



# The Drifting Seed

May 1, 1995

Vol. 1, No. 1

THE DRIFTING SEED

A semiannual *Newsletter* covering seeds and fruits dispersed by tropical currents and the people who collect and study them.

**Dr. Charles R. (Bob) Gunn & Cathie Katz (CoEditors)**

Please send us your notes and comments about drift disseminules and/or yourself for use in future issues. Please mail seeds and fruits for identification to Bob Gunn at the address below.

## From Your Editors

Welcome to the first issue of *The Drifting Seed*. This *Newsletter* is the result of a fortunate meld of our talents, but its success resides in your hands. We need to fill the following columns and only you can do this: **From Your Editors, Feature Articles** (mainly about collectors and contributors), **News and Notes from Readers, Recent Literature Citations,** and **Unknown Disseminules**. We welcome your suggestions for other columns. The Unknown Disseminules column will start with the second issue: Its space for this first issue contains the list of readers who received this initial mailing.

We have a caveat: Because of postage charges, the *Newsletter* cannot exceed ten pages (five sheets of paper plus an envelope).

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Melbourne Beach, FL 32951 USA



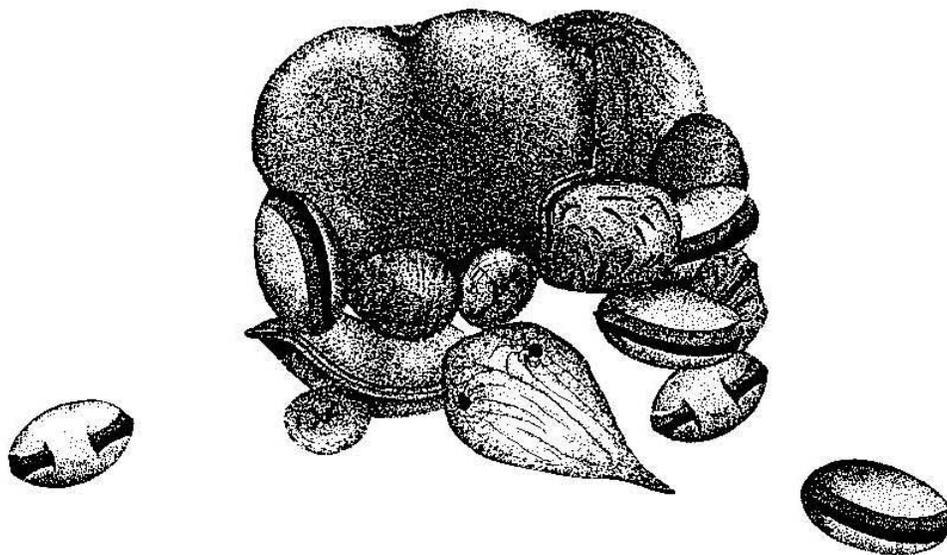
**From Bob:**

The drift disseminule collection that I have been tending since 1976 has been transformed from a museum collection to a research collection which I will actively curate. The family or main collection was the primary source for the text and plates in the Gunn-Dennis-Paradine book, *World Guide to Tropical Drift Seeds and Fruits*. This collection will be used in the preparation of the updated and expanded book. Family and generic concepts follow the United States Department of Agriculture Technical Bulletin 1796 as updated by John Wiersema, Nomenclaturalist (BARC). Species names and authors are based on ongoing research being conducted at (BARC). All accessions have new, uniformly written labels designed to facilitate databanking.

I am keeping these satellite collections: 1) Display quality disseminules from Florida, 2) drift-seed jewelry, 3) exchange accessions, and 4) Puerto Rico Trench disseminules. All collections are in a room with a work table, and this room is adjacent to my office with its computer station.

The collections are supported by black and white photographs of many of the disseminules and by the disseminules in the John Muir collection from South Africa. These photographs were made by the Smithsonian Institution (US). Many of the disseminules also have been photographed in color. The excellent drawings of Pam Paradine and an extensive literature file also are available.

Databanking of the accessions in a PFC-5 file has begun, and databanking the DELTA Computer Program System will begin next Fall. These systems will be the source of the text for a revised book on tropical drift seeds and fruits. Concurrently, I will be creating a separate DELTA databank designed to facilitate the automated identification of unknown seeds and fruits to the family level. I will be working closely with Joseph H. Kirkbride, Jr., Director of the U.S. National Seed Herbarium, USDA/ARS/SB&ML (BARC) on computer and identification problems.



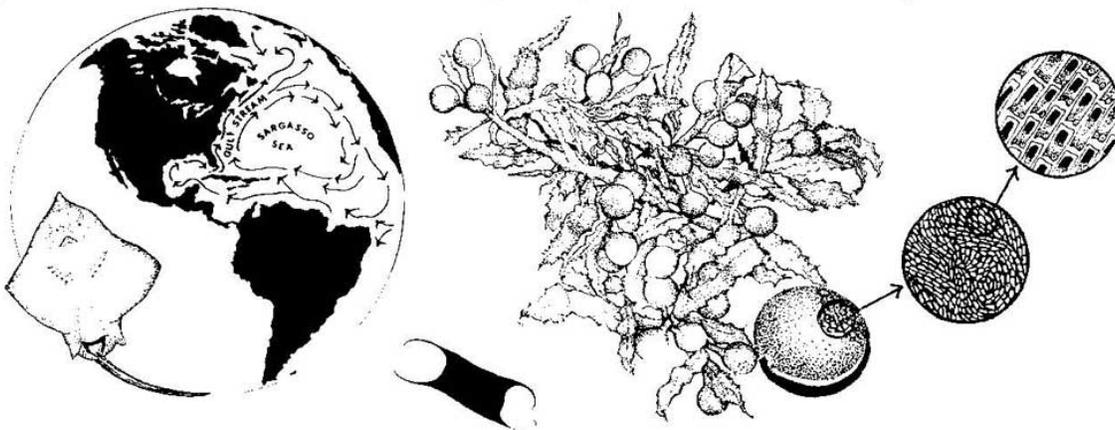


**From Cathie:**

I was very pleased when Dr. Gunn suggested creating this *Newsletter* because it meant an opportunity to pool worldwide sea-bean information. Ever since I found my first sea hearts (*Entada gigas*) in New Jersey and Holland, I had been asking, "What are they?" and couldn't get a satisfying answer: The first answer I received was, "Dat weet ik niet, maar ik wed dat het geluk brengt." (*I don't know, but I bet it brings good luck.*) That was typical of the answers I received over the next 30 years until I discovered a copy of *World Guide to Tropical Drift Seeds and Fruits* (Gunn-Dennis-Paradine) ... I found the mother lode of sea-bean information! Good luck had indeed come my way! Shortly after finding the book, I contacted Dr. Gunn and was privileged to meet him when he lived in Annapolis. I saw his wonderful collection of drift seeds from around the world and was astounded at the extent of his international correspondence and the widespread interest in sea-beans. His enthusiasm for sea-bean information was infectious.

As a casual beachcomber on the "Space Coast" (Central Florida's eastern shore between Cape Canaveral and Melbourne Beach), I can identify almost all the species I find here (almost 100) by referring to *The World Guide* ... I'm looking forward to the updated version.

Since I've been beachwalking on the Space Coast almost daily for the past 12 years, I've noticed a predictability from year to year: April and May are wonderful months for me to see migrating shore birds, but sadly, this time of year signals the END OF SEA-BEAN SEASON! I can be pretty sure that the two sea-beans (*Mucuna*) I just picked up this week will be the last ones I find until the Fall. Both beans are encrusted with sea lace (*Membranipora tuberculata*), a bryozoa associated only with the sargassum community (the seaweed and marine life that lives within the Sargasso Sea). From their well-traveled appearance, these sea-beans must have drifted in the Sargasso Sea for a long time, as opposed to the "fresh" sea-beans I find in October: Those Autumn beans usually drift onto our beach by the hundreds, all very clean, and all similar species are alike in size, color and shape. This suggests to me they arrived via the Gulf Stream within a few months after falling from their parent plants in Central and South America and probably never drifted into the Sargasso Sea.



Other beachcombers often ask me about sea-beans: "What are these strange stones?" When I tell them they're seeds, they're usually surprised and then ask, "Can I grow them? Where do they come from? Can I polish them like yours?" In response to those questions and other questions about beach oddities (like mermaids' purses, Spirula and Sargassum weed) I've written and illustrated a book, *The Nature of Florida's Beaches* which is available from Atlantic Press PO Box 510366 Melbourne Beach FL 32951 for \$8.95 plus \$2 postage.

**Overseas readers:** add \$6.00 for postage for one book; add \$2.00 postage each additional book.



**John Value Dennis, Sr.**

*It is a genuine pleasure to recognize our premier drift collector and writer John Value Dennis, Sr., who writes:*

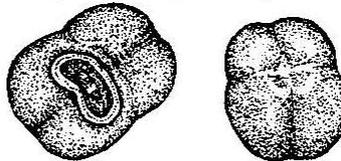
By way of introduction, I am a freelance writer and biologist who took up 'sea-beans' when I found a sea heart (*Entada gigas* (L.) F. & R.) on Nantucket, Massachusetts beach around 1955. Subsequently on visits to Florida, I found sea hearts and a great many others, most of them unknown to me. What changed me from a casual collector to a serious one was meeting Bob Gunn, Director and Curator for the U.S. National Seed Herbarium (BARC), USDA\ARS, Beltsville Maryland. He was curating the largest seed collection in the world, and had written an article about the tropical drift seeds and fruits sent to him by Bob Mossman of West Palm Beach, Florida. At our first meeting, we decided to write a book about tropical drift seeds and fruits. My assignment would be to collect the drift disseminules, and he would work with the identifications, taxonomy, and literature review.

My part of the bargain was greatly facilitated, when in 1960, I received a one-year assignment from the American Petroleum Institute to make a daily beach survey for one year at Golden Beach and two other beaches north of Miami Beach, Florida. I monitored the oil from ships and ship wrecks which was seriously polluting the beaches. I had a similar assignment ten years later that focused on condition sat Palm Beach, Florida. This study, conducted in 1970-71, revealed somewhat improved conditions so far as oil pollution was concerned.

Needless to say, I took full advantage to collect drift seeds during the course of these assignments. With the Gulf Stream only two miles offshore, it took only a day or two of onshore winds to bring ashore seeds and other floating debris from the New World tropics. I recorded over 100 species of tropical drift seed and fruits. Many of them were described and illustrated by Pam Paradine in our 1976 book *World Guide to Tropical Drift Seeds and Fruits*.

The writings of E. Charles Nelson in Ireland, Hiroki Naganishi in Japan, and Jeremy Smith in Australia helped give our subject an international scope. I have kept up with this subject with writings of my own and travels that have taken me to European beaches in Scotland, England, and Ireland and to New World beaches from Massachusetts to Texas and Costa Rica. Part of my enthusiasm for drift seeds lies in the fact that they are in a field of botany that still offers many challenges. Currently, Bob and I are working on a paper about Mary's-bean, *Merremia discoidesperma* (Donn. Sm.) O'Donell, and we will be updating and expanding our *World Guide* book.

**John V. Dennis, Sr. Searches for Mary's-bean Data**



John has sent Bob the first draft of the paper on Mary's-bean, and Bob has databanked and edited it. We welcome any data you might have on this drifter. Please send your information to:

J. V. Dennis, Sr.  
P.O. Box 578, Princess Anne MD 21853 USA

[Eds. Note: John also has written two major bird books: *A Complete Guide to Bird Feeding*, John V. Dennis, 1975, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, ISBN: 0-394-47937-8 and *Beyond the Bird Feeder*, John V. Dennis, 1981, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, ISBN: 0-394-50890-4.]



## Robert (Bob) Mossman, 'Jack Beans' by Bob Gunn

*The Drifting Seed* is dedicated to Bob Mossman, who lived at 1608 Georgia Avenue, West Palm Beach, Florida. During the 1960s (1961 to 1969), Bob was 'Jack Beans'. He started to walk the beaches for health reasons when he moved to West Palm Beach in 1961. He started to collect drift legume seeds because of their beauty and oddity, and later he collected all tropical drift seeds and fruits from beaches in and around Palm Beach. He kept daily records even though he did not know what he was collecting. He turned his entire collection over to me when he left West Palm Beach. His collection is the start of the worldwide collection that I now curate. Bob sent 60 seeds for identification in a milk carton to the Botany Department, Smithsonian Institution. The Department turned the seeds over to me for identification. They were primarily legume drift seeds (*Caesalpinia*, *Dioclea*, *Entada*, and *Mucuna*) that he had collected along the beach at Palm Beach, Florida. I returned the seeds to Bob, who displayed them at the Palm Beach County Shell Club, before he sent them to the Science Museum and Planetarium of Palm Beach County.

Later Bob sent me his field pages (really the backs of Kraft-paper bags) which he started keeping in September, 1962. He noted the date, the number of legume drift seeds he collected, a running total, beach, and comments. He kept records until 10:31 am, Wednesday, October 15, 1969 when he reached 5,000 sea-beans. At that time he announced that he would start on the next 1,000, but as we will learn later, Bob made a change in his life. His samples along with those of Lt. Col. Corinne E. Edwards, USAF (ret.) of Coconut Grove, Florida and the scant literature were the basis for my first article of drift seeds: C. R. Gunn, 1968, Stranded Seeds and Fruits from the Southeastern Shore of Florida, *Garden Journal* March/April:43-54. Bob's hobby and enthusiasm started all my work with tropical drift seeds and fruits on a world basis and directly caused this *Newsletter* to be published.

The *Palm Beach Post-Times* followed Bob's sea-bean collecting for several years, first by articles written by Marlene Freedman then Lucille Simpson, and Mary Ann Hill, whom I met. There are many stories to tell you about Jack Beans, and two of the more important are the liquor bottles and the Bean-A-thon. Every time Bob found a sea-bean (*Mucuna*), he would invert a liquor bottle (and there were more bottles than seeds) and push its neck into the spot. This was his trademark alerting other collectors that he had visited the beach, and it also appeared "Saint Beano", the patron saint of sea-bean hunters. Bob's record was a collection of 63 sea-beans in eight hours, and thus 63 liquor bottles.



Bob was aware of the periodicity of stranded seeds, and the relationship of hurricanes (Inga and Kara) to the increased numbers of stranded seeds. Until Bob contacted me, he thought that the seeds were coming from Africa into the Gulf Stream then to beaches in Florida. We now know that all of the tropical seeds and fruits on Florida beaches are produced by terrestrial plants in the tropics of the New World.

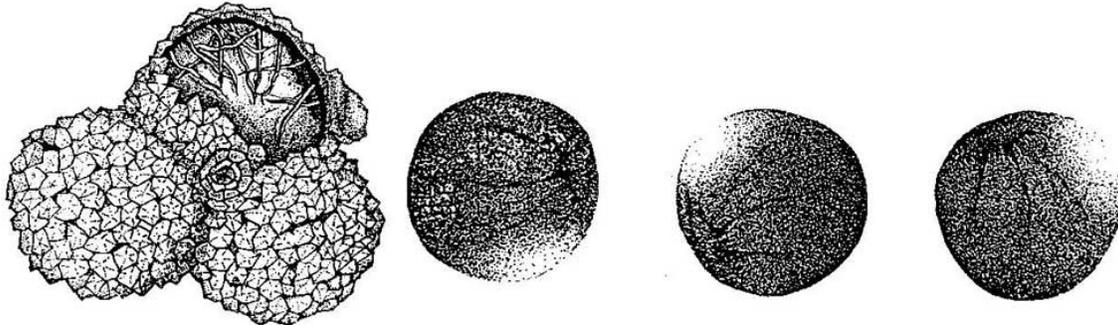


Robert Mossman (continued)

Bob founded "The Annual Gold Coast Bean-A-Thon". It was a three-mile collecting area, and the collector who found the most sea-beans would be the winner. August was selected because it was a month when sea-beans would be found, and it would be before the "snow birds" came to Florida. The two leading contenders were Bob and Donald S. Farrar, or 'Monk', who kept his collection records on index cards, of Delray Beach, Florida. 'Monk' used extra sensory perception to 'see' sea-beans under the masses of seaweed. Donald claimed to have collected 1,800 sea-beans in one year, averaging 1,224 sea-beans a year for six years. Unfortunately, I neither met Donald nor saw his record cards or seeds.

I was fortunate and yet at the time unfortunate to be the 'official' observer of the Bean-A-Thon. I had arrived in West Palm Beach on Saturday with my USDA\ARS panel truck. I had been collecting plants that showed a promise in the initial anticancer screening program of the National Institute of Health. My herbarium specimens were in the plant drier and my bulk-bagged samples (air dried while tied to the top of truck) were spread on tables in the herbarium of Stetson University, DeLand, Florida. Sunday was Bean-A-Thon day, and it was everything you could expect of an August day. Bob directed me to the end of Palm Beach where I could legally park and walk to the beach. He pointed out that parking along the beach roads was illegal. Bob and the other collectors planned to walk to the beach at various times so as not to attract attention. Palm Beach was empty in August, so the beaches seldom had many people. Therefore, it was always an excellent beach for collecting sea-beans, if you were inconspicuous.

I was equipped with suntan lotion, my big-straw hat (which I had purchased along the road), a bottle of water, and a collecting sack for drifters. Because I would be in and along the ocean, I wore no shoes. As I collected, the sun beat down, a haze formed along the beach, and my sunglasses were encrusted with salt. Even under these conditions, I started to make out figures on the beach. Though they turned inland before they reached me I recognized Bob, because of his bottle habit; Eleanor Miller with her plastic pail and omnipresent dog, Elvis; Bent-Over-Riley (he could not straighten up), Corinne Edwards, Clarence and Louise Jessen (whose Boynton Beach house was nearly engulfed by the sea-bean lianas he planted); Big-foot Johnson, who wore plastic feet), Mrs. A. B. Hall, Jr.; Tar-Toes Thomas; and finally Diggin' Duggan, who was always digging thorough the seaweed for sea-beans. I started to go to them, but rapidly returned to the water. The sand had gotten so hot I could not walk on it. They waved goodbye, and I waited for the sand to cool so I could tiptoe to the truck and leave for DeLand where I loaded and returned to Beltsville.





**Robert Mossman (continued)**

Bob never collected the next 1,000 seeds because he started playing some of his 1,200 LP records on WQXT in West Palm Beach. Then in 1973 he became 'Old Uncle Bascomb', the 70-year-old disc jockey on WTTB, Vero Beach, Florida.

Bob started to collect these records when he was 15. He remembered being told not to bring home records by Bess Smith, King Oliver, and Jelly Roll Morton. These and other records were not sold in regular record stores. He got them in the east Liberty area of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His favorite was Dixieland: A combination of the Afro beat and Methodist hymns, with a touch of French creole. He used to winter with his brother and mother in California, where he was an extra in movies made at the 101 Ranch.

He was also a cub reporter for the *Pittsburgh Leader*, covering the election of 1920, gathering the results of the Warren G. Harding – James M. Cox race, later covering the Lawrenceville beat. In 1927 he started to broadcast the National Open Golf Championship scores from Oakmount at 6:05 pm, over KDKA. Tommy Armour, the Silver Scout, won the Open. From there, Bob went to work in advertising for the Curtis Publishing Company in Philadelphia. The crash of 1929 saw the collapse of advertising, and Bob opened a golf driving range near the Philadelphia Country Club. Here people had the money and certainly the time to practice. With the profits, Bob started to winter in Florida. In 1933-34 he and his family (wife, two children, and a dog) came down in a 1929 Ford station wagon along the unpaved Old Dixie Highway, US 1. They stayed close to the coast to keep warm.

During World War II, Bob was the advertising manager for the Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation, then an account executive for Bond and Starr, Inc. of Pittsburgh. When he retired in 1961, he came to West Palm Beach by himself. Bob left West Palm Beach in 1979 to live near his son in Kansas City, Missouri. As J. Bascomb Cadwallader III, a Jazz aficionado, lover of life, and inmate in the world of madness, he had a two-hour Jazz concert on KCUR-FM (89 stereo). On the air, he was 'Ole Unkle Bob', and played records of Dixieland, big Jazz dance bands and singers, Blues, Razz-Ma-Tazz, Ricky Tic, and the hot and sweet swinging tunes of the 20s, 30s, and 40s.

Unfortunately, I cannot finish this story because I have no record of what happened after January 1979. I do know that Bob's son worked for the Hanna Rubber Company which was four blocks from the Kansas City STAR. The company had a fire and lost all its records. No one remembers a Mossman working there. A printout of the Mossmans in the city-wide phone books revealed a likely lead, but the phone has been disconnected and the number has not been reassigned. I hope that this note will spark memories, either Kansas City or West Palm Beach. If so, please write to me.





## News and Notes from Readers

From **Curtis Ebbesmeyer**, Evans-Hamilton, Inc. 731 North Northlake Way, Seattle WA 988103 USA:

I have had translated the drift seed-fruit portion (pages 409-432) of this volume written in Old German: Gumprecht, T. E. 1854, *Zeitschrift der Allgemeinen Erfunde* 3:1-524, Reimer, Berlin. Bob Gunn and Joe Kirkbride are working with Ebbesmeyer by tracing references cited by Gumprecht. We are interested in suggestions on who might publish these 12 or so single-spaced pages.

From **J. Dan Pittillo**, Cullowhee, NC:

We were pleased and surprised to read in *Chinquapin* (The Newsletter of the Southern Appalachian Botanical Society) 3(1):2, 1995 that in December, 1994 Editor Dan Pittillo found a fruit of the sausage tree (*Kireglia pinnatta* DC., in the Bignoniaceae) at the north end of DeSoto National Memorial in Bradenton, Florida. [Eds. Note: Dan, we hope you saved this fruit and will loan it to Bob, because this is the first record of the fruit of this species drifting to any temperature beach.]

## Recent Literature Citations

**Cadée, G.C.** 1994. Een 'invasie' van zeekool-vruchten (*Crambe maritima*) op Texel. Het Zeerpaard 52(4):91-96. [Eds. Note: C. m. from the Belgian and Dutch coasts may be transported north to Texel.]

Cadée, G.C. 1995. Spoelen op Texel meer tropische zaden aan dan elders in Nederland? Nieuwe vondsten. Het Zeerpaard 55(1):7-17. [Eds. Note: Record of tropical drift disseminules found on the beaches of Texel, Netherlands. Illustrated.]

**Ebbesmeyer, C.C. and W.J. Ingraham, Jr.**, 1994. Pacific toy spill fuels ocean current pathways research. EOS, Transactions, American Geophysical Union 75(37):425 & 427, 1994; *ibid.* 74(16):unknown, 1993; and *ibid.* 73(34):361 & 365, 1992. [Eds. Note: The 1994 article with the colored photograph, treats the flotation of plastic bathtub of toy animals in the North Pacific Ocean, and their arrival beaches near Sitka, Alaska USA. Neither seeds nor fruits are mentioned.]

**Smith, J.M.B.** 1994. Patterns of disseminule dispersal by drift in the north-west Coral Sea. New Zealand Jour. Bot. 32:543-461. [Eds. Note: 56 Sites in the Torres Strait were studied and 47 taxa are listed in Table 2.]

Smith, J.M.B. 1994. Search for tropical seeds and fruits on Victorian beaches. *The Victorian Naturalist* 3:196-202. [Eds. Note: Current map around Australia and drawings of 11 disseminules.]





## Initial Distribution

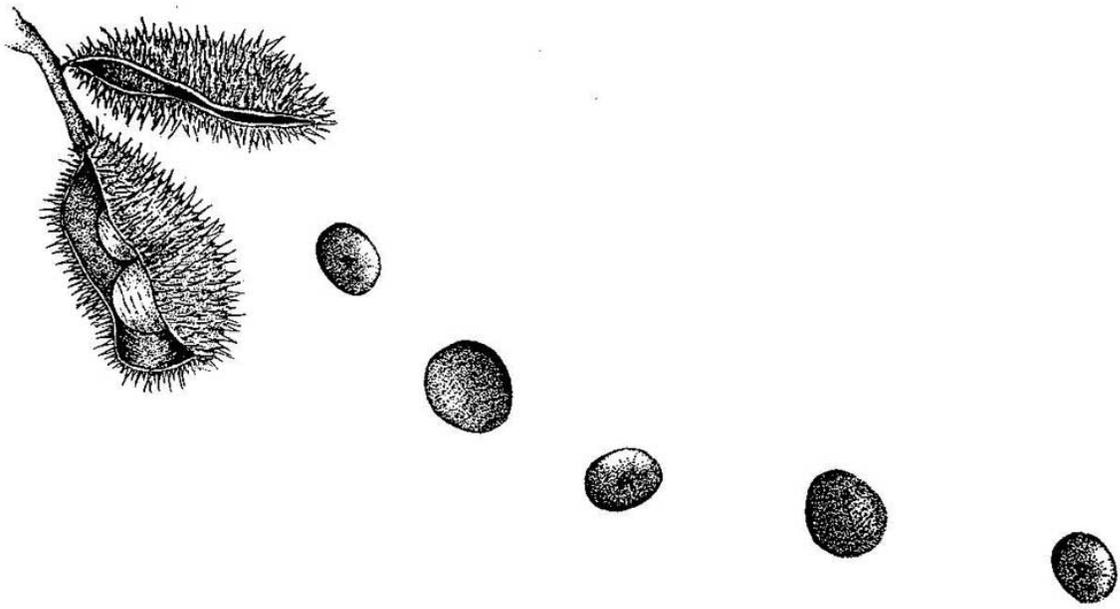
The May, 1995 Newsletter was sent to these individuals and institutions:  
Letters or letter in () are herbarium symbols and they are expanded in the next list.

Andrews, Joann M. – Merida, Yucatan, Mexico  
Armstrong, Wayne P. – Palomar College, San Marcos, CA  
Bisby, F. A. – Southampton University, Southampton, England  
Briggs, George – North Carolina Arboretum, Ashville, NC  
Cadée, Gerhard C. – NOIZ, Texel, Netherlands  
Campbell, Lisa M. – (NY)  
Creech, John – Hendersonville, NC  
Crow, Steven – Richardson, TX  
Dennis, Jr., John V. – Ithaca, NY  
Dennis, Sr., John V. – Princess Anne, MD  
DiGioia, Harriett – Dalton, GA  
Ebbesmeyer, Curtis C. – Evans-Hamilton, Inc., Seattle, WA  
Graham, Allan K. – State University, Kent, OH  
Gunn, Charles R. – address above  
Gunn, Edward & Marjie – Brookline, MA  
Gunn, Steven – Summitt, NJ  
Harrison, Frederick - Cullowee, NC  
Hum, Harold J. – Brevard, NC  
Katz, Cathie – address above  
Kirkbride, Jr., Joseph H. – (BARC)  
Kuijper, W. J. – Rijksherbarium, Leiden, Netherlands  
Leenhouts, P. W. – Rijksherbarium, Leiden, Netherlands  
Leff, Laura and Adam – Kent, OH  
Librarian, USDA/ARS – Beltsville, MD  
Lipscomb, Barney – Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, TX  
Matthews, James F. – UNCC, Charlotte, NC  
McAlister, Wayne H. – USDI/F&WS, Austwell, TX  
Mori, Scott – (NY)  
Nakasaki, H. – Nagasaki University, Nagasaki, Japan  
Nelson, E. Charles – National Botanic Gardens, Dublin, Ireland  
Ockenga, Starr – Livingston, NY  
Paradine, P. J. – 'Ambergate', Somerset, England  
Pittillo, J. Dan – Cullowee, NC  
Polhill, Roger M. – (K)  
Rainey, William E. – Berkeley, CA  
Ritchie, Carole A. – Laurel, MD  
Schmid, Rudolf – Kensington, CA  
Seymour, Frank – Jensen Beach, FL  
Shuler, Jay – McCellanville, SC  
Smith, Jeremy M B. – University of New England, Armidale, Australia  
Smith, Richard & Jeanne – Brevard, NC  
Smith, Ruth – Arlington, VA  
Vega, A. Varela de – Universidad Central de Venezuela, Maracay, Venezuela  
Wiersema, John H. – (BARC)  
Williamson, Gary M. – Cape Charles, VA  
Zies, Peter J. B. – Lake Mary, FL



**Institutions :** Letters or letter in ( ) are herbarium symbols.

- (B) – Botanischer Garten und Botanische Museum Berlin-Dahlem, Berlin, Germany
- (BARC) – U.S. National Seed Herbarium, Beltsville, MD
- (BISH) – Herbarium, Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI
- (BM) – Herbarium, British Museum, National History, London, England
- (CANB) – Australian National Herbarium, Canberra, Australia
- (E) – Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, United Kingdom
- (F) – Herbarium, Field Museum, Chicago, IL
- (HAV) – Gary Herbarium, Cambridge, MA
- (ISC) – Herbarium, Iowa State University, Ames, IA
- (K) – Royal Botanic Gardens Herbarium Kew, United Kingdom
- (L) – Rijksherbarium, Leiden, Netherlands
- (MEXU) – Herbario, Instituto de Biology, Mexico City, Mexico
- (MO) – Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis, MO
- (NSW) – National Herbarium of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
- (NY) – Herbarium, N. Y. Botanical garden, Bronx, NY
- (P) – Herbier, ORSTOM, Paris, France
- (STEU) – Herbarium, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, South Africa
- (US) – Herbarium, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC



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