

Palma prunifera Miller**Copernicia prunifera** (Miller) H. E. Moore, tr. nov.*Palma prunifera* Miller, Gard. Dict. ed. 8. 1768.*Corypha cerifera* Arruda da Camara, Discurso Util. Inst. Jard. 1810.*Copernicia cerifera* (Arruda da Camara) Martius, Hist. Nat. Palm. 3: 242. 1838.*Arrudaria cerifera* (Arruda da Camara) Macedo, Not. Palm. Carnauba 5. 1867.

The disposition of *Palma prunifera* (referred by *Index Kewensis* to *Chamaerops humilis* Linnaeus) will come to many as an unpleasant shock. The original description and the synonym cited refer to one palm, the commentary in part to another. The decisive factor lies in the "caudice squamato" of Miller's description:

"7. PALMA (*Prunifera*) frondibus pinnato-palmatis plicatis, caudice squamato. *Palm-tree with hand-shaped winged leaves which are plaited, and a scaly stalk.* Palma Brasiliensis prunifera, folio plicatili seu flabelliformi, caudice squamato. Raii Hist. 1368. *Plum-bearing Palm-tree of the Brasils, with a plaited or fan-shaped leaf, and a scaly stalk, called Palmetto or Thatch.*"

The account by Ray in *Historia Plantarum* 2: 1368, 1688, which Miller cited is, in turn, based upon that of Marcgravius (1648) and the further elaboration of Piso (1658). Ray's treatment appears in Chapter IV (*De Palmis folio plicatili flabelliformi majore*) of the *Dendrologia*, commencing with the polynomial "4. *Palma Brasiliensis prunifera folio plicatili seu flabelliformi, caudice squamato.* Caranaiba & Ananachicarivi: Brasilianus Marcgrav, Pison," which is followed by an adaptation of Marcgravius' account on page 130 of "Historia Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae" (Piso & Marcgravius, *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, 1648) and a comment to the effect that Fiso had illustrated two species (in Laet, *De Indiae Utriusque Re Naturali et Medica*, 1658) which seemed to differ only in aspect of foliage and conformation of the trunk. The illustrations of Piso are reproduced in a preceding fascicle (*Gent. Herb.* 9: 26, fig. 13). That to the left is the original illustration for Marcgravius' account, that to the right is a stylized illustration added by Fiso. Thus the synonym may be traced directly back to a clearly recognizable account of the Brazilian wax palm or carnauba palm, treated by Dahlgren and Glassman under the long-established name *Copernicia cerifera*.

Miller's own commentary, however, is implicitly though not explicitly based in part upon Sloane's account of the "Thatch" of Jamaica, a palm which Bailey (*Gent. Herb.* 4: 185. 1938) has identified as "... a *Thrinax*,

perhaps *T. tessellata*." Miller wrote, "The seventh sort is called Palmetto-tree, or Thatch, by the inhabitants of Jamaica, where this tree grows upon all the honey-comb rocks in great plenty. It rises with a slender stalk ten or twelve feet high, *which is naked and smooth*, and at the top garnished with many fan-shaped leaves placed circularly; these have foot-stalks two or three feet long, which are *armed with a few strong, green, crooked spines*; . . . the fruit is of the *shape and size of the small Lucca Olives*" [italics mine].

The commentary indicates a confusion of what are now recognized as two distinct taxa (a confusion not unexpected when one considers that only two fan palms were at all familiar at that time). *Thrinax* does have "a naked and smooth" trunk but it does not have "crooked spines" nor fruits as large as noted. The spiny petiole and larger fruit are characters of *Copernicia*, which, in turn, often retains petiole bases on the trunk for a long time.

As earlier noted, Miller provided the key to a contemporary interpretation of his species when he described *Palma prunifera* as having "caudice squamato" and cited Ray. This phrase applies to no known *Thrinax* but is characteristic of *Copernicia cerifera* (see figures in *Gent. Herb.* 9: 26-27), which should bear the far less descriptive but correct name *Copernicia prunifera*.

Palma americana Miller

The only species of *Palma* described by Miller which cannot be identified with confidence at present is:

"10. PALMA (*Americana*) frondibus pinnatis, foliolis lanceolatis plicatis geminatis sparsis. *Palm-tree with winged leaves, whose lobes are spear-shaped, plaited, and come out by pairs from one point, standing thinly along the midrib.* Palma altissima, non spinosa, fructu oblongo. Houst. MSS. *Tallest Palm-tree having no prickles and bearing an oblong fruit.*"

Dr. Stearn has been unable to locate either specimens or more ample manuscript description which would clarify the identity of this palm. Miller says of it, "The tenth sort was discovered by the late Dr. Houstoun in the Spanish West-Indies. This rises with a very tall naked trunk, garnished at the top with long winged branches or leaves, whose lobes are spear-shaped and plaited; they are of a softer texture than any of the other sorts, and for the most part come out two from the same point, so stand by pairs on the same side of the midrib; they have two lobes on a side a little above each other, but there is a great space between every four lobes. The flowers come out in long bunches from between the leaves,