



## BAMBOO (*Bambusa vulgaris*)

Our common bamboo came to Jamaica in the early eighteenth century. It is a native of the Old World tropics but is now widespread. About 700 species exist worldwide.

Bamboos are really giant grasses with straight hollow, jointed, smooth stems. Bamboos seldom flower and do so once in 30 to 100 years, depending on the species. After blooming the stems tend to die allowing new shoots to spring up from the base of the old plants. Young plants can also grow from seeds. The common bamboo grows up to 25 m tall and occurs from sea level to 1,000 m. The leaves are 15 - 25 cm long and have rough edges.

Bamboo trees are especially cultivated in Jamaica since their roots are so closely matted that they help to control soil erosion. The plant also provides shade and beauty on road banks and hillsides. Bamboo Avenue in Jamaica is a tourist attraction.

Many ornamental varieties of bamboo have also been introduced into Jamaica from Asia and they can be found growing in different gardens across the island.

Laminated bamboo piles make good reinforcement for concrete when building houses. Bamboo is used to make furniture, fences, river rafts, yam sticks, beer mugs, pencil holders, baskets and flower pots of various kinds.

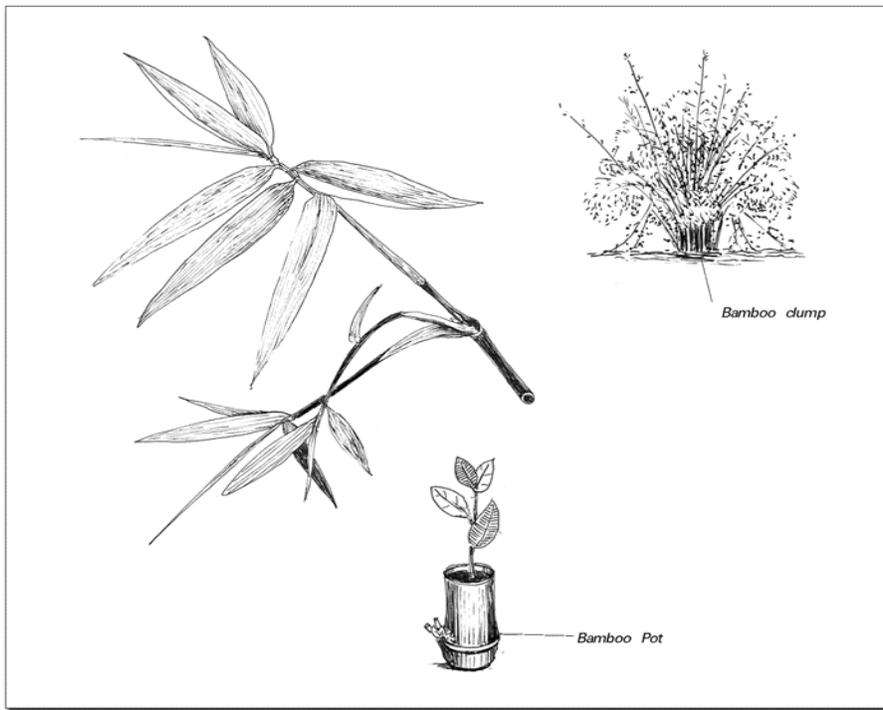
Another bamboo, the endemic Climbing Bamboo (*Chusquea albiifolia*) grows profusely in parts of the Blue Mountains where it forms a thick entanglement along the trails.

Records show that this Bamboo flowered in Jamaica from 1884 - 1886. It is interesting to note that in 1884 some plants sent from Jamaica to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew (England) flowered at the same time, in 1886. This happened although the plants were in entirely different environments. In the Blue Mountains the last recorded flowerings were in 1948 and in 1984.



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Family: <b>Gramineae</b>	Species: <i>Bambusa vulgaris</i>	Author: Schard. ex Wendl.
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Height: 10m	Habitat: Sea level to 1000m	Persistence: Evergreen
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