

The Palms in the Riviera from the Latter Half of the 19th Century to the First World War

PIER GIORGIO
CAMPODONICO,
GABRIELE CAMPODONICO
*Piazza San Bartolomeo,
6 - 18039 Ventimiglia,
Italy*

AND

CLAUDIO LITTARDI
*Centro Studi e Ricerche
per le Palme,
Corso Cavallotti,
113 - 18038 Sanremo,
Italy*



1. The palms of Nice were featured in early post-cards.

Palm horticulture along the French and Italian Riviera flourished in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Fig. 1). Public and private gardens featured an astonishing diversity of palms, as documented by the contemporary literature. Palm nurseries, especially that of Ludwig Winter, pushed the horticultural limits during this golden age.

The Riviera, i.e. the Mediterranean coast of what is now Italy and France, had a strong appeal to the leisure classes of northern, central and eastern Europe during the whole of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The development of communication routes, especially the railways, stimulated tourism in the region (Figs. 2 & 3). To this end, the first sleeping cars of the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits started to operate from Paris to Menton in 1872. This service soon extended to Calais. Among the many other services that have followed, the Vienna–Cannes line stands out. That service began in 1896, and only two years later it was extended to Saint Petersburg.

Purchasing agricultural land along the coast to build vacation homes was extremely appealing not only for English people, but also for Germans and Russians. The particularly favorable climatic conditions of the Mediterranean coast offered the possibility to extend stays not only in winter but also during a great part of the autumn and the spring. It is clear that all these factors played a role in the creation of a large number of private gardens, into which plants of every type and origin were introduced. At the same time, thanks to the development and the transformation of the coastal villages from small groups of houses into places which were capable of receiving and satisfying a great number of guests, many green spaces were created, especially in the areas next to the old town centers, where clusters of villas and hotels were appearing. So, plants and especially palms began to be used to decorate boulevards and town spaces. These small coastal villages became little towns, and their new, well-organized urban green spaces were soon welcoming guests.

New, exotic plants from private gardens enriched the pre-existing urban green spaces, which consisted mostly of olive tree groves, pine forests or areas of native coastal vegetation. In creating these new gardens, their owners were effectively botanical collectors, who on the one hand exchanged plants with one another, and on the other hand competed with one another for possessing and growing rarities. In this context, the experimentation with and acclimatization of exotic species were no longer the exclusive prerogative of research centers but became the vocation of wealthy land-owners as well. These activities caused such a demand for plants that some of the regional plant nurseries began seeking out new



2. A travel poster for train service from Paris to the Mediterranean coast.

3 (facing page). Travel posters used palms to emphasize the exotic ambiance of the Riviera.

plants and in turn became centers of both plant introduction and research.

The great collectors and the major nurseries managed to import plants from important international nurseries thanks to the railway development, which was completed in the Riviera in 1872 with the inauguration of the Menton – Ventimiglia section, which connected the Italian and the French networks. The resulting plant introductions remade the landscape, in which a leading role was played by palms, which transformed the image of the Riviera during this period. Palms were used as in advertisements to represent the Riviera's mild, almost subtropical climate.

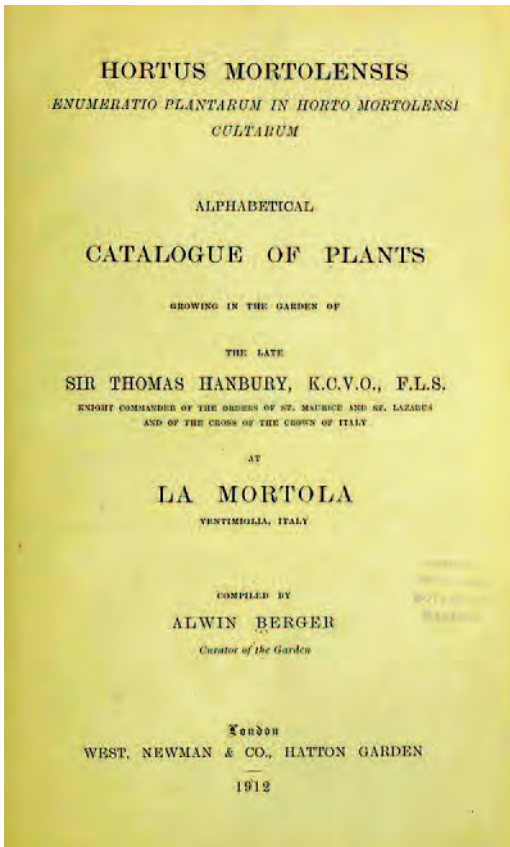
Of course, some palm species were already present in the Riviera and had been for decades, particularly in the area of Sanremo and Bordighera, where specimens of *Phoenix dactylifera* were cultivated to produce and sell leaves for Jewish and Catholic religious ceremonies. A detailed report of this activity was given by Eduard Strasburger (1913) in his book *Streifzüge an der Riviera*.

We cannot speak about the development of the Riviera's horticulture, garden design, public



landscapes and the introduction of an impressive number of new plants without remembering the figure of Ludwig Winter

(1846–1912). We credit him, directly or indirectly, for the great progress in introducing palms in the coastal towns of the Riviera on



4. The title page of Berger's catalog of the plants of La Mortola from 1912.

both sides of the border between Italy and France. Ludwig Winter came to Italy following a suggestion made by Charles Huber, who took the liberty of recommending Winter to Thomas Hanbury, who few years before had acquired the property of Capo Mortola, where he had begun to set up one of the most important acclimatization gardens of the Mediterranean area. Thomas Hanbury was looking for a project coordinator who could replace him and his brother Daniel when they were absent from their property at La Mortola. A better choice could not have been made. The young German not only proved himself able to fulfil the tasks assigned to him but he also became the designer and builder of the garden's layout. The mark which Winter left is clear and evident even today. We owe him credit for the introduction of most of La Mortola's palms, for which it is said that the owner did not have a particular taste!

Much information about the palms of La Mortola can be gathered from analyses of three published catalogues or inventories (Cronmeyer 1889, Dinter 1897, Berger 1912).

Among them, the one published by Alwin Berger (1912) is surely the richest in information (Fig. 4). Beyond the mere listing, it contains some very interesting notes about the taxa that were found in La Mortola at that time. As with every catalogue, the list indicates only the presence of at least one individual for each taxon, but it does not tell us whether the plants were adult or young, if they were in the ground or in a container, if they had just been introduced or if they were well acclimatized. Fortunately, the appendix includes many interesting notes concerning the plants and their introduction to La Mortola, their origins, their systematic classification, their acclimatization results and phenological observations on cultivated specimens. Sometimes there are notes concerning the acclimatization of palm specimens in other gardens of the Riviera. In particular, there are notes on some palms in gardens of Garavan, viz. Villa Hindoue, Villa Paradu and Villa St. Louis.

With his 5-years of experience in La Mortola's gardens, Ludwig Winter created a large nursery of his own near the town of Bordighera, from which and for some decades he provided

5. Winter's nursery, Bordighera.



plants to clients in the Riviera and beyond (Fig. 5). Each catalogue (Fig. 6) gives us the opportunity of knowing all the plants that Winter offered for sale and consequently which taxa were distributed in the region. There was a huge selection of plants. About fifty taxa of palms were offered in a variety of sizes and ages.

The great demand for plants caused the birth and growth of other nurseries in the region. Many of them were little more than shops, but some of them could be considered as rivals of Winter's nursery, especially when they were on the other side of the international border. Among the rivals, the Zacharias & Keller nurseries in Beaulieu sur Mer (France) offered a rich catalogue with a wide selection of palms. We must not forget another famous enterprise for the cultivation and marketing of palms: Charles Huber's nursery in Hyères. He was the first in the region to offer *Jubaea chilensis*.

Evidence of the wide variety of cultivated plants in Sanremo was provided by the Baron Carl von Hüttner, a doctor who, enchanted by the Riviera, chose Villa Parva (Fig. 7) in Sanremo as his residence. He is famous for having written a small book which described the flora of Sanremo's villas and gardens,



Abb. 27. Ngavenblüte im Palmengarten der Villa Parva in San Remo. Nach einer Photographie von G. Scotti in San Remo. (Zu Seite 40.)

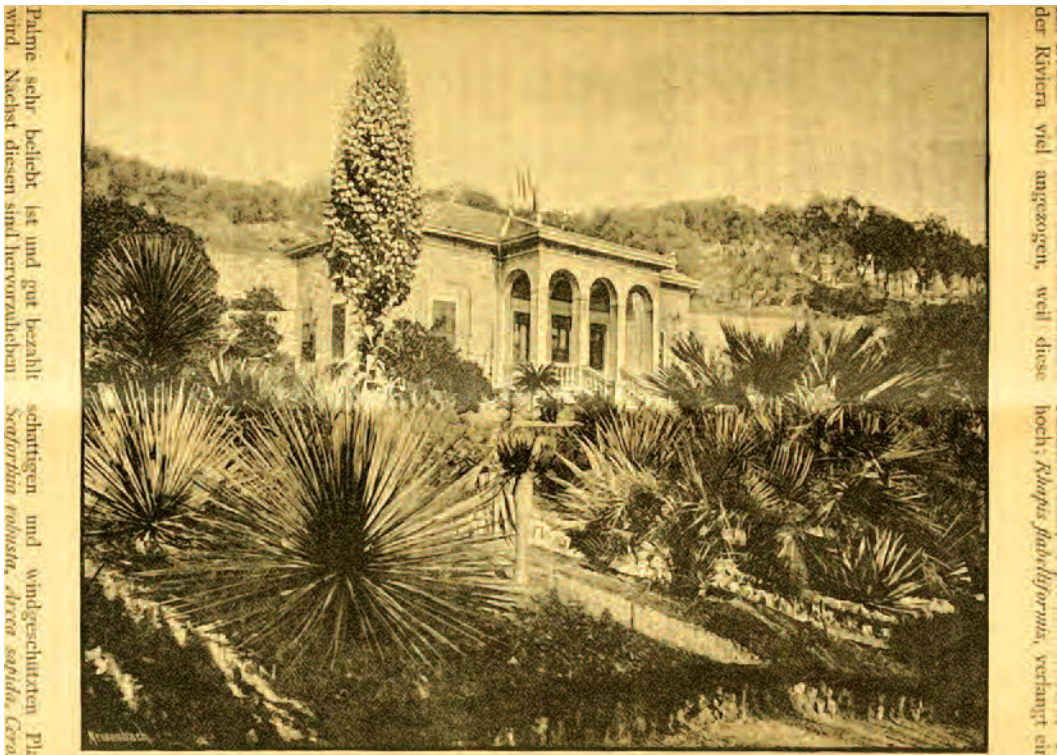
6. Winter's Bordighera catalog.



7. The garden of Villa Parva.

entitled *Gartenflora des Klimatischen Winter-Kurorts San Remo* (1884). He noticed that "... the number of hosts who evidence an interest for the local gardens grows every year ..." and "... our German compatriots have begun to settle in this wonderful region" With this guide, Hüttner passed on an important source of information about plants in Sanremo's parks and gardens. The uniqueness and the best quality of this work, and at the same time its limitation, is the narrowness of the territory considered. This inventory is an exceptional testimony of the wide variety of Sanremo's flora of that time. His text is neither a mere summary nor a simple guide: it includes notes and detailed comments about the various taxa. The list of the private villas is very extensive and evinces how much passion and interest there was in gardening. On the other hand, we note with disappointment that so many of these green spaces either no longer exist or were changed beyond recognition by subsequent development. Among Sanremo's villas with important collections of palms, without any doubt, Hüttner's Villa Parva stood out (Fig. 8).

Additional precious evidence of the palms in the Riviera comes from Giorgio Roster's writings. He was a Florentine doctor, a scientist and a famous photographer. These last two



Palme sehr beliebt ist und gut bezahlt wird. Nächst diesen sind hervorzuheben: schattigen und windgeschützten Platz, *Scaevola robusta*, *Azorea sabida*, *Cerastium*.

der Riviera viel angezogen, weil diese hoch: *Rhapiz fuchsiformis*, verhängt einen

Fig. 26. Die «Villa Parva» in San Remo.
 Links: *Ficus Whipplei* in Blüthe; in der Mitte: *Dracaena Draco* L.; dahinter, an der Ecke des Balkons: *Zamia* (*Encephalartos*) *Prostrata* H. — Rechts, an der *Dracaena Draco*: *Diplothemium maritimum* Mart.



Ospedaletti - La Passeggiata.

8 (top). An early published photograph of the garden of Villa Parva in Sanremo. 9 (bottom). The Passeggiata, Ospedaletti, Italy.

interests – passions, really – made of him a leading figure among high society and a curious traveler. Being fascinated by the perfectly acclimatized plants he saw in the Riviera, Roster (1903) wrote, “Whoever goes from San Remo to Cannes cannot help but wonder at seeing the typical flora of the region combined with some rare decorative plants which come from the warm countries and are

scattered everywhere, on the slopes, in the fields, along the streets and in the public walks.” At that time, owners were proud of their gardens and took pleasure in exhibiting their collections to their guests. They were probably especially pleased to welcome an important scientist such as Roster, who was at the same time an expert of the new art of photography. Roster had the occasion to visit

10 & 11. Postcards illustrating the gardens of Monte Carlo, in which palms play a prominent role.





12. The Casino and Garden at Monte Carlo.

many gardens along the whole coastal arc from Sanremo to Cannes.

Texts from the late 19th and early 20th centuries paint a picture of the diversity of palms cultivated in the Riviera (Figs. 9–12). Among

the most significant gardens mentioned in the texts are: in Sanremo (Villa Parva [Figs. 7 & 8], Villa Thiem, Villa delle Palme, Villa Weber, Villa Ormond, Villa Zirio [Fig 13], Villa Marsaglia, Marsaglia Castle [Figs. 14 & 15], Villa Evellina, Palazzina Roverizio, Villa

13. Villa Zirio, Sanremo.





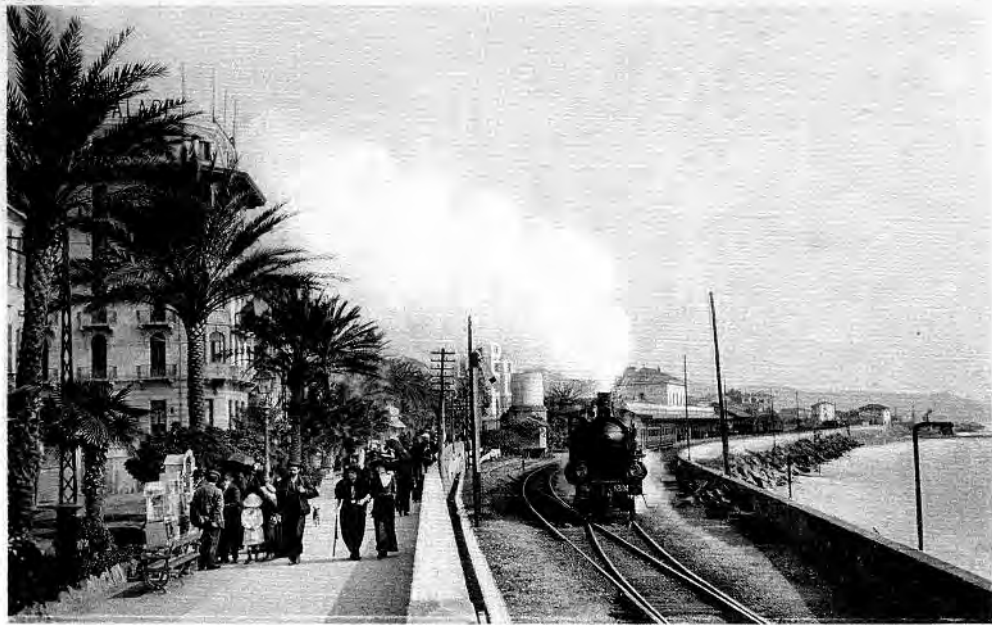
14. (top). A vintage postcard from Marsaglia Castle, Sanremo, showing palms. 15 (bottom). Another postcard showing *Phoenix* palms.

Patrone, parks of the Westend and Victoria Hotels, garden of the Pensione Flora, public garden near the railway station [Figs. 16 & 17], Garden Imperatrice and town square), in Bordighera (Winter Garden in the so-called zone Madonna della Ruota [Figs. 18 & 19], Winter nursery in the valley of the Sasso River

and urban spaces), at La Mortola di Ventimiglia (Hanbury Gardens, Fig. 20), in Menton (especially in Garavan: Villa Saint Louis, Villa Hindoue, Villa Paradou – the former Villa Kennedy – in addition to other areas that were not clearly defined Fig. 21), in Monaco (gardens of the Casino), in Nice (the new



San Remo - Passeggiata dell'Imperatrice



San Remo - Treno in partenza

16 & 17. Two postcards showing the palms of the Corso Imperatrice, Sanremo.

Promenade des Anglais, Achille-Georges Viscount of Vigier's Villa on the Mont Boron, Victor Spitalieri Count of Cessole's Villa Mariposa in Mantega, Dr. Robertson-Proshowski's Villa Les Tropiques, Villa Robertson, and others (Figs. 22 & 23), in Antibes (Gustave Thuret's Villa along the Boulevard du Cap), in Golfe-Juan (Villa Mauresque – Les Cocotiers, which was created

by Jacques Duval, Count of Éprémèsnil and Villa Niobe) and, at last, in Cannes (Villa Menier and Villa Valetta – the former Villa Dognin – now Villa Mariposa). Unfortunately many of these gardens, especially on the French side, do not exist anymore. In some cases, groups of palms still exist, hidden between modern buildings that were built where these splendid parks were located.



18. A painting by H. Nestel was the basis for this postcard from the Winter Garden, Bordighera.

The texts consulted for this paper were published over one-hundred years ago, and moreover, they have very different origins. Nevertheless, it is possible to reconcile the

nomenclature of that time with modern nomenclature. In this following discussion, we have modernized the nomenclature for all the cited taxa. During our research, some



19. Palms of Bordighera.

illegitimate names were found. With methods which were typical of commercial nurseries,

hybrids, varieties or even clones were sometimes considered as species.

The palms

The genus *Phoenix*, represented by *Phoenix dactylifera*, was already present in the Riviera since time immemorial and growers had learned to select clones with the best phenological features for commercial needs. The aesthetic requirements of the 19th Century, when these palms were used more for street landscaping (Figs. 24–26), were very different from the past when they were grown for church decor. However, nurseries sold a lot of adult plants, which came from old cultivation areas. On the other hand, major nurseries produced new plants either by separating suckers or from seeds. This last activity allowed the exploitation of great individual variability and the selection of clones with particular characteristics.

These selections, which were made in Ludwig Winter's nursery, resulted in plants with unique features. The most striking case concerns a palm in the garden of Villa Spitalieri de Cessole in Nice (Fig. 27): this rare specimen was able to produce and ripen edible dates, something remarkable for southern Europe. Émile Sauvaigo (1891), at that time the director of the Natural History Museum of Nice, described the palm and gave it the name

20. A postcard view of the Hanbury Gardens, Ventimiglia, based on a painting by H. Nestel.



Phoenix mariposae. He mentioned this palm for the second time three years later, but he gave it a different name, *Phoenix melanocarpa* (Sauvaigo 1894), and attributed the name to Charles Naudin, who had described it in the previous year (Naudin 1893). In 1924, Auguste Chevalier proposed a new combination: *Phoenix dactylifera* var. *mariposae*. It is possible

that this plant was purchased in 1882 in Winter's nursery in Bordighera. Chevalier reported that the date production by this palm was decidedly abundant. In 1893, 50 kg of dates were harvested (Dru 1894), while in 1916 no less than 80 kg of dates were harvested (Chevalier 1924). When Sauvaigo described this palm he noted its similarity to both *P.*

21 (top). The famous Allée des Palmiers, Menton. 22 (bottom). Postcard from La Grotte des Jardines, Nice.





23. An allée of palms in the garden of a villa in Nice.

canariensis and *P. dactylifera*; we suspect that it was some sort of hybrid between both species.

Phoenix canariensis is a palm that was introduced in the Riviera soon after the fashion for palms took hold: it was first planted in 1864 in Villa Vigier's park on the slopes of the Mont Boron on the bluffs around Nice (Zona 2008). Until then it was completely unknown in the region. Some specimens of *Phoenix canariensis*, because of their aesthetic and landscape characteristics, were planted out in towns along both the French and Italian coasts, especially by Ludwig Winter. In the last quarter of the 19th century, it was widely planted in boulevards, promenades, parks and gardens. Soon the nurseries in the Riviera, which were always searching for something new, made hybrids, as it has been already said, with it. A hybrid of *Phoenix dactylifera* with *Phoenix canariensis* was obtained by Naudin, who called it *Phoenix × intermedia*.

In the meantime, a palm was found that had features of *Phoenix canariensis*, but it produced much bigger fruits (dates). Sauvaigo (1894b) described it and gave it the name *Phoenix macrocarpa*. Ludwig Winter requested seeds of that particular palm. Upon growing them, he obtained a plants whose features did not match with the ones reported in Sauvaigo's description. Regretting these differences and thinking that it was a hybrid, he offered for sale those little plants and called them *Phoenix* 'Hybrida Elegantissima.' Modern tests on herbarium specimens of *P. macrocarpa* showed

24. Postcard showing the Quai des Etats Unis, Nice, and the mature stands of *Phoenix*.





25 (top). Vintage postcard of the Promenade du Chateau, Allée des Palmiers, Nice. 26 (bottom). A postcard showing the Allée des Palmiers, Menton.

that it was simply a clone of *Phoenix canariensis*.

Other species of *Phoenix* were cultivated in the Riviera, including *Phoenix paludosa* and *Phoenix sylvestris* (both were present in Villa Parva, at La Mortola and in the Winter nurseries),

Phoenix reclinata (in La Mortola's gardens and in Villa Parva, where it was mentioned a second time under the synonym *Phoenix leonensis*, the latter name also present in Winter's catalogues) and *Phoenix rupicola* (in Les Cocotiers in Golfe Juan and in Sanremo's Park Marsaglia, as well as in Villa Parva, in the



Fig. 5. — *Phoenix melanocarpa*. (Cliché P. Henry).

27. *Phoenix melanocarpa* at Villa Cessole.

Hanbury gardens and in Winter's nursery). Although *Phoenix roebelenii* is mentioned in Winter's catalogues, it was not present in any garden, probably because at that time it was considered only as a houseplant.

Today *Chamaerops* is treated as a monospecific genus: it includes only the species *Chamaerops humilis*, which is the only native palm of the Italian territory. However, its original range extended from the coastal zones of the Tuscan Maremma towards the south. Its widespread cultivation has allowed it to become naturalized in some coastal stretches of both the Liguria and the Côte d'Azur. During the 19th century, the nurseries learned to offer *Chamaerops humilis* on a large scale from Charles Huber, who had been the first to offer it for sale in 1864. From then on, this small and often bushy palm was widely used. A note (Muratorio & Kiernan 1992) concerning the first introductions of *Chamaerops humilis* at La Mortola is very interesting: These palms arrived following a purchase made in December 1867 in Hyères. This purchase was made at Charles Huber's nursery where brothers Daniel and Thomas Hanbury made considerable purchases of many kinds of plants. Some years later other plants reached La Mortola coming from Algeria, from Hamma's Jardin d'Essai.

As demand for *Chamaerops humilis* increased, nurserymen began to search individuals with

particular features in order to offer something different. Individuals were selected sometimes with distinctive features; many of them were listed under varietal names with no botanical standing. They are nowadays simply *C. humilis*. Hüttner reported that the typical form of this species was widespread, but he also noted four different varieties within the municipality of Sanremo, in gardens that belonged to either private citizens or hotels: *Chamaerops humilis* var. "arborea" (possibly coinciding with *C. humilis* var. *arborescens*) in Villa Parva, in the Marsaglia Castle and in the Westend Hotel, *C. humilis* var. "duplicifolia" in Villa Parva, *C. humilis* var. "elegans" in Villa Parva, Villa Thiem and in the Westend Hotel, *C. humilis* var. "tomentosa" in Villa Parva. Berger reported that the following varieties could be found in La Mortola's gardens: *Chamaerops humilis* var. *arborescens*, *C. humilis* var. "elegans," *C. humilis* var. *macrocarpa* and *C. humilis* var. "tomentosa." In the notes at the end of the catalogue, Berger (1912) sketched out the differences that characterize these varieties.

The genus *Trachycarpus* includes the palm most tolerant to frigid temperatures: *Trachycarpus fortunei*. This palm, which comes from the Far East, can easily be cultivated far from the coast as well as in some temperate zones of northern Europe. Thanks to its easy acclimatization and its resistance to the hard winters, it was used throughout the Riviera. Other species of this genus were not as common. *Trachycarpus takil* was present only in the Hanbury gardens. It reached La Mortola in 1884 from the Kew Gardens under the name *Trachycarpus martiana*. This classification was ambiguous because this horticultural form was different from the true species *T. martiana*. This specimen was subsequently examined by Odoardo Beccari, who recognized it as *T. takil* (Berger 1912). *Trachycarpus takil* has since disappeared from the Hanbury gardens.

Winter sold *Trachycarpus wagnerianus*, which was also present in the Hanbury gardens. Berger (1916b) noted that his plants grew from seeds collected in the wild in an undefined location of either central or eastern Asia, probably in interior China. The seeds arrived to Wagner's horticultural firm in Gohlis, a northern suburb of Leipzig, Germany. Most of these seeds were acquired by Winter who, after having received them, germinated them and arranged the little plants in his garden. In 1911, the first of these palms bloomed and fruited. By 1916 there were no traces of this palm in Gohlis. Berger (1916b) wrote that Mr.

Wagner's widow, when questioned about *Trachycarpus wagnerianus*, confessed not only that she did not have it in her nursery, but also that she did not know that it even existed. Berger, in the pages of *Gartenwelt*, invited all German readers to report any possible existence of this palm from the Wagner nursery. We do not know whether Berger received any replies to his query. The specimens that were in the Winter nursery and in the Hanbury Gardens have long since disappeared.

Rhaphidophyllum hystrix was mentioned by Berger (1912) among the palms of La Mortola's gardens. In Winter's ue, this palm was listed under its old name *Chamaerops hystrix*. Then as now, nurseries are reluctant to update their nomenclature. For them it was more useful to keep the familiar names that were known to their customers. The palm then known as *Chamaerops hystrix* was found in Sanremo, in Villa Parva's park. Roster pointed out its presence in Monte-Carlo (Casino garden) and in Golfe-Juan in Villa Mauresque's garden (Les Cocotiers).

Rhaphis excelsa and its synonym *Rhaphis flabelliformis* were mentioned as quite rare and present in only a few gardens (Villa Parva, Villa Hanbury and Villa Mauresque). Maybe it was not widespread because, as pointed out by Winter in his catalogue, it was thought to be a houseplant. Equally uncommon was the similar *Rhaphis humilis* (found only in La Mortola's gardens and in Villa Mauresque).

There was much written about the several species of *Brahea* (sometimes mentioned under its synonym *Erythea*). *Brahea armata* (which was mentioned in several gardens under its synonyms *Brahea roezlii*, *Brahea lucida*, *Brahea nobilis*, *Erythea armata*) was present in Villa Parva, at La Mortola, in Monte-Carlo, in Nice, in Golfe-Juan and in Villa Dognin in Cannes. *Brahea calcarea* (synonym *Brahea nitida*) was present in Bordighera, in Golfe-Juan and in Villa Dognin. *Brahea edulis* (synonym *Erythea edulis*) was more common and widespread in many places along the whole Riviera. *Brahea brandegeei* was found only in the Hanbury Gardens. *Brahea dulcis* was listed for Villa Parva, in the Winter nursery, in the gardens of Monte-Carlo's Casino and in Villa Mauresque's garden.

The genus *Sabal* was known from five different species. The first one, *Sabal palmetto* (which was kept separate from *Sabal blackburniana* but today the latter is considered a synonym of

the former), was widespread in Sanremo, in Bordighera, at La Mortola, in Nice, in Antibes, in Golfe-Juan and in Cannes. The specimen in La Mortola's gardens was purchased in 1888 by the prince Piotr Trubetskoy, who had his own garden on the Côte d'Azur. *Sabal minor* was not as common (at that time it was often called *Sabal adansonii*) and could be found in Villa Parva and in the Westend Hotel's park in Sanremo, in Bordighera, in La Mortola's gardens and in Villa Thuret's park in Antibes. The specimen in the Hanbury gardens was grown from a seed given by Gustave Thuret in 1869. The other three species, *Sabal bermudana*, *Sabal havanensis* and *Sabal ghiesbreghtii* (the latter two are uncertain names), were mentioned as present; the first two palms were reported in Villa Parva's park.

At that time there was some confusion about the genus *Washingtonia*. Berger (1912) wrote, "These plants are very much seen in gardens along the Riviera, but generally wrongly named...." Therefore it is necessary to heed this remark when examining the literature concerning the genus *Washingtonia* in the Riviera. Berger (1916) mentioned a rich collection in Villa Hindoue on Garavan's bluffs, just beyond Pont Saint Louis's border. *Washingtonia filifera* seems to have been widespread in many towns along the whole Riviera. *Washingtonia robusta* was not very common. It was found not only in Villa Hanbury's garden, but also in Villa Hindoue in Garavan, in Monte-Carlo and in Les Cocotiers's park in Golfe-Juan. Berger noted that, in Villa Hindoue, a specimen of *Washingtonia filifera* bloomed and fruited in 1893; *Washingtonia robusta* did the same in 1897.

To complete the analysis of *Washingtonia* palms that were found at that time in Villa Hanbury's garden in La Mortola, we have to mention *Washingtonia filifera* var. *microsperma*, *Washingtonia gracilis* and *Washingtonia sonorae*; today these three taxa are synonyms. The first one is synonym of *Washingtonia filifera*, and the others are synonyms of *Washingtonia robusta*.

In the 1880s, thousands of *Washingtonia* plants were raised in the nurseries in Hyères and in Ludwig Winter's nursery in Bordighera. The presence of such an abundance of palms implies that they were subsequently widely grown in the region. *Washingtonia robusta* and sometimes *W. filifera* were included by Winter in his garden designs as his signature palms. They were usually placed in his projects in

Die Gartenwelt.

Illustrierte Wochenschrift für den gesamten Gartenbau.

Jahrgang XXI.

16. März 1917.

Nr. 11.

Nachdruck und Nachbildung aus dem Inhalte dieser Zeitschrift werden strafrechtlich verfolgt.

Palmen.

Erythea.

Von Alwin Berger.

(Hierzu vier Abbildungen.)

Unter den schönen, großen Fächerpalmen, die zur Ausschmückung unserer Wintergärten und kühleren Häuser aus den berühmten Palmengärten meines unvergeßlichen Freundes Ludwig Winter in Bordighera vor dem Kriege nach Deutschland eingeführt wurden, spielten die sogenannten *Brahea* eine große Rolle. Vor allem war es *Erythea armata* S. Wats., die sogenannte *Brahea Roezli*, die den größten Beifall fand, sei es nun, daß man Gelegenheit hatte, sie auf Ausstellungen in Deutschland anzutreffen, wo Ludwig Winter mit seinen herrlichen Palmen nie fehlen durfte, oder daß man das Glück hatte, die Pflanze bodenständig an der Riviera selbst zu betrachten. Auf jeden Beschauer wirkte sie unter allen Umständen imponierend und verlockend, und so fanden ungezählte Stücke ihren Weg nach Norden. Ein wohl-gewachsenes Exemplar ist in der Tat etwas großartig schönes, ein Bild der Kraft und Schönheit zugleich. Wie eine große Halbkugel wölben sich die Wedel übereinander, deren Farbe und Beschaffenheit unter allen unseren Palmen nicht ihres Gleichen hat. Wenn die helle Sonne der lachend schönen Küste monatlang auf ihnen gelegen hat, erscheinen sie kreideweiß mit einem Ton ins Blaue, genau wie bei *Agave Franzosini*, und wie bei dieser kann in geeignetem Boden die Färbung während der Sommerzeit überraschend stark blau ausgeprägt sein. Mit dem Herannahen der Herbsttage und ihren Regengüssen läßt diese durchdringende Färbung nach und macht einer mehr grünlich erscheinenden Platz. In unseren Gewächshäusern, wo das Sonnenlicht spärlicher, ja zeitweise Winters überhaupt ganz ausbleibt und dann immer noch die Glasscheiben zu durchqueren hat, bleiben diese prachtvollen hellen Farbentöne aus oder verblassen nach und nach und machen einem Grüngrau Platz, wie es im Freien nicht vorkommt. Ich weiß nicht, ob es nicht möglich wäre, durch Verbringen der Pflanzen in das Freie auf warme, sonnige Plätze die hellen Farben wieder hervorzuzaubern. Ich habe darin keine Erfahrung, zweifle aber nicht, daß es in Deutschland *Brahea Roezli* gibt, die Sommers auf diese Weise behandelt werden.

Die Wedelspreiten dieser Palme sind derb, fast wie Blech so hart, sie klingen wie Metall, wenn man mit der Hand auf sie schlägt.

Gartenwelt XXI.

Die erste Veröffentlichung, die ich in der einschlägigen Literatur finde, ist eine Notiz in der „Illustration Horticole“ 1881, wo sie als *Brahea Roezli* Linden erscheint. Nach dieser von L. Linden selbst stammenden Notiz war sie im Jahre 1877 in Gent in der Lindenschen Gärtnerei ins freie Land gepflanzt worden. Ihr Wachstum sei zwar nicht rasch gewesen, aber sie habe die kalten Winter 1879–80 und 1880–81 unter dem Schutz einer einfachen Glasglocke aus-



Erythea armata am Lago Maggiore.

11

28. Berger published several illustrated articles about palms new to cultivation in Europe, including this one on *Erythea* (= *Brahea*). Note that the palm in the photograph was young and had not yet acquired a trunk.

groups of three specimens, in an asymmetrical placement. Furthermore, a large row of *Agapanthus africanus* was usually planted under them in order to complete the combination. This plant, which belongs to the amaryllis family, was particularly beloved by Ludwig

Winter because its inflorescence is reminiscent of a palm's shape.

Regarding the genus *Pritchardia*, only *P. pacifica* was mentioned by Berger (1912) for Villa Hanbury. The mention appeared only in the

Supplement, which was inserted just as the catalogue was ready to be printed. Its date of introduction and its origin were also reported: Palermo, 1911. This suggests that the plant was still young and in a pot. It is difficult to know whether the plant survived the events that some years later affected this garden and the whole of Europe. It appears that this taxon was absent from other gardens of the Riviera and from the catalogues of the Winter nursery.

Palms of the genus *Livistona* were quite widespread in the gardens of the Riviera with specimens of the following: *Livistona australis*, *L. chinensis* and *L. decora*. *Livistona chinensis* was often mentioned, along with its synonym *Livistona oliviformis*, as common and widespread: its presence was clearly mentioned in Villa Parva, in Villa Winter, in the Hanbury gardens, in Villa Vigier, in Les Cocotiers and in Villa Dognin. *Livistona australis*, reported as widespread, was indicated as present not only in La Mortola's gardens, but also in these Sanremo's private parks: Villa Parva, Marsaglia Castle, Villa Zirio, Westend Hotel and Pensione Flora. In contrast, *Livistona decora* (under its synonym *Livistona decipiens*) was much rarer and was found only in La Mortola's gardens, in villa Paradu in Garavan, in villas Dognin, Vigier and Robertson in Nice and in Les Cocotiers in Golfe-Juan.

Many of the texts describing the palms of the Riviera mentioned members of the genus *Cocos*. Today this genus is considered monospecific, with the only species *Cocos nucifera*, i.e. the coconut palm, which is too tender to be grown in the Riviera. Hüttner (1884) wrote that at his Villa Parva there were specimens of eight different species of *Cocos*, but today all of them would be classified in the genus *Syagrus* (and they would comprise fewer than eight species). In updated nomenclature, these palms would be *Syagrus romanzoffiana*, *Syagrus flexuosa*, and *Syagrus coronata*. Mention was made of "*Cocos blumenaui*," a name whose identification is uncertain. Its origin could be horticultural, and the name (without any description) was published in 1884. The first two species turn out to be widespread in the whole Riviera, from both sides of the border. *Syagrus romanzoffiana* was also mentioned as frequent and present in Monte-Carlo. On the contrary, *Syagrus coronata* was very rare, while "*Cocos blumenaui*" was unique. Specimens of both species are mentioned to be present only in Sanremo in Baron von Hüttner's property.

Berger (1912) wrote something interesting about the genus *Butia*, which at that time was

treated as a section of the genus *Cocos*: "Four species are in cultivation, occurring in gardens under a good many wrong names. Without flower and seeds they are not easily determined. If flowers are present, it will not be difficult to distinguish them by the following key...." After this remark, he provided a rather simple analytical key with which anyone in possession of the essential elements would be able to reach a correct classification (Berger 1912). *Butia capitata*, *Butia eriospatha* and *Butia yatay* were found at La Mortola. All the three taxa were mentioned as widespread in many places in the Riviera, but they were not reported as very common.

Some notes concerning the species of the genus *Archontophoenix* were reported in a beautiful article by Alwin Berger (1917a). In particular the author specified that specimens of *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*, which he observed in the Riviera, were able to stand the cold during the most frigid winter of 1901 at La Mortola, even though they suffered some damage (Berger 1912). In Villa Hindoue in Garavan, where this plant was in a good position, i.e. protected both by a wall and by a great specimen of *Ficus macrophylla*, it was able to stand the exceptionally rigid winter temperatures without showing any signs of suffering. At the beginning of the 20th century, in Villa Les Cocotiers in Golfe-Juan, a specimen reached the height of 1.7 m (ca. 5.6 ft.).

Hüttner (1884) reported that *Archontophoenix alexandrae* was at Villa Parva. This claim raises some doubts. In fact, Berger (1917a) wrote that this species was very rare in the Riviera, and as far as he knew, only one specimen of it existed, in Villa Niobe in Golfe-Juan. This plant, at that time 10 m high (ca. 32.8 ft.), was planted in 1870. It came from a nursery of Ghent (Belgium). Why did Berger never mention Villa Parva's palm? There are two possible answers: first, it is possible that the palm was not classified correctly; second, the plant, for whatever reason, may not have survived. We must not forget that Hüttner's small book was published in 1884, while Berger wrote his articles thirty-three years later.

Several specimens of *Jubaea chilensis* were known in the Riviera. Of course, the palm which used to be found in Villa Thuret on the Cap d'Antibes aroused much admiration: its trunk was 7.5 m tall (ca. 24.6 ft.) and its circumference 4.1 m around (ca. 13.5 ft.) at 1 m (3.28 ft.) from the ground. It had been blooming and bearing fruits since 1894, but



29. A portrait of Ludwig Winter, the Riviera's most important horticulturist and promoter of palms.

unfortunately it died during the first years of the 20th century. Charles Naudin, who was the director of Villa Thuret at the time when it

became a national property, had planted lots of seeds of this palm. It is possible that the present specimens in Villa Thuret grew from

those seeds. Unfortunately, today these historic palms have been heavily attacked by the red palm weevil. The specimen of *Jubaea chilensis* which was mentioned for the Hanbury Gardens can still be found there; it had been given to Thomas Hanbury by Prof. Decaisne, the director at that time of the Jardin des Plantes in Paris.

The genus *Chamaedorea* was represented in area gardens by *Chamaedorea elatior* (in Villa Parva, at La Mortola and in Nice), *Chamaedorea elegans* (in Sanremo in Villa Parva, in Bordighera in Winter's Villa, at La Mortola in the Hanbury gardens, in Golfe-Juan in Villa Mauresque) and *Chamaedorea ernesti-augusti* (only in Bordighera, at La Mortola and in Golfe-Juan). Berger reported that a specimen of *Chamaedorea corallina* could be found in La Mortola, but we cannot be certain that the identification was correct. *Chamaedorea corallina* is a synonym of *Chamaedorea linearis*. The Winter nursery catalogue offered *Chamaedorea sartorii*, which was not mentioned among the palms cultivated in the garden of the Riviera.

Another group of palms that were mentioned were popularly united under the term "Kentia palms." These were mostly palms were not suited for outdoor gardens, but they were popular houseplants in Europe during the 19th century. Both *Howea belmoreana* and *Howea forsteriana* were reported to be found at La Mortola and in Villas Hindoue, Paradu and Saint Louis in Garavan. *Hedyscepe canterburyana* was reported only at La Mortola. *Rhopalostylis baueri* and *Rhopalostylis sapida* were at both La Mortola and Villa Parva.

Finally, some gardens boasted a few, exceptionally rare, exotic palms, which were never widely cultivated. *Trithrinax brasiliensis*, a graceful palm from southern Brazil, was found in La Mortola's gardens and aroused Roster's admiration. He had seen it before in Nice. The presence of *Wallichia caryotoides* was mentioned only for La Mortola and Les Cocotiers. *Copernicia prunifera* (reported under the synonymous name *Copernicia cerifera*) was found only in the Villa Parva. Amazingly enough, *Corypha utan*, a large palm from Indochina and the Philippines, was offered for sale in Winter's nursery catalogue. It was surely too tender to be grown outside, but too large to grow as a house or conservatory plant. Roster reported that in 1888 a specimen of *Acanthorrhiza aculeata*. could be found in Villa Vigier's garden; this species is now known as

Cryosophila nana. Villa Parva grew *Allagoptera arenaria* and *Ceroxylon alpinum* subsp. *alpinum*.

Conclusions

The palm-growing fashion, which English and other ex-patriots pursued on the Ligurian coast and Côte d'Azur, deeply influenced both the conception of the private garden and vernacular landscape design. In just over fifty years' time, a great deal of tender plants – particularly palms – found their place near the coast. Most of the palm species that grow today in the Riviera arrived thanks to highly specialized nurseries that pushed and even expanded the limits of palm horticulture. Surely the palm-rich landscapes that we admire today would look very different had it not been for the work of exceptional horticulturists, landscape architects and scientists in the region. Chief among them was Ludwig Winter. Had he not come to Bordighera, many palm species would be absent from the gardens of the Riviera.

LITERATURE CITED

- BERGER, A. 1912. Hortus Mortolensis. Enumeratio Plantarum in Horto Mortolensi Cultarum. West, Newman & Co., Hatton Garden, London.
- BERGER, A. 1916b. Palmen. *Trachycarpus*. Die Gartenwelt 20(39): 460, 461.
- BERGER, A. 1916c. Palmen. Die Washingtonien. Die Gartenwelt 20(46): 547–550.
- BERGER, A. 1917a. Palmen. *Archontophoenix*. Die Gartenwelt 21(3): 25, 26.
- CHEVALIER, A. 1924. Dattiers à fruits comestibles cultivés sur la Côte d'Azur. Revue de Botanique Appliquée et d'Agriculture Coloniale 4: 188–198.
- CRONMEYER, G. 1889. Systematic Catalogue of Plants Growing in the Open Air in the Garden of Thomas Hanbury F.L.S. Koenig, Erfurt.
- DINTER, D. 1897. Alphabetical Catalogue of Plants Growing in the Open Air in Garden of Thomas Hanbury F.L.S. Waser Brothers, Genoa.
- DRU, L. 1894. Les Palmiers dattiers. Bulletin de la Société Nationale d'Agriculture de France 54: 279–284.
- VON HÜTTNER, C. 1884. Gartenflora des Klimatischen Winter-Kurorts San Remo. Otto Wigand, Leipzig.

- MURATORIO, M. AND G. KIERNAN. 1992. Thomas Hanbury e il suo giardino. Tipolitografia S. Giuseppe, Arma di Taggia.
- NAUDIN, C. 1893. Le dattier à fruits noir. *Revue Horticole* 65: 563, 564.
- ROSTER, G. 1903. Una Visita ai Giardini della Riviera, da San Remo a Cannes. Ricci, Florence.
- SAUVAIGO, E. 1891. Sur un dattier de Nice à fruit comestibles. *Bulletin de la Société agricole des Alpes Maritimes, Nice* Reference incomplete: need volume and page range
- SAUVAIGO, E. 1894b. Les *Phoenix* cultivés dans les jardins de Nice. *Revue Horticole* 66: 493–499.
- STRASBURGER, E. 1913. *Streifzüge an der Riviera*. 3. Aufl. Gustav Fischer, Jena.
- Zona, S. 2008. The horticultural history of the Canary Island Date Palm (*Phoenix canariensis*). - *Garden History* 36: 301–308.
-