

## CONSERVATION OF A THREATENED SPECIES

**Cycas pectinata** Griff. (Cycadaceae)

Commonly known as '*Nepal cycas*' and locally called *D'eng-sia-goda* in Khasi, *Thal-jimura* in Assamese and *Sagang* in Manipuri,

**Cycas pectinata** Griff., is a small evergreen tree looking palm-like. Some workers treat it as a variety of *C. circinnalis* L., while others consider it very close to *C. siamensis*

Miq. and probably one is a variety or a geographical form of the other.

This plant is very useful to the local people. Seeds and tender shoots are prized as vegetable while the stem yields a starch like sago, and is also used for medicinal purpose. Tender shoots are gathered by poor people and sold in local bazaars.

In the nineteenth century it was fairly common in Eastern Nepal, Assam and Bangladesh to Burma. In course of development of the country forests where it occurs have been very heavily worked upon for multifarious human needs, resulting in reduction in coverage and denudation of the forest and natural habitats. The hillocks on which it grows are subjected to jhum cultivation and annual fires. On the other hand, whatever plants grow are exploited indiscriminately by the poor food gatherers for their uses. Due to these reasons it has become very rare now and is threatened with extinction. As for instance this plant was abundant in the hillock at Kakching, Manipur State in 1953-54 but in 1978 not a single plant could be located here.

This endangered plant was originally cultivated in the Indian Botanic Garden as early as 1837 when William Griffith collected it from Burma during his deputation with the Tea Delegation. It was bearing flowers and seeds when he worked out the description, and remained under cultivation up to the year 1883 as is evident from the specimens extant in the Central National Herbarium (CAL). But it is not named in the catalogue of non herbaceous phanerogams cultivated in the garden as published by A. T. Gage in 1916. When and how the living type plant died between 1883 and 1916 could not be traced out.

It has been reintroduced in the Indian Botanic Garden, Howrah in June 1978 by



Fig. 1. *Cycas pectinata* Griff., a sucker with sprouting leaves.

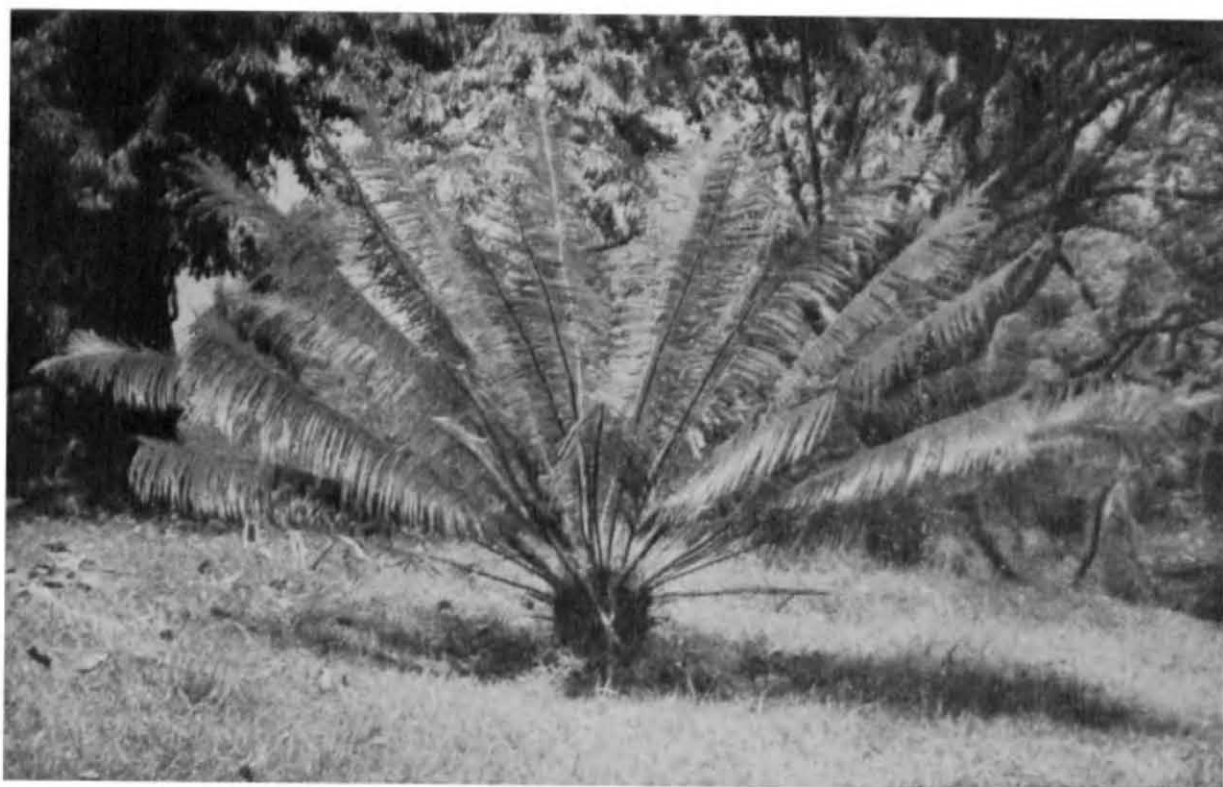


Fig. 2. *Cycas pectinata* Griff., a small tree (3 years old)

the author from Manipur State, growing over a hillock near Lei Kumbi village, about 64 km from Imphal. 7 suckers and saplings were brought, and planted at different spots under varying conditions. The suckers sprouted very well and every one produced several leaves (fig. 1) within a week or so. The saplings produced new leaves after several months. Two plants died when the nursery remained submerged under water for about a week during the flood in October, 1978. 2 others died sub-

sequently probably as an after effect of that flood which was beyond control. However, it is gratifying to note that one plant in pot in the Nursery No. 1 and two others transplanted on the sloping upland in the Pine-tum No. 1 survived and are growing well (fig. 2) for the last five years, thereby acclimatising in the garden.

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