

Montgomery Botanical NEWS

*Advancing Research, Conservation, and Education
through Scientific Plant Collections*

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Senegal:

Montgomery had the unique opportunity to join Conservatoire et Jardin Botaniques Genève and Université Cheikh Anta Diop (Dakar) this past March on a scientific mission led by Dr. Fred Stauffer – a leading palm expert from Geneva who is also one of our Kelly Botanical Research Fellows at Montgomery. After extensive planning, the team set out to study the palm flora of Casamance – the remote southern section of Senegal. We gave special emphasis to biogeography and also ethnobotany, the way these palms are used by local people.

Basing our work out of Ziguinchor and Kolda, we sought palm habitats throughout Casamance, from the Atlantic coast, the banks of the enormous Casamance River, and through to the distant border with Guinea-Bissau. These explorations provided robust documentation of these diverse palms, with herbarium specimens, DNA samples,

photographs, seeds, and notes – as well as a multitude of local palm crafts for the museum. These efforts contribute directly to research by students at University of Dakar and Geneva, and are part of a broader effort led by Dr. Stauffer to extensively document the African palm flora, and to advance palm conservation.



Montgomery brought more seeds to Senegal than it took home! Seeds from 17 species at Montgomery were given to Parc Hann and University of Dakar Botanic Garden, enriching the palm collections at both gardens. Sharing plants is a cherished tradition of our founders, Robert and Nell Montgomery!



This expedition is the first to successfully obtain *Calamus deeratus*, now in the living collections at Montgomery and Geneva – these palms were previously unknown in cultivation!

Background: The team covered many miles in search of palms. In this area near the Forêt de Blaze, we found *Raphia*, *Calamus* and *Laccosperma*, as well as the common *Elaeis*.

Mission Scientifique

In each stop we were privileged to work directly with local experts including foret paramilitaires, park rangers, farmers, chieftains – and even A KING! We are deeply grateful for the abundant local and national collaboration, hospitality, support and permission for the Mission, and to the Plant Exploration Fund for financing this important project.

*M. Patrick Griffith, Executive Director
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Rangers from Parc national de la Basse-Casamance led the team to a remote site with abundant palm seeds.



The team was granted audience with King Silondebil of the Kingdom of Essaout. The King offered his approval and blessings, commending the team for their efforts to understand and protect the palms of his region.



A chieftain shows a basket fashioned from a *Borassus* leaf.



A palm wine maker showed us his harvest technique, using a fiber loop made from a different palm species!