

CHAPTER VIII.

VALUABLE TREES FOR THE EVERGLADES.



IN THE following article I shall mention a few trees specially worthy of cultivation and certain to succeed on Everglade soil when drainage has sufficiently progressed to lower the water table three or four feet below the surface level. Some of these trees will stand submergence for a short time. Even grapefruit or pomelo will stand submergence in two or three feet of water for a period of a couple of weeks without apparent injury.

The following opinions are based entirely on my own experiences and observations. These are based on ten years of experience in the tropics, especially in Southern Florida, and fifteen years of experience as a forester.

Bamboo (*Bambos vulgaris*) is very abundant along mucky water courses in the West Indies, where it forms stately groves or thickets. Although there is not a fortune in growing bamboo it is highly ornamental and the poles are very useful on the farm. It is sure to become a great favorite for Everglade planting. The Government is now experimenting, and in a short time we may be able to select varieties especially fitted for fish poles, furniture, etc. Bamboo throws a dense shade and is fine as a shelter and forage for poultry.

Of the palm family the royal palm (*Roystonea regia*) and the coco palm (*Cocos nucifera*) are of first importance. The royal palm is native to Southern Florida. It loves a moist, mucky soil. It is a majestic tree for avenue or roadside planting. Its berries for pigfeed are equal to corn.

Although the coco palm is a lover of the seashore, it will

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grow on moist soil several miles inland. Just how far it is difficult to say, but I have seen it growing in the West Indies ten miles from the coast. This tree and its many products are too well known to need description. It is sufficient to say that it is considered by many authorities to be, on the whole, the most useful member of the plant world. A home in the tropics, at least near the seashore, seems incomplete without it. Many nuts were planted years ago on our sandbeaches, and although many did sprout and grow, thousands were lost because the young, tender leaves of the germinating nut were devoured by rabbits.

Australia pine or beefwood (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) is second to none as a quick hardwood producer in mucky soil or in saline land along the coast. In my opinion *it is superior to any eucalypt that I know of for the production of hardwood lumber.*

Very few of the eucalypts produce first-class sawlogs in a short length of time. The eucalypt is not a sawlog proposition. I am upheld in this statement by Bulletin No. 61, Agricultural Experiment station, Tucson, Arizona: "It is not very likely that eucalyptus culture will ever prove a success as a *sawlog proposition* in any part of Arizona." I think I can safely say the same for this part of Florida. It is a pole, sleeper and fuel proposition and a California proposition. There is no reason why we should ever concern ourselves about fuel anyway. There is no danger of freezing to death in this part of Florida. The limbage alone will be sufficient; there will always be a lot of waste lumber, and then the coal supply of the Eastern United States is by no means exhausted. Plant for fine timber or other valuable products. The fuel question will take care of itself in the tropics.

We have several native trees belonging to the same family as the eucalyptus, and they are apparently quite as good. The rose-apple or pomerosa belongs to this family and is a magical fuel wood producer on the edge of streams in Cuba. It looks just like a eucalypt and yields an abundance of edible fruits. This tree would succeed on Everglade muck. I am growing

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another tree similar to the eucalyptus on muck soil. It is the cajeput of India. It is a beautiful tree, of very quick growth and yields the cajeput oil of commerce. This oil is used in India for rheumatism and I believe is the basis of some massage creams and hair oils.

My choice of all the softwood trees, which produce fine timber, are easily propagated from cuttings, free from disease, and grow with great rapidity, is three or four species of the genus *Cedrela*—the commonest of which is *Cedrela odorata* or Cuban cigar-box wood. The wood of this tree is worth more than mahogany; in fact, much of the so-called mahogany in the market belongs to this genus and is not true mahogany.

In the spring of the year stick a cutting, twelve inches long, of *Cedrela odorata*, Cuban cedar, *Cedrela toona*, the red cedar of Australia, or *Cedrela Brasiliensis*, the acajou of Brazil, in moist muck land and in six weeks it will have shoots on it six feet high. I have specimens growing at the rate of more than one foot a month. The trees resemble walnut trees and lead as softwood timber producers for tropical regions.

Were I engaged tomorrow to plant a tract of land in trees for lumber on the Everglades I would plant Australian pine for hardwood and Cuban cedar for softwood.

For quick growing, valuable shade trees I would like to recommend the Spanish laurel (*Ficus nitida*) and the Sacred Bo tree of India (*Ficus religiosa*). The wood of these trees is no good but they afford a fine shade, are very decorative and grow very quickly.

I think all the trees mentioned above will hold up in bad winds. On mucky soil one must select trees that do not blow over easily. That is a fault of the eucalyptus in this region. It probably would not happen if the tree could get deep rootage.

Another good shade tree for mucky soil is *Thespesia populnea*, called in Cuba the Florida mahoe (*majagua de Florida*), although not a native of Florida. It bears a beautiful flower and is easily reproduced from cuttings. A brother to this tree, called "maga" in Porto Rico, is one of the most beautiful trees

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I have ever seen. I have not been able to get seeds or cuttings for Florida, but I hope to some day.

Speaking of fuel wood above, I think we have the best fuel wood producer in the world. It is the Florida buttonwood (*Conocarpus erecta*). This tree grows on the seashore. The wood gives out a great deal of heat and produces very little smoke. *It will now bring twice the price of any other fuel wood in Key West or Nassau.*

The sapodilla is a great favorite of mine. It grows especially in the hammock, but will, I think, grow well anywhere in the glades when drainage is complete. It is stormfast and tough, it produces a wood that is everlasting, a fruit that is good and salable locally, and a gum called chicle, which is in great demand in the manufacture of chewing gum. In fact, we are on the verge of a chewing gum famine, owing to the scarcity of this gum.

The mastic is a fine native hardwood.

Princewood is also a good wood. Its bark is a splendid tonic, containing quinine or a similar drug. It is worth while to plant a tree or two of this just to have a fine, unadulterated tonic near at hand.

In addition we have mahogany and Jamaica dogwood, well known native woods of excellent quality and in demand locally. Mahogany is ordinarily regarded as the "king of all hardwoods." I have sent samples of our mahogany, here called madeira, to England and France and experts there pronounced it of first quality for the manufacture of solid furniture. This grows wild on islands just south of the Everglades.

We have other woods of great value too numerous to mention in one article. In addition to the plants I have already mentioned, there are, of course, many tropical fruit trees and many ornamental shrubs and vines.