



## COCONUT

(*Cocos nucifera*)

Although the coconut tree is originally native to Southeast Asia and the islands of Melanesia in the Pacific Ocean the tall, graceful, coconut palms can now be found throughout the world's tropical and subtropical regions. The coconut is one of the trees that represent the essence of the tropics to people who live in the colder climates.

The slim trunk which can reach a height of over 25 m is free of branches and is somewhat thicker at the base. The leaves are always at the crown of the tree trunk. They resemble huge green feathers and spread out from the top of the tree for up to 5 m. They have long thin leaflets which hang from a leafblade that runs down the centre of each leaf.

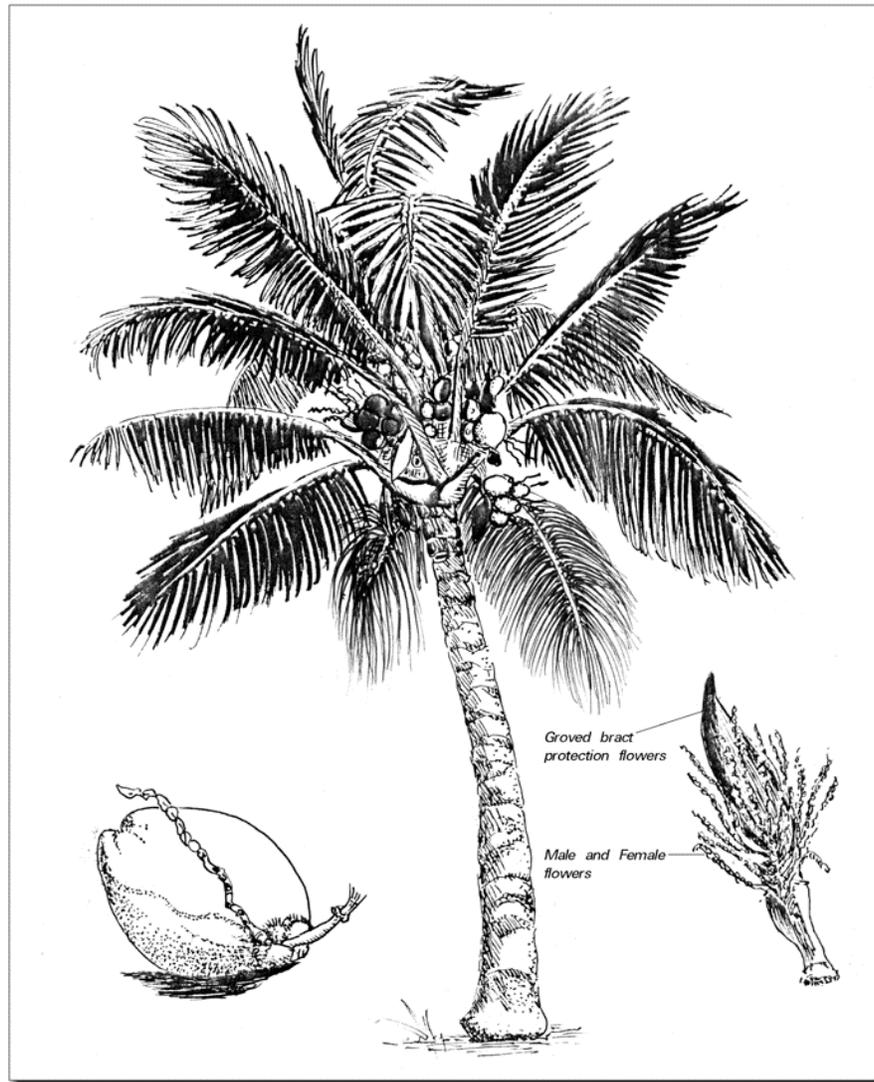
In the central core at the top of the tree there are clusters of yellow-white flowers. Fruits are located at the bases of the leaves. The fruits are large and rounded (about 25 x 30 cm) with an outer green, red-green or yellow rind. Under the rind is a layer of fibre called coir and beneath that a hard brown nut. The immature coconuts are picked and the liquid in the nut drunk; it is called coconut water. When the endosperm (coconut meat) from mature coconuts is dried it is called copra and is used to make oil, soap and margarine. The meat is also grated and made into confectionaries such as drops and grater cake.

Coconut leaves are used for thatching roofs, making baskets, mats and hats. The wood from the trunks can be used to build houses and bridges.



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Family: <b>Palmae</b>	Species: <i>Cocos nucifera</i>	Author: Linneaus
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Height: 28m	Habitat: Sea level to 1000m	Persistence: Evergreen
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