

# Seychelles

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## Genebank

No ex situ genebank recorded.

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## Contact

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The Republic of Seychelles is an archipelago nation of 115 islands in the Indian Ocean, some 1500 km east of mainland Africa, and northeast of the island of Madagascar. Seychelles has the smallest population of any state in Africa.

There are hundreds of known and documented uses for the coconut in Seychelles. Although the Tree of Life finds many uses in the everyday life of the Seychellois, there is an urgent need to review some of these products as potential income earners (Moustache 2005). With the rapid rate of social development and competition for land by other economic sectors such as tourism and manufacturing, there is less and less land available for agriculture. Thus, future coconut plantations may have to be of lesser acreage, planted more densely or managed in complementation with another purpose (e.g. lending aesthetic value to ecotourism centres).

Scientific research on coconut had its heyday in Seychelles when the export of copra was the mainstay of the economy before the tourism boom in the early 1970s. Thereafter, research focused on the selection of better performing varieties that were well adapted to the poor granitic soils and showed positive response to fertilizers and other inputs. Most of the coconuts planted in the country are local Talls. These Talls are made up of a number of different varieties characterized by different nut sizes, shapes and productivity but with no apparent differences in tree morphology. Among the common local varieties planted are Coco Raisin, Coco le Haut, Coco le Rein and Coco Bleu. In a bid to boost coconut production, Seychelles imported some 10,000 nuts from Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) during the years 1906-1911. Studies conducted in 1935 found that these imported varieties were inferior to the local Talls as they required far more intensive cultural practices and were more prone to diseases. In 1931, Dwarf coconuts were introduced from the Malay States, particularly the Malayan Yellow and Malayan Red Dwarfs (MYD and MRD). Fruits of these varieties are mostly used for decorative purposes and consumed locally or sold to tourists as tender-nuts for drinking. In 1994, Pakistan, the last remaining importer of coconut and copra from Seychelles at that time, ceased coconut-related transactions with the country. This spelled doom for most coconut farmers and growers in Seychelles who depended solely on the crop and did not have alternative sources of income. Since then, national coconut research priority has shifted to “finding new uses for an old product”.

## Reference

Moustache AM. 2005. Status of coconut genetic resources research in Seychelles. In: Batugal P, Ramanatha Rao V, Oliver J, editors. Coconut Genetic Resources. International Plant Genetic Resources Institute – Regional Office for Asia, the Pacific and Oceania (IPGRI-APO), Serdang, Selangor DE, Malaysia. pp. 691-694. Available from: URL: <http://www.cogentnetwork.org/index.php?page=books>

## Seychelles Tall (SCT)

*Ratnambal MJ, Kumaran PM, Bashkara Rao EVV, Pillai RV*

### Conservation

Seychelles Tall (SCT) is conserved at the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (Kerala) and at the research stations at Aliyarnagar and Veppankulam (Tamil Nadu) and Ratnagiri (Maharashtra), India.

### History

Seychelles Tall was introduced to India in 1955. Durocher-Yvon (1953) reported that there was one variety extensively cultivated in Seychelles and it was referred as 'Coco Seychelles'. He described this variety as Tall with a curved trunk with oblong fruit and small nuts. Seychelles Tall at the Indian germplasm bank is similar to the one described by Durocher-Yvon (1953). According to Bhaskara Rao and Pillai (1984), Seychelles Tall showed the highest value for percentage of husk (59%) and might have originated from a Niu Kafa parent.

### Identification

The palm grows up to 8-9 m with 35 leaves on the crown. The trunk is slightly curved. Leaves are long (5 m) with about 220 leaflets. Leaflets are 119 cm long and about 6 cm wide. The stem girth at 1 m height from the ground level is about 30 cm. It has only 18 leaf scars, measured from 1 to 2 m above ground level. The leaf is long, measuring 5.6 m with 235 leaflets. The palms are indirect self-pollinating, as there is inter-spadix overlapping in 20% of the inflorescences (mean overlapping period of 3.5 days). The fruits are green and oblong with a thick husk which is concentrated more towards the posterior end. The nut is small and angular. The kernel is thick.

### Yield and production

Fruiting starts when the palms reach nine years. The mean nut yield per palm per year is 65 in Kasaragod, 22 in Aliyarnagar and 61 in Ratnagiri. Tender nut water of this variety is sweet with 6.1% total sugars. The fruits are oblong with husk contributing 59% to the whole fruit weight. The nut is small and angular, situated at the bottom near the pointed end. The copra content in Kasaragod is 122g per nut with 66% oil; and 171g in Veppankulam.

### Other information

Due to its high husk content this variety may be utilized for making coir and coir products. Because of its small nut size, Seychelles Tall is not used in any of the breeding programmes in India.

### References

- Bhaskara Rao EVV, Pillai RV. 1984. Characterisation of coconut germplasm based on fruit component analysis. *PLACROSYM-V*. pp. 112-121.
- Durocher-Yvon F. 1953. The coconut industry of Seychelles. *World Crops* 5:437-441.
- Ratnambal MJ, Nair MK, Muralidharan K, Kumaran PM, Bhaskara Rao EVV, Pillai RV. 1995. Coconut Descriptors Part I, CPCRI, Kasaragod, Kerala, India.

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