

# *Caryota* *kiriwongensis* Revisited

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In 1998 I named, described and illustrated *Caryota kiriwongensis*, a rare, splendid, giant, fishtail palm from unusually palm-rich, wet forest in southern peninsular Thailand (Hodel 1998, p. 53). In the Latin diagnosis, a requirement for naming a new species, I simply used one word, *grandissima*, which means the largest, because *C. kiriwongensis* is the largest and most imposing species in the genus.

At the time of publication, some nomenclatural authorities did not regard the publication as valid, as they felt the one-word Latin diagnosis I employed when I named *Caryota kiriwongensis* was insufficient. They were concerned that the diagnosis did not clearly distinguish this species from other large species in the genus, and thus, the species was not validly published in 1998. Here I offer an expanded, more descriptive Latin diagnosis and also provide a brief description, discussion and illustration of this splendid and remarkable palm. For a complete and detailed description see Hodel (1998).

*Caryota kiriwongensis* Hodel, *sp. nov.*, *C. obtusae* affinis sed trunco cano non ventricoso, inflorescentiis multo brevioribus (2.5 m vs. 6 m), floribus pilis abundantibus longis ferrugineis non appressis, perianthiis fructificantibus lobis profundis, seminibus vix sulcatis, endospermio homoganeo, eophyllis pinnatis differt. Typus. Thailand. Nakhon Si Thammarat: Kiriwong, Hodel *et al.* 1809 (Holotypus BK, Isotypus BH.). Fig.1.

*Caryota kiriwongensis* is a massive, solitary, emergent, monoecious, monocarpic tree palm to 35 m tall. The gray trunk is about 85 cm in diameter and uniform throughout its length or only slightly ventricose. The immense leaves

are clustered tightly in a spreading crown at the top of the trunk and the blade alone is over 8 m long. Each leaf has up to 25 twice divided pinnae to 3.5 m long with only slightly drooping tips on each side of the rachis. The pendulous inflorescence is only about 2.5 m long, making it much shorter than that of the similar *C. obtusa*. Abundant, long, reddish brown, non-appressed hairs cover the flowers. The purplish red fruits, 2.6 × 3.3 cm, typically contain two, scarcely grooved seeds with homogeneous endosperm. The homogeneous endosperm is unusual for the genus and occurs elsewhere only in *C. ophiopellis* and *C. zebrina*, two species amply distinct in their conspicuously and colorfully marked petioles. The pinnate eophyll is unique for the genus (Hodel 1999).

Not a gregarious species, only about 50 large plants of *Caryota kiriwongensis* are scattered across the bottoms of steep, rocky slopes in an area about five kilometers wide in wet mountain forest at about 1200 m elevation. In 1998 only a few plants were reproductive and there were few seedlings and saplings. The species may now be in cultivation and, by its sheer size alone, would obviously make an outstanding ornamental in an appropriate landscape or garden setting.



1. *Caryota kiriwongensis* is a massive, solitary, emergent, tree palm to 35 m tall. Note the standing man in a green shirt barely visible at the right side of the base of the trunk (Hodel 1809).

#### Acknowledgments

I thank seed dealer Tobias Spanner for bringing to my attention the homogeneous endosperm of *Caryota kiriwongensis* and James Reveal and Sherry Vance of the Bailey Hortorium for arranging the loan of the isotype for study.

#### LITERATURE CITED

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