

17. ARECA Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 2: 1189. 1753.

槟榔属 bin lang shu

Stems solitary or clustered, tall to short or subterranean, ringed with conspicuous leaf scars. Leaves 4–12, pinnate or occasionally undivided; leaf sheaths closed, forming a distinct, green or yellowish crownshaft, rarely sheaths open and not forming crownshafts; rachis sometimes strongly recurved, mostly spreading horizontally; pinnae usually regularly arranged, spreading in same plane, those at apex joined with only short splits at apices, giving compound pinnae with lobed apices. Inflorescences branched to 3 orders, borne below crownshaft; prophyll present, peduncular bract absent; flowers unisexual, borne in triads of a central large female flower and 2 lateral much smaller male flowers, usually triads only at bases of rachillae, above male flowers only. Fruits usually bright red, small to moderate, ellipsoid to globose or spindle-shaped, commonly beaked, 1-seeded; endosperm ruminant; germination adjacent; eophylls bifid.

About 48 species: from Sri Lanka and NE India through SE Asia to as far east as New Guinea and the Solomon Islands; one species (introduced) in China.

Areca triandra Roxburgh ex Buchanan-Hamilton (三药槟榔 san yao bin lang) is cultivated in Guangdong, Taiwan, and Yunnan. It differs from *Areca catechu* by the smaller, clustered stems, to 4 m high, and is native to India, Peninsular Malaysia, and Indochina.

1. *Areca catechu* Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 2: 1189. 1753.

槟榔 bin lang

Areca faufel Gaertner; *A. himalayana* Griffith ex H. Wendland; *A. hortensis* Loureiro; *A. nigra* Giseke ex H. Wendland; *Sublimia areca* Commerson ex Martius.

Stems solitary, erect, to 20 m tall, 10–20 cm in diam., gray with conspicuous nodes. Leaf sheaths closed and forming green, slightly swollen crownshafts to 1 m; petioles no more than 5 cm; rachis recurved, to 2 m; pinnae 20–30 per side of rachis, regularly and closely arranged, stiffly erect; middle pinnae 30–60 cm, 3–7 cm wide at mid-point. Inflorescences infraxillary,

branched to 3 orders, erect; rachillae many, flexuose, yellowish green, to 25 cm; male flowers solitary, alternate and distichous on rachillae; stamens 6; female flowers at bases of rachillae only, larger than male flowers. Fruits yellow, orange, or red, ovoid, to 8 × 6 cm.

Cultivated and commonly seen around houses. Guangxi, Hainan, Taiwan, Yunnan [origin probably C Malesia; widely cultivated throughout tropical Asia].

Areca catechu is an important cultivated species. The sliced seed (betel nut) is chewed as a mild narcotic. The plant also has great ornamental value and many other minor uses.

