaï

The white giant bird of paradise is native to South Africa and was named in honour of Tsar Nicholas of Russia (Regel & Koch, 1858). Unlike its relative Strelitzia reginae, it produces white flowers.

It has a tree-like form, with a trunk that can reach six to ten metres high in its natural environment, from which grey-green leaves arranged in a fan shape emerge, which like those of the traveller's tree, can reach nearly two metres long.



Details of the inflorescence with a bee feeding on nectar.

41



MEDICINAL PLANTS

Much of the knowledge about indigenous plants comes from Madagascar, whose flora is closely related to that of Reunion. This knowledge is also constituted of empirical practices inherited from maroon slaves and their descendants who sought refuge in the island's highlands and cirques, particularly regarding endemic species. Cut off from society, they relied entirely on their natural surroundings to survive and to treat illness. This knowledge is therefore largely empirical and passed down orally. For several decades, research has been conducted to document traditional pharmacopoeia. Among them are the works of Father Raimbault.



West india thyme (Plectranthus amboinicus)



Bitter aloe (Aloe vera)

42



Lemmon's marigold

FATHER RAIMBAULT

Father Raimbault, a passionate botanist, spent twenty-nine years in Nosy Be as a missionary, where he founded the Society of Perfume Plants of Madagascar, before settling in Reunion in 1935. His love for plants and for people motivated his research into the medicinal properties of plants, particularly to treat leprosy, which became the cause of his entire life.

However, his knowledge of medicinal plants went far beyond leprosy, and patients came from across the island to receive free consultations and remedies. He carefully recorded the effects and dosages of his remedies and relied on chemical analyses to confirm the properties of the plants. A brilliant botanist, he documented all his observations on the most well-known and effective medicinal plants. Unfortunately, his notes were destroyed during the devastating cyclone of 1948. All that remains is a small book published shortly before his death on "Medicinal Plants in Reunion".

Today, 19 plants from Reunion are officially recognised in the national pharmacopoeia, meaning that France has acknowledged their usefulness.

43 & 44



FATHER RAIMBAULT'S CLOVER

This four-leaf clover-shaped area was designed by Philippe Kaufmant as a tribute to Father Raimbault. In this area are displayed some of the medicinal plants commonly found in Creole gardens. Caution: all plants have medicinal properties, but they can also be toxic and must be used with care.Always consult your doctor or pharmacist before using medicinal plants.

ORTHOSIPHON

Exotic

Orthosiphon aristatus

Introduced in the 1970s, this Mexican plant, recognisable by its highly nectar-rich white flowers, has since become highly invasive and is now found throughout the island's forests.

Known locally as "Herbe la tension" (blood pressure herb), it is included here for its traditional use by local herbalists to improve circulation, lower blood pressure and treat varicose veins. It is also believed to help reduce cholesterol levels.

45



AYAPANA

Exotic

Ayapana triplinervis

Infuse three ayapana leaves for 15 minutes in half a litre of boiling water; drink this preparation and you will at once feel lighter after a heavy meal. If you are really in a hurry, chew the leaf directly. Ayapana, native to the Amazon rainforest, reached Reunion at the end of the 18th century and has since become a must in local gardens.



Ayapana

46



WEST INDIAN THYME

Exotic

Plectranthus amboinicus

In Reunion, the species is known as Gros thym (big thyme), Ti baume (little balm) or even “Efferalgan péi” (local Efferalgan). Widely naturalised, this plant has become invasive.

The leaves are used in traditional medicine as a herbal tea to aid digestion, relieve respiratory problems, flu symptoms, fever, menstrual pain and help with sleep. The antiseptic and anti-inflammatory leaves are applied to insect bites to relieve itching. They hold essential oils with proven properties. This plant is listed in the French Pharmacopoeia.

Wash the walls of your house with an infusion of “gros thym” to ward off bad energies and unwanted visitors! Even if not magical, this infusion will protect your walls from many insects and leave your home delicately scented

47



ROSAT GERANIUM

Exotic

Pelargonium geranium “rosat”

Common plant names can often be misleading. Let us clear up the misunderstanding right away: what is known in Reunion as “rosat geranium” is in fact a hybrid of Pelargonium. Rosat geranium is above all a perfume plant. Native to South Africa and introduced to Reunion around 1870, the first distillation trials were carried out in 1872 at La Plaine des Palmistes. Mr Boisjoly Potier, regarded as the pioneer of geranium cultivation in Reunion, was the first to grow and distil it on a large scale at La Plaine des Cafres, bringing prosperity to the town of Le Tampon.

All the green parts of the plant, especially the leaves, are distilled before flowering; about 400 kg of leaves and stems are required to produce around one litre of oil. Production of rosat geranium continues to decline in Reunion, even though the quality of the oil produced here far surpasses that produced elsewhere in the world. Rosat geranium essential oil is sought after by leading perfumers, as well as in phytotherapy, aromatherapy and more recently in gastronomy. Rosat geranium is recommended for treating nervousness, stress and skin problems. It is also known for repelling insects such as lice and mosquitoes. Have you ever had the chance to taste geranium brioche? A treat for the taste buds!

48



LEMONGRASS

Exotic

Cymbopogon citratus

Lemongrass will revive your body and mind after a long day. Nothing beats a good cup of "lemongrass, cinnamon and sugar cane" to end your meals. This pleasant infusion aids digestion and promotes perspiration. Its aromatic stems are widely used in cooking, but lemongrass is also a medicinal plant. Its leaves have antispasmodic, antibacterial, sedative and relaxing properties.

They are used to treat various conditions such as digestive disorders, flu-like symptoms and fever, mental fatigue, joint pain and rheumatism. Lemongrass is also believed to help lower blood sugar levels.

This herb is also a remarkable antiseptic and repels mosquitoes with exceptional effectiveness. Mosquitoes are repelled by the smell of "citral", which is highly concentrated (70-85%) in lemongrass essential oil. It is commonly found in mosquito repellent lotions.

49



ARNETTE WOOD

Indigenous

Dodonea viscosa

Arnette wood, or Reinette wood, takes its name from the apple-like scent released when its leaves are crushed. This indigenous plant is diuretic and is used more generally to treat kidney disorder.

An infusion made from fresh leaves cleans the body. An infusion of dried leaves is used to relieve diarrhoea and stomach bloating, kidney stones and renal colic.



male flowers



female flowers

50



BITTER ALOE

Exotic

Aloe vera

Aloe vera is known as “Aloès amer” (Bitter aloe) in Reunion. It is part of Creole phytotherapy, where remedies are passed down from generation to generation. Aloe gel is well known for its healing properties.Mixed with a few drops of rosat geranium essential oil, it is beneficial for the skin, treating eczema and sunburn.

The first chemical analyses of aloe leaves began after 1850 and highlighted its digestive properties. Since then, many other properties have been identified. Aloe is said to contain over 400 active compounds and 200 nutrients, including 12 vitamins, 12 minerals and 18 amino acids.

51



MARJORAM

Exotic

Origanum majorana

In the United Kingdom, when a young woman hesitated between two men, she was recommended to rub her body with marjoram. This practice was believed to make her future husband appear in her dreams. It might be worth trying!

In Reunion, marjoram is used as an herbal tea to relieve flu symptoms, improve digestion and promote sleep. Native to the Mediterranean region, more specifically Cyprus and Turkey, it has been used since antiquity for its medicinal properties and is often confused with oregano, with which it shares similar digestive virtues.

Most often, to increase the effectiveness of marjoram, it is combined with other plants: for digestion, marjoram is combined with basil, for insomnia, a few linden leaves are added to marjoram tea and for headaches, marjoram is preferably combined with a few mint leaves.

52



ARROWROOT OR MARANTA

Exotic

Maranta indica

The rhizomes of “rouroute” resemble large white grubs with pointed ends. In English, this plant native to Central America is called “arrowroot”, literally “arrow root”. Note the Creole transformation of this English name into “rouroute”! Have you ever tasted “bonbons la rouroute”, still sold in Chinese shops? They are delicious sweet biscuits made from the starch of the rouroute rhizome, which is also known to be a good gastric dressing. This starch is indeed very digestible and suitable for children and people recovering from illness. It is said to have been used to treat Napoleon I in Saint Helena during the final days of his life.



Arrowroot roots

53



LOWLAND TAMARIND

Endemic

Tamarindus indica

Tamarind trees are found all over the island, and their fruit is a favourite among tamarind lovers. Its medicinal properties are remarkably interesting and go far beyond its well-known effect on constipation. The word “tamarind” comes from the Arabic “Tamar indu”, meaning “dates of India”. The tamarind tree is found in all tropical countries.Its pods are like sweets enjoyed by both children and adults and are used to make a particularly refreshing juice.

Its pulp is also used in many savoury dishes, providing an incomparable acidic flavour. The tamarind is a majestic, slow-growing tree that can live for over a hundred years. Its leaves are delicate and finely divided, and its flowers are small and discreet.The fruit pulp is brown in colour, with an acidic but also sweet, tangy and highly aromatic flavour. Inside the pulp are shiny dark brown to black seeds.

Its medicinal properties are known worldwide. In addition to relieving constipation, tamarind helps reduce fever, supports digestion and benefits the liver and kidneys.

54



VANILLA

Exotic

Vanilla planifolia

Climbing up our tamarind tree is the vanilla plant; try to follow it and see how high it grows! Vanilla is an orchid native to Mexico, where its flowers are pollinated by Melipona bees and produce pods highly valued for their aroma.

Unfortunately, Melipona bees are not found outside Mexico. Humans must therefore carry out the contact between the male and female organs of the plant themselves. In 1841, a young Creole slave named Albius discovered the technique of hand-pollination, launching the development of vanilla production on the island. And fortunately so, as Bourbon vanilla is renowned worldwide for its exceptional quality.

In Reunion, vanilla thrives mainly along the island's east coast. Indeed, the plant requires an average of 2 metres of water per year to grow naturally without irrigation. Each vanilla plant can produce 2 to 10 flower clusters, each carrying around ten green pods that mature in 7 to 8 months if pollination is successful. These pods release their full aroma after being scalded and then dried according to an extremely specific technique, which will be explained to you if you have the opportunity to visit one of the island's vanilla plantations.

55



BISMARCK PALM

Exotic

Bismarkia nobilis

Near the four-leaf clover area, Bismarckia Nobilis is a “monospecific” genus of palm, meaning it is the only representative of its genus. This palm is remarkable in many ways, for its blue colour, its regular shape and its majestic silhouette. Its trunk is grey and smooth. When fully grown, it can reach up to 25 metres high. It bears “costapalmate” leaves with an intermediate structure. The leaves resemble a fan with a clearly defined central rib and perfectly pleated segments.

Bismarckia produces either male or female inflorescences. Its fruits are globular, brown in colour and about 4 centimetres in diameter. Particularly adapted to arid areas, it is commonly found in the Malagasy savannah and in dry, sunny regions where its bluish colour is even more pronounced.

56



TALIPOT PALM

Exotic

Corypha umbraculifera

Native to India, the talipot is remarkable for its towering terminal inflorescence, which can reach 5 to 6 metres and marks the end of its life. This palm flowers only once, usually after 30 to 80 years, depending on climate conditions. The inflorescence bears hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of flowers.

The fruits, about 4 centimetres in diameter, mature within a year, after which the palm dies. Its sap is used to make wine, and its leaves are used for thatched roofs. On the Malabar Coast, the leaves are also used to make traditional umbrellas for farmers and students in rural areas.

57



SKUNK TREE OR JAVA OLIVE

Exotic

Sterculia foetida

Flowering from November to January

Sterculia foetida, as its name suggests, is a tree with a fetid smell. Its small dark red flowers smell unbelievably bad, as does its bark. The genus name pays tribute to the Roman god of toilets, Sterculius (from the Latin "stercus": excrement).





58



WHITE SANDALWOOD

Endemic

Ruiza cordata

White sandalwood is also known as “singing wood”. It is a plant that has entered Reunionese tradition as a talisman tree or a bringer of good luck. Some elders say that if one takes a leaf from the tree, one must pay, which explains the presence of old copper coins found beneath some specimens in the wild.Legend has it that this magical plant sings at noon and at midnight.White sandalwood is considered the ultimate magical plant. It is used to make protective talismans.

Endemic to Reunion, the species was considered common at the end of the 19th century. The destruction of its natural habitat caused by fires, urbanisation and excessive harvesting by herbalists led to the extinction of this species.

By the 1970s, only three specimens remained on the island. Thanks to the recovery of cuttings, two plants were grown at the Brest Botanical Conservatory. When manually pollinated, the female flowers produced fruits containing a large number of viable seeds. In 1988, nearly 1,800 young plants were reintroduced into natural habitats and in public and private gardens across the island. White sandalwood has been a protected species since 6 February 1987.

59



RED KAPOK TREE

Bombax ceiba

Exotic

Flowering from July to September

Notice the impressive stature of the red kapok tree; this tree is characterised by its large buttress roots, and if you come closer, you will also see the large spines embedded in its trunk.

Our Bombax ceiba L. is listed among the remarkable trees of Reunion by the MOABI database. It produces large scarlet-red flowers composed of five petals and numerous red stamens. The flowers bloom when the tree is usually leafless, making them even more striking.

You will meet its cousin, the kapok tree, as you leave the garden. This botanical family is known for producing kapok, a very particular plant fibre. The red kapok tree has noticeably light wood used for match production.

60



YLANG YLANG

Cananga odorata

Exotic

Regular flowering throughout the year

This was the favourite flower of the founder of the Jardin d'Eden. Two specimens mark the entrance to the "Lovers' Fountain" path. But you probably walked past without noticing them: we learned the hard way that an ylang-ylang tree must be heavily pruned every year if one wishes to smell and admire its flowers without binoculars. Only the mature, yellow flowers are fragrant.

It was Pierre Poivre who introduced the "perfume tree" to the Mascarene Islands. This botanist, royal administrator, chartered the corvette "Le Vigilant" in May 1769 and succeeded, despite Dutch surveillance, in bringing back a few ylang-ylang plants from Southeast Asia.

From 1885 to 1910, Bourbon Island experienced a true ylang-ylang fever and rose to become one of the world's leading producers after Malaysia. The industry later declined and the crop abandoned due to competition from lower labour costs in the Comoros and Nosy Be.

As with vetiver or rose-scented geranium, ylang-ylang essence is obtained by steam distillation. One hectare of ylang-ylang produces around 1,500 kg of flowers per year, yielding about 30 kg of essential oil.

61



VACOA OR COMMON SCREWPINE *Indigenous*

Pandanus utilis

As its name suggests, every part of Pandanus utilis is useful. Grown as an ornamental plant, it also acts as a windbreak and is highly attractive to bees. Its leaves are used to make handicrafts: baskets, bertels (traditional Reunionese backpacks), hats, bags and placemats. Its heart can be eaten in salads, stews or in traditional Reunionese dishes such as screw pine heart with smoked pork.

According to the "gramouns" (elders), its root can be used as a refreshing drink. The pimpin, its fruit, contains around 300 segments, each producing on average four to five plants, resulting in nearly 1,500 young vacoa plants from a single fruit ball. Fortunately, it is a delight on Reunionese tables! Be sure to try pimpin terrine with turmeric or pimpin bavarois flavoured with rum and vanilla. However, patience is needed: leaves can only be harvested after 2 to 3 years, and the heart can only be used after about ten years.

Other vacoa species such as Pandanus montanus, Pandanus purpurascens and Pandanus sylvestris are endemic to the island and form part of the primary vegetation of mid-altitude areas.

62



SPONGE TREE

Endemic

Polyscias cutispongia

The sponge tree is an endemic tree of Reunion. Cutispongia, from the Latin “cutis” meaning skin, covering or bark, and “spongius” meaning spongy or sponge-like, gave it its common name “sponge tree”. Its bark and branches have a relatively soft consistency, as if they were spongy.

The sponge tree is a rare species protected by a ministerial decree dated 8 February 1987. Only a handful of specimens remain, mainly in inland coastal areas near Saint-Philippe. The species is endangered due to natural hybridisation with a Mauritian endemic species now introduced and sold in Reunion’s nurseries.

63



BAOBAB

Adansonia digitata

Exotic

Flowering from December to February

After passing the Christ thorn plants (Euphorbia Milii), said to ward off evil spirits, you enter the cactus area, home to aloes, euphorbias, succulents and tuberous plants. At the entrance to this area stands the undisputed star of the garden: the baobab.

When planted in December 1990, our baobab measured just 5 cm, and its trunk has already reached a respectable diameter. This pachyderm plant, native to tropical Africa, especially Madagascar, home to five endemic species, easily withstands drought thanks to its ability to store water in its soft, spongy wood (succulent properties).

Its hanging white flowers open at night and are pollinated by nectar-loving bats. They produce large greenish-bronze fruits containing many seeds surrounded by an edible white pulp that is slightly acidic and floury. The word “baobab” comes from the Arabic “ba hobab”, meaning “fruit with many seeds”. Highly appreciated by baboons in Africa, these fruits are also known as “monkey bread”.

63



BAOBAB

Adansonia digitata

As for young baobab leaves, they are also edible and can provide a valuable supplementary meal, as they are particularly rich in water, protein and calcium.

Note that another baobab, younger and smaller, grows in the car park just before the garden entrance. Baobabs can live for up to 2,000 years.



Baobab fruit or Monkey bread



Inflorescence

64



MADAGASCAR PALM

Exotic

Pachypodium lamerei Drake

Despite its common name, Madagascar palm, this species endemic to the Great Island is a succulent and therefore closely related to cacti. Highly sought after by collectors, Pachypodium lamerei has been introduced to many regions. Present in Reunion only cultivated, this tree-like succulent can be found in a few parks and Creole gardens.

Its column-shaped trunk, single or branched, is covered with spines and can reach 5 metres high. Caution: its sap is toxic. Its flowers are fragrant, with five white petals and a golden-yellow centre. Its fruits are pods containing a large number of seeds with white wings.

The plant is propagated from seed, which must first be soaked in warm water for 24 hours before sowing in moist sand.

65



CANDELABRA EUPHORBIA

Exotic

Euphorbia candelabrum

Native to South Africa, the candelabra euphorbia is a succulent tree found in Reunion only in cultivation as an ornamental plant. Its tissues contain a milky substance, a toxic latex which, upon simple contact with the skin or face, causes blistering, irritates the eyes and can even lead to blindness.

Inhalation of this substance can also cause a burning sensation in the throat. This plant must therefore be handled with caution.

In its country of origin, the candelabra euphorbia is used to stun fish: its latex mixed with grass is weighted with a stone in the water, which paralyses the fish, causing them to float to the surface where they can be caught by hand.

66



ROUCOU OR ACHIOTE

Exotic

Bixa orellana

Regular flowering throughout the year

For half of the year, it appears to be an ordinary shrub. But if you are lucky enough to visit the Jardin d'Eden between May and August, the scarlet fruiting of the "litchi-flower", "roucouyer" or "roucou", Bixa orellana, is truly magnificent. They resemble lychees.

Indigenous peoples of tropical America have traditionally used it to dye their hair and skin. The scientific name of the species refers to Francisco de Orellana, who crossed South America in 1541-1542.

Today, modern women have taken over from the "Redskins". Do they not colour their lips with a paste made from roucou? In fact, roucou is a food and pharmaceutical colouring whose use has become widespread, as it colours both lipsticks and the wax coating of Dutch cheeses, the famous E160! It is the seeds and the pulp surrounding them, rich in tannins and carotenoids, which are used (between 150 and 250 kg can be obtained per tree per year).

If you crush one of its red seeds, your fingers will instantly be stained!

67



BANANA PLANT

Exotic

Musa

The banana plant (Musa × paradisiaca) was exported from Malaysia several centuries before our era and spread throughout all tropical lands. Contrary to popular belief, the banana plant is not a tree but a herbaceous plant, as it is not lignified, although this is not the most characteristic criterion since bamboos are lignified yet are also not trees. It is commonly, though somewhat abusively, referred to as "the largest herb in the world".

When the banana plant has produced between 25 and 30 leaves, a floral bud develops at their centre and evolves into an inflorescence that, in most species, bends to the side. The inflorescence, known as a "bunch", is made up of a series of coloured leaves called "spathes", arranged in a spiral, bearing female flowers at the base that will produce bananas and male flowers at the tip. Flowering occurs after seven months, and the fruits ripen four months later, after which the stem dies. It is important to cut it after harvest to make room for the next one, as cultivated banana plants reproduce vegetatively.

67



BANANA PLANT

Musa

Bananas are picked green, as harvesting triggers the ripening process. Fruits left on the banana plant will increase in size until they burst, without accumulating sugar. In Reunion, the tip of the banana flower, locally called “figue”, is also enjoyed in curry dishes. However, the “baba figue” (baby banana flower) requires careful preparation to remove its bitterness, involving several soakings in cold salted and vinegared water.

The banana, it is said, accompanies people throughout their lives. The fruits, of course, are a constantly renewing staple food. They are eaten ripe (as fruit or in punch), or green (as chips, in soups or stews). In some cultures, banana leaves are used as cradles for babies. These same leaves are also used to hold liquids and food. They are also used to cover huts and sometimes even for clothing. In Reunion, Cabri Massalé (goat masala) is traditionally served on banana leaves.

68



CARAMBOLA TREE

Exotic

Averrhoa carambola

As you walk towards the beehives, the carambola tree is a tropical tree that can bear fruit from the age of 5. Depending on the variety, more or less tangy, the fruit is used in juices or fruit salads, jams or sauces; but it is mainly used to decorate dishes and desserts. It stands out for its unusual shape and waxy-looking skin.When sliced crosswise, it forms a five-pointed star, hence its English name “star fruit”.

Like many plants in the Oxalidaceae family, carambolas are rich in oxalic acid, which is toxic at very high concentrations. The fruits of this species also contain a neurotoxin called “caramboxin”, which is sometimes poorly filtered by the kidneys and is therefore strictly not recommended for people suffering from kidney or liver failure.

69



chayote

THE JARDIN D'EDEN VEGETABLE GARDEN

Depending on the seasons, you may discover in our vegetable garden pumpkin and chayote vines growing on trellises and spreading along the ground. These plants produce the well-known fruits that can be enjoyed in stews or gratins, but Reunionese people more often consume pumpkin leaves and chayote leaves. "Brèdes" is the local term for leafy greens, usually cooked in stir-fries or quiches. For pumpkin and chayote vines, it is the young shoots that are harvested and prepared as leafy vegetables.

In the ground-level beds, you may also see Chinese cabbage leaves, as well as Swiss chard, parsley, coriander, spring onions, some carrots and lettuces, which form the basis of culinary preparations.

Further along, the angled luffa vine develops; its fruit is eaten when very young and tender, in the same way as courgettes or zucchini. When mature, the luffa becomes so fibrous that it produces the ideal plant sponge; non-abrasive, it is perfect for washing pots or exfoliating the skin.



cassava

THE JARDIN D'EDEN VEGETABLE GARDEN

Further into the garden, you will also find cassava plants. Their tall stems and green leaves with reddish veins hide underground the prized rhizome used to make tapioca and tapioca pearls.Here too, the young leaves are eaten locally as cassava brèdes.

Beneath a dense green ground cover, sweet potatoes grow. Different varieties exist purple, white and bicoloured sweet potatoes; in Europe, the orange variety is most commonly found. In Reunion, white sweet potato is used to make the delicious "gâteau patate" (sweet potato cake), a speciality of all Creole families.



Sweet potatoe (Ipomoea batatas)



Angles luffa (Luffa acutangula)

70



VICTORIA PINEAPPLE

Exotic

Ananas comosus

A little further on, if it is not the replanting period, Victoria pineapple plants (Ananas comosus) catch your eye. No, pineapples do not grow on trees!

Pineapples from Reunion are known to be far sweeter and more fragrant than those from Africa. If you enjoy them during your stay on the island, you will also be following a slimming diet at the same time. Pineapple indeed contains an enzyme, bromelain, capable of digesting up to 1,000 times its own weight in protein in just a few minutes!

Unfortunately, canned pineapples no longer contain bromelain because of the sterilisation process. Fresh pineapple is therefore especially recommended after a meat-based meal. Note that pineapple is a composite fruit, resulting from the fusion of many ovaries that become fleshy at maturity. Therefore, counting the “eyes” of a pineapple is equivalent to counting the number of individual fruits that formed this delicious whole.

71



THE BEEHIVES OF THE JARDIN D'EDEN

The educational apiary at the Jardin d'Eden was created thanks to an initiative by the Reunion beekeepers' association.

Three main types of honey are produced in Reunion, each with its own distinct appearance and flavour :

- Pink peppercorn honey represents 70% of local production and is harvested in March-April. It is runny and pale yellow in colour, with a very distinctive flavour reminiscent of the berry, slightly peppery.

- Lychee honey represents 15% of local production and is harvested in August-September. It crystallises very quickly and becomes almost white.

- Forest and wildflower honey represents 15% of local production and is harvested at the end of the year. It comes from the flowering of native forests in both lowland and upland areas of the island (Mahot, Tan Rouge, Natte, Benzoin, Grevillea, etc.). A small amount of honeydew is part of its composition, giving it a darker colour and a fragrant flavour.

Honey from the Jardin d'Eden is a wildflower honey, produced from a wide variety of plants such as rose pepper, palms, Indian tamarind, Antigone vine, spinach plants, white bird of paradise, etc. It is harvested two to three times a year, each hive producing around 15 to 20 kg annually.

72



BRAZILIAN PEPPER TREE *Invasive exotic species*

Schinus terebinthifolius

These delicious berries, now very popular in modern cuisine, are sold as “rose pepper”. According to the consumer protection and quality control authorities, only Piper species are entitled to be called “pepper”.

In Reunion, the “false pepper tree”, or rose pepper, is an invasive plant that spreads throughout lowland areas and ravines. Birds are largely responsible, as they, like us, enjoy these small berries with their sweet and peppery flavour...and spread everywhere the seeds they cannot digest. You will see large numbers of these plants when crossing the bridge through the marsh.

73



STRAWBERRY GUAVA

Invasive exotic species

Psidium cattleianum

The strawberry guava (Psidium cattleianum) is not to be confused with the common guava (Psidium guajava), which is larger, yellow in colour with pink flesh. The strawberry guava is a small fruit measuring about 2.5 to 5 cm in diameter and is purple in colour. Its white, aromatic flesh is extremely rich in vitamin C, 50mg for 100g, twenty times more than an orange. Introduced in Reunion as a garden plant in 1818, strawberry guava has spread over hundreds of hectares and now colonises large areas of native vegetation, thanks to its very rapid growth. It has become common in the undergrowth in the east of the island, at higher altitudes on the west coast, and on lava flows. Today, it is considered an invasive species. At the end of summer and into early winter, locals head out to gather these fruits.

Strawberry guava wood is dense, uniform, yet flexible. The use of strawberry guava wood was once common in Reunion, for making fences, palisades, and artfully crafted furniture. Some pieces preserved in the collections of the Museum of Decorative Arts of the Indian Ocean bear witness to this tradition. This craft, once abandoned, is now enjoying a revival and takes many forms: artfully crafted indoor furniture, contemporary garden furniture, planters, decorative objects, plant supports, and fascines

74



CAMPHOR TREE

Invasive exotic species

Cinnamomum camphora

One of the very few living beings to survive the atomic bombing of Nagasaki on 9 August 1945 was a 200-year-old camphor tree, although severely burned and stripped of its branches. Over time, it slowly grew back and became a symbol of hope and rebirth for the Japanese people.

Among the vetiver that we have planted later on, a camphor tree is growing. Also known as Japanese laurel, camphor wood is prized for furniture making, especially wardrobes and chests, as its scent lasts for many years and its fungicidal properties naturally repel insects and moths. The essence extracted from its leaves is used in many pharmaceutical preparations. Used as a rub, it relieves rheumatic pain and muscle soreness, and inhaling steam from its leaves placed in boiling water helps cure colds. Finally, being an anaphrodisiac, it is said to reduce sexual desire. Naturalised in Reunion, it is widely spread in forests and is listed as an invasive species.

75



VETIVER

Exotic

Vetiveria zizanioides

Vetiver, the famous fragrance by Guerlain that takes its name from the roots of vetiver (Vetiveria zizanioides) grows opposite the painting kiosk. Long cultivated in the south of the island and in the western highlands for its fragrance between 1920 and 1970, the difficulty of harvesting its extremely long roots, up to 3m long, led to the decline of this once-renowned production amongst perfumers. Vetiver essence, obtained by steam distillation of the roots, is used in perfumery and aromatherapy.

This essential oil releases a heavy, woody, earthy scent that acts as a base note with very long-lasting persistence. Local craftsmanship still produces small objects made from dried roots, whose pleasant scent lingers for a long time in wardrobes.

Today, vetiver cultivation has become widespread and is commonly found in urban areas and farmland to prevent soil erosion thanks to its roots and the mulch it provides. The use of mulching has been used for many years to produce roofs like those of the kiosk next to you, and it is a savoir-faire that is a part of the cultural heritage of Reunion.

76



REED OR NARROWLEAF CATTAIL *Indigenous*

Typha augustifolia

The bridge takes you across a vast sea of reeds, also called cattails. This sturdy plant can grow up to 2-3 metres tall. It only grows in fresh to slightly brackish water and was already present in this marshy area, long before the Jardin d'Eden was created. Its flowers are sausage-like, long, brown, velvety holding many seeds.

We regularly cut back the reed area after flowering because it's the only way we've found to get rid of the plant pests that invade it. This work is exhausting, a real chore for our gardeners. Ten days after cutting, the first tender shoots reappear, restoring all the magic of the landscape we aimed to create. Its dried leaves were used to make seats for the traditional "Gol chairs" (near Saint-Louis).

77



BENJOIN TREE

Terminalia bentzoe

Endemic

The benjoin (Terminalia bentzoe), a tree endemic to the Mascarene Islands, can reach 20 to 30 metres high. Now rare in the wild, it has sometimes been planted by the National Forestry Office for reforestation and is now commonly replanted in urban landscaping projects.

It provides good-quality construction wood and has been used for carving traditional canoes. It is also the host plant of the Sylvain de La Reunion, Neptis dumetorum, an endemic butterfly. Its bark is reputed to relieve respiratory problems and has antiseptic properties. If you look closely, you will often see trees in town with trunk wounds caused by bark harvesting for medicinal purposes.

Caution! When taken internally, and due to its high tannin content, benjoin bark may cause gastrointestinal disorders, bloating and constipation.



Sylvain de La Reunion (Neptis dumetorum)

78



ARAUCARIA

Exotic

Araucaria columnaris Hook

Back on dry land, we give you Araucaria columnaris Hook. Endemic to New Caledonia, this species is one of the most common within the Araucaria genus.It owes its name to its column-like shape, hence the epithet columnaris, from the Latin meaning columnar.

It is also called the Cook pine, after explorer James Cook, who named the Isle of Pines when he spotted these trees in 1774 near New Caledonia. It was introduced to Reunion for ornamental purposes in gardens, parks and urban areas. It is the iconic Christmas tree in Reunion.



Détails de feuille

79



VELVETLEAF SOLDIERBUSH

Indigenous

Heliotropium foertherianum (formerly Tournefortia argentea)

The veloutier or velvetleaf soldier is a coastal plant native to the Mascarene Islands, originally growing along the coastline of Reunion. It is now rarely seen growing wild on the island.

Unfortunately, this plant is critically endangered (IUCN Red List 2023) due to urbanisation, rising sea levels and coastal erosion, which are causing the gradual disappearance of its habitat. Today, the veloutier is widely replanted to protect beaches and to help sea turtles regain the natural environment of their nesting sites.



Inflorescence



80



CALABASH TREE

Exotic

Crescentia cujete

The calabash tree is remarkable for its large fruits that grow directly on its trunk. The round or oval calabashes, with a smooth green shell, can measure up to 40 cm long. Once dried, the calabash is used to make containers, handicrafts and maracas. It should not be confused with the edible calabash (Lagenaria siceraria), from the gourd family, pear-shaped and growing on a creeping or climbing vine. This calabash is a true tree, not a vine. Its spreading shape, short trunk and leaf arrangement give it a very distinctive silhouette. It does not exceed 10 metres high.



Begining of fruiting



Inflorescence

81



EUCALYPTUS TREE

Exotic

The Eucalyptus genus

Eucalyptus trees were introduced to the island in the 1860s by Joseph Antoine Sosthènes d'Armand de Chateauvieux on his Colimaçons estate in Saint-Leu, now the Mascarin National Botanical Conservatory since 1987. In Reunion, eucalyptus trees are mainly planted in dry areas, although worldwide they have often been used to drain marshy zones due to their high-water consumption. Several species can be found on the island, almost all of them endemic to Australia.

On the mound in front of you stands Eucalyptus globulus, also known as the Tasmanian blue gum, with bluish leaves and a strong scent of eucalyptol. This tree has been the floral emblem of Tasmania since 1962.

Beside it, Eucalyptus citriodora has a citrusy scent and greener foliage. It is used to treat bronchitis, flu, asthma and tuberculosis. This essence is also highly effective against mosquitoes. In general, the vapours of this essential oil purify the air and destroy pathogenic microbes. Naturally, its wood is resistant to termites.

82



KAPOK TREE

Exotic

Ceiba pentandra (L.) Gaertn.

As you leave the garden, to the right of the gate leading to the car park stands the silk-cotton tree, also known as the kapok tree. Beware: Local legend says that whoever cuts this tree will die within three days, three months or three years, as this tree shelters the souls of the ancestors. Native to South and Central America and the Caribbean, it can reach 60 metres high.

In the Caribbean, the kapok tree is known as the “slave tree”, as enslaved people accused of wrongdoing were once tied to its trunk by their owners. It is also said that it is the tree of the devil because it is from this tree that spirits would take flight after having hung their skin on the thorns of the branches.

It is its fruit that makes it remarkable and once gave it great economic importance. Shaped like a hanging, woody capsule about 15 to 20 centimetres long, the fruit opens to release a whitish, cotton-like fibre called kapok, containing small brown seeds. It then seems to snow at the entrance to the garden.

82



LE FROMAGER OU KAPOKIER

Ceiba pentandra (L.) Gaertn.

Used to stuff cushions, pillows and mattresses, the use of kapok declined at the end of the 20th century with the arrival of synthetic materials. As it is eight times lighter than cork, floats and is rot-proof, kapok is still used today, for instance in life jackets. The wood of the kapok tree is used to make packaging boxes and crates. Oil extracted from the seeds is used to relieve rheumatic pain, make soap, and used as fire starter. The "Ceiba" was a sacred tree for the Maya civilisation and symbolised the axis of the world.



Fuits nammed "Kapok"



Details of the fluff inside the fruit.



SMALL FAUNA OF REUNION GARDENS



Common myna

SMALL FAUNA OF REUNION GARDENS

Birds

The Jardin d'Eden quickly became a true haven for birds, most of them being exotic and human-associated species, sometimes even invasive, such as the common myna or Indian myna (Acridotheres tristis).
Introduced to the island in 1760 as a means of controlling locust invasion, it is believed to have contributed to the disappearance of the hoopoe starling, an endemic Reunion species, by taking over its habitat and food sources. Today, this species numbers at least 60,000 individuals, but this is nothing compared to the 1.5 million "merles de Maurice" (Pycnonotus jocosus - Red whiskered bulbul) causing damage to both agriculture and the environment.



Red Cardinal or Madagascar fody



Red whiskered bulbul



Gold dust day gecko

SMALL FAUNA OF REUNION GARDENS

Geckos

In gardens, it is no longer rare to encounter this well-known reptile, the gold dust day gecko (Phelsuma laticauda). Endemic to northern Madagascar, it is nevertheless considered an exotic and invasive species in Reunion. Like the giant green gecko of Madagascar, the gold dust day gecko has gradually colonised the lowlands of the western part of the island, starting from the neighbourhood of Grand Fond (Saint-Gilles-les-Bains). Today, it threatens endemic species of Reunion, such as the Manapany green gecko, an endemic species that must be protected.



Giant green gecko of Madagascar



Manapany green gecko (endemic) (Not found in the garden)



Photographie Ugo Herpin

SMALL FAUNA OF REUNION GARDENS

The Tailless Tenrec

The tailless tenrec (Tenrec ecaudatus), native to Madagascar, was introduced to Reunion as a food resource. It is an insectivore that resembles a hedgehog, but it cannot curl into a ball. Its hairs, although very stiff, are different from hedgehog spines. It uses its pointed nuzzle ending in a mobile snout to dig into the soil in search of insects, slugs, roots or fruit.

A nocturnal animal, this small, solitary mammal lives in a burrow during the day. The young are born with striped coat for camouflage and remain with their mother for three to four months. The tailless tanrec can have from 12 to 16 young per litter. Nursing females may be seen during the day as they must feed to sustain their large litters. It is then that they can be observed.

In Reunion, the tenrec was threatened with extinction due to intensive poaching. Today its hunting is regulated and takes place from 15 February to 15 April, at night with the help of dogs. It is cooked as a curry. Every March, a festival in La Grande Chaloupe celebrates this rare traditional delicacy.



Photographie Roland Godon

SMALL FAUNA OF REUNION GARDENS

The Musk Shrew

Native to southern Asia, the shrew (Suncus murinus) has been introduced into nearly thirty countries in East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia and the Pacific. In the Indian Ocean region, it is found in Reunion, Mauritius, Rodrigues, the Comoros and Madagascar.

It inhabits all types of environments: forested areas, agricultural zones and human settlements, with which it is particularly associated. It is also found near ponds and waterholes. Mostly nocturnal and not very shy, the shrew emits high-pitched squeaks when threatened. It often enters houses at night.With a high metabolism, the shrew needs to feed often and is most active in the hours just before dawn. However, its metabolism is slower than that of European shrews, which makes it less vulnerable to environmental stress. It is not to be confused with the grey mouse, which has a rounder snout, a smaller body and is far shyer.

Source Atlas Borbonica

JARDIN D'EDEN

L'ERMITAGE - ILE DE LA RÉUNION



THANK YOU

PLEASE REMEMBER TO RETURN THIS BOOKLET TO RECEPTION. THANK YOU!