

Manzanillo

May 2015

Sun

Manzanillo's Lifestyle E-Magazine

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E-MAGAZINE

a div. of Manzanillo Sun SA de CV
www.manzanillosun.com

Publisher: Ian T. Rumford

Editors: Freda A. Vickery

Kirby L. Vickery

Dana Parkinson

Contact: info@manzanillosun.com

freda@manzanillosun.com

dana@manzanillosun.com

For advertising information in
magazine or web pages contact:

Manzanillo-

jaime@manzanillosun.com

ian@manzanillosun.com

dana@manzanillosun.com

Writers and contributors:

Tommy Clarkson

David Fitzpatrick

Suzanne Marshall

Vivian Molick

Terry Sovil

Senior Tech

Karen Trom

Freda Vickery

Kirby Vickery

Mark Wright

Yann Kostic

*Comments, brickbats and bouquets
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welcome.*

Individual writers or authors may
also be reached via the following:
info@manzanillosun.com

Submissions for possible inclusion
in the magazine, please send to the
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We are always looking for writers
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Tommy Clarkson

Rangoon Creeper, *Quisqualis indica*

Family: *Vitaceae*

Also known as Drunken Sailor, Burma Creeper, Indian Jessamine and Chinese Honeysuckle

Whenever I say this vine's common name I can hardly but think of it as some vile and evil, fictional, nemesis - created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle - for Sherlock Holmes, with the brilliant sleuth himself observing to his faithful sidekick, "Watson, I fear this looks to be the dastardly work of none other than the Rangoon Creeper!"

Well, in all reality, its Latin name "*Quisqualis*", according to the South Florida Plant Guide, means "What is it?" and they assert that it is an apt "description of what your friends, family and passersby will exclaim when the beauty of this vine comes into its full glory in summertime." I certainly don't disagree!

The clustered, four to five inch (10 – 12.7 cm), star-shaped blossoms of the *Quisqualis indica* are unique indeed and initially emerge white, then change colors to pink and, ultimately, take on a deep red hue, along with a delightfully aromatic, sweet fragrance. While most flowers fade in color with age, the Rangoon Creeper's blossoms defy convention having their full array of colors present all at the same time for a most delightful and stunning display of yet another of Nature's wonders.

As to that heavenly scent, stand down wind of them at nighttime as that is when the blooms' toasted coconut fragrance is most wonderfully pungent.



At Ola Brisa Gardens, ours climbs up a tall wrought iron fence next to our entry.

Beyond the flowers, the foliage, as well, is quite attractive consisting of elongated, yellowish green to bright, lance-shaped, leaves that can form a dense lush greenery.

When planting your Rangoon Creeper, keep in mind that it requires room to grow and needs strong support. . . as do we all! As a result of its natural make-up - in the right locales its vines can reach up to seventy feet (21.3 meters) - it is ideal for an arbor, pergola, gazebo, carport or patio lattice enclosure, trained along the roof line of an overhang or simply arched over a driveway. With its cascading blooms, graceful drooping branches, and slightly sweet scent of the blossoms, in such places as these, it's a natural - or as we have effectively used ours, climbing up a tall wrought iron fence next to our entry.

When planting in a row covering a fence, place the plants four to five feet (1.2 – 1.5 meters) apart or from the nearest shrub or tree. Low growing plants can be situated close to its base once it reaches enough height for clearance and light.



A fast grower, the Rangoon Creeper – which originated in the India, Indo-Malaysian and New Guinea area - can thrive in full sun to part shade and while losing some leaves during the colder times, it will return to its full glory in the springtime. If properly draining, it can handle in a variety of soil conditions.

When first planting, add rich, mulchy, top soil around the root ball and, of course, as we always do here in *Ola Brisa Gardens*, add *estiércol de vaca* (dry cow manure) to enrich the soil around the plant's subsurface growth.

It likes to be watered on a regular basis, but wait a bit of time between waterings so as to allow the soil to dry out. In concert with this, fertilize twice a year (spring and fall) with a top quality granular fertilizer and keep in mind supplemental feedings, if you like, with bone meal and/or liquid fertilizer. This will encourage heavier blooming. But avoid fertilizers that are high in nitrogen as while this will encourage foliage growth it will not nurture the flowering we seek.

W. Arthur Whistler reports that “Various parts of the plant are used in herbal medicines in Asia, especially the seeds, as a vermifuge (expulsion of intestinal worms), but the plant can be poisonous” . . . so I encourage that you not employ them in your salads!



The Rangoon Creeper needs room to grow and needs strong support.



Its quite attractive foliage consists of elongated, yellowish green to bright, lance-shaped, leaves that can form dense lush greenery



Now there are some beautiful blossoms!



Buccaneer Palm, (*Psuedophoenix Sargentii*)

Family: *Eugenia*

Also known as: Cherry palm and Sargent's cherry palm

Origin: South Florida, Saona Island near Hispaniola, the Bahamas, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Navassa and the Caribbean coast of Mexico

Once found in abundance in the upper Florida Keys the slow growing Buccaneer Palm is now considered as endangered in Florida. That – coupled with the fact that it takes nurseries no little time to grow them, hence making them, often, somewhat expensive – may make them a bit difficult to find.

But wherever located, it's interesting to see that no two Buccaneers look alike. Their pinnate fronds are colored from light green, through green, past blue green to completely silver! The swollen trunks of the mature specimens also vary in shape with the subspecies *P. saonae* developing a heavier trunk than *P. sargentii*. (The latter part of this Latin name being an honorific for Charles S. Sargent, the original collector of the species.)

As may be noted by the accompanying picture, the fronds – particularly when young - stretch out and spread in a flat, fan-shaped pattern, looking quite similar to a small blue-green Traveler's Palm. Specimens found in their natural environs may, ultimately, grow to a height of 25 feet (7.6 meters) with a trunk one foot (30.5 cm) in diameter. However, for those "in captivity" one should anticipate not much more than ten feet (three meters) or so.



The young fronds stretch out and spread in a flat, fan-shaped pattern, looking quite similar to a small blue-green Traveler's Palm.

Buccaneer Palms are single trunked and they are slender to moderately stout with a short crown-shaft and between eight to twelve stiff fronds. On these fronds are leaflets that grow from the rachis at a slight angle in a shallow V-shape form. The trunk is often irregularly shaped, sometimes wider at the base with closely spaced ring scars and, on older palms, no dead leaf bases. As the palm matures, the trunk's color changes from a light to dark gray on its older portions.

The erect and many-branched inflorescence is a bit of a bee magnet growing from among the leaves as opposed to beneath the shaft - as is so often the case with most crown-shafted palms. The numerous small greenish-yellow flowers are generally bisexual or with separate male and female flowers and can occur year round. They're followed by many green drupes – each holding one seed - which ripen to a bright red.

(Want your own family of Buccaneers? Its seeds are easily germinated. Simply remove the outer pulp and dry them for five to seven days, then soak them in water for two days, followed by planting them no deeper than 1/2 inch (1.27 cm). As a rule, they will germinate in six to eight weeks.)

Unlike so many of its kin in the *Arecaceae* family, the *Psuedophoenix Sargentii* does grow well, albeit sometimes seeming at a snail's pace, in hot regions that suffer with erratic rainfall and have only limey soils. Some other positive aspects of the Buccaneer Palm are that it is virtually pest free and highly wind and salt tolerant - making it ideal for warm, seaside locales. And, with this propensity for sandy soil, it is not necessary to add anything to the soil when planting!

Wherever planted, it can take full sun to partial shade but would prefer some shade, particularly so when young. The greater the shade, the longer the fronds will grow, thus explaining that their lengths can vary from as short as four feet (1.2 meters) to as long as ten (three meters). When young (a "Buccaneerette?") you may find it necessary to prune an occasional frond. However, in maturity, it becomes a self-cleaner . . . just as we hope our children will, but sometimes worry! Don't bother adding soil amendments when you plant, since these hardy Buccaneers are comfortable in sandy soil. (However, like all palms, it will still appreciate fertilization in the spring, summer and fall.)

So how might they best be used around your home, yard and garden? Here are some suggestions: as a focal point specimen; lining an entry walkway, garden path or driveway, by the pool, deck or on the patio in a large planter (in such the fronds tend to be shorter) or along the side of your house. However, if you're planting Buccaneers in a line along a wall or drive make sure you allow ten feet (three meters) between the palms and to ensure you won't bump up into eaves, plant them three feet or more away from your house.

All said, they are a nice palm that you will enjoy.

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Buccaneer Palms have a slender to moderately stout trunk.



The frond's leaflets grow from the rachis at a slight angle in a shallow V-shape form.

Aztec Maize

By Kirby Vickery

Although the Conquistadors of the 1500's would argue for gold and other hard treasure and today's historians would argue for legumes, pepper, cocoa, or even tobacco; corn would be my vote for the greatest discovery they brought back with them. 80% of the crop in the United States goes to feeding livestock and you can't find too many people that will turn down a hot, buttered, ear of corn either from the family dinner table or at a county fair.

There are accounts from learned people that tell us that corn came from the Inca of South American fame. Others tell of its origins from the deserts of America's great southwest to Central America. I believe corn was picked up by Cortez and his initial group of Spaniards as they pushed inland from what is now Vera Cruz, Mexico which is where he burned his landing fleet right in the middle of Aztec land. As an avid lover of the Mexican corn tortilla and all that the Mexican people do with it, I am ever thankful for whoever tried it first and yelled out, "Eureka! The world's perfect food and it can be grown just about everywhere."

There are many accounts from almost all the Mesoamerican people as to the origins to corn's discovery and use. I'm presenting two. The first is an Aztec myth taken from the Legend of the Suns and chronicled as a means to feed the new and very weak people during the early stages of the Fifth Sun. The second is a Christianized version which was written during the early days of the conquest when the monks busied themselves destroying all things Aztec and substituting Christian versions where they could.

The Aztec god's had made and destroyed four worlds and discovered they needed a means to feed the weak humans they created in the paradise of Tamoanchan in the Fifth Sun. Their search was called off then a small red ant which was wondering by offered the human some of the corn it was carrying back from within the Mountain of Our Sustenance, also known as Tonacatéptl. The head god, Quetzacóatl happened to look down with concern for the human and saw this transaction. He also noted that the human grew stronger and so he got curious and asked the ant where it had gotten the kernels. At first the ant didn't want to tell him but later capitulated to the additional pressure Quetzacóatl put on it. The ant informed him that the kernels of corn came from inside Tonacatéptl. So as to not to let a good



thing go by Quetzacóatl quickly became a black ant and entered this hill which was the Mountain of Our Sustenance. When he came out he gave some of the maize to the other gods. They, in turn, chewed the corn into a paste which was then placed on the lips of all the humans who immediately started becoming stronger and more alert.

All the gods saw that this was good and held a meeting to decide what they were going to do about getting the corn out of the Mountain of our Sustenance. Quetzacóatl tried to tie it up with rope and drag to Tamoanchan but that didn't go very far as it was too big and heavy. In a bid for guidance two other gods, Oxomoco and Cipactonal threw their entire share of the grain against the ground then informed the rest that only Nanàhuatl had the power to get the grain out.

The gods of rain, the Tlaques, threw their lot in with the rest of them and helped Nanàhuatl. The four gods were colored red, white, blue and yellow. The Mountain of our Sustenance was split open with a huge stick. As it split the corn assumed the four colors of the rain gods and was all swept away onto the new earth for the new humans to sow and grow for their health and well being. [Because this second story is not Aztec but derived later I am presenting it as I have found it. Ed.]

(This Tojolabal myth from Las Margaritas in Chiapas was recovered by Antonio Hernández Jiménez.)

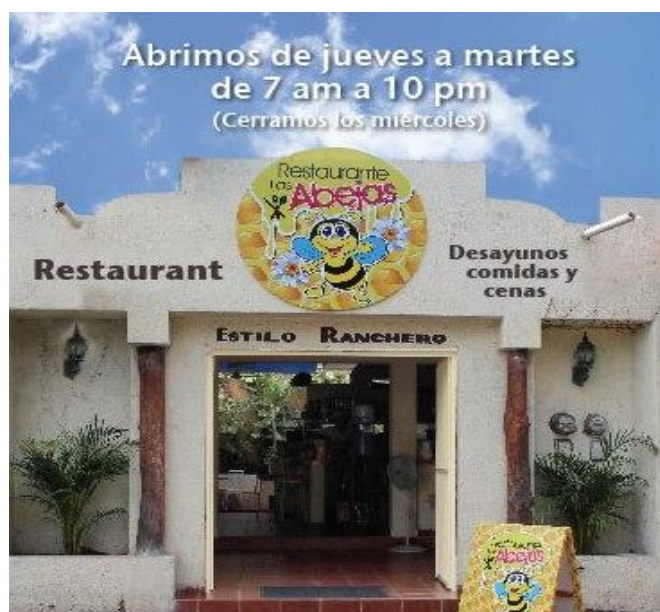
The discovery of corn and why the ant has a small waist...

The Virgin Mary was sitting on a stone suckling her baby, Jesus Christ. She was thoughtful, worrying about how she would sustain herself and her son. All of a sudden she noticed a movement under her stone. She saw that there were ants carrying something that neither she, nor any human, had seen before. She asked

herself what it could be, and soon discovered it was corn.

She caught one of the ants and asked it to tell her from whence it had obtained the corn, but the ant would not obey her and refused to say. Consequently, the Virgin Mary announced that the ant would be sentenced to death if it did not obey her, but even then it would not say where it found the corn. She took a piece of twine and tied it around the ant's waist and tightened it little by little but it still refused to tell her. Finally, when it felt death was imminent, it revealed its secret: the corn could be found through the fissure in a mountain that nobody but ants could fit into.

When the Virgin ate the corn she felt queasy, it didn't do her any good. She sat on her stone once more and a thought occurred: "What if I use this stone to make lime to cook the corn with? Then it will be better for me." She did this. As for the twine with which the ant was suffocated, it is now used as material to make nets for collecting corn cobs during harvest.



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Cocos and Cocodrilos

Story and photos by John Chalmers

When our daughter and son-in-law came from Canada to visit us in March with their three boys, the first stop on the way to our Mexican home after leaving the airport was a roadside fruit stand north of El Naranjo. We purchased some yaca, watermelon, papaya and starfruit, but what most interested the boys was the chance to have their first *coco frio*, a chilled whole coconut.



Left to right, Harrison, Andrew and Ben Nixon pose with their cocos frios and the woman who sold them at roadside.

They watched with fascination as the woman used a machete to chop off the top of the *coco*, allowing a straw to be inserted for their taste of a coconut drink. The *cocos* were a new experience for the boys, but a visit to the crocodile sanctuary at La Manzanilla stirred their imagination.

About an hour's drive north of Manzanillo is the small seaside town of La Manzanilla where crocs can be viewed safely from an elevated walkway through the mangroves alongside a lagoon. While the *cocodrilos* appeared to be more interested in a siesta than paying attention to tourists, seeing the huge crocs up close was a great experience for all of us.



At 15 pesos for adults and 10 pesos for children, the croc sanctuary at La Manzanilla provides a unique experience.



While Harrison appears to be eaten by a croc, his brother Andrew tries to ride the croc to submission, but parents Troy and Tara and brother Ben seem less concerned.

The walk alongside the lagoon, which is well populated with crocodiles, includes a walk over a small suspension bridge and up the steps to an observation tower. As well as seeing many huge crocodiles in the water or out, we watched for birds, which are a major interest for us in the Manzanillo area. We were rewarded by seeing a great egret, a green-backed heron, and orange-fronted parakeets in the trees, plus a large iguana no more concerned about visitors than the *cocodrilos* themselves.



Our daughter, Tara, like her three boys and husband, had a chance to handle a cute and cuddly baby croc, nearly three years old and seemingly used to being held.



A green-backed heron is on the hunt for lunch at water's edge in the crocodile sanctuary at La Manzanilla. A small and colorful heron about 18 inches long, it is generally common, often solitary and favours water areas with woodland cover.



The great egret at far right seems unconcerned about any threat posed by the nearby crocodiles at the sanctuary, even when one croc has its jaws open!



Even a huge crocodile can look handsome! From the safety of the walkway, visitors see dozens of the fearsome creatures close-up. If you are lucky you may have a chance to see the monsters put their huge jaws work when fed. At right, a parakeet in the trees, and an iguana, below, add to the interest of a fascinating tour



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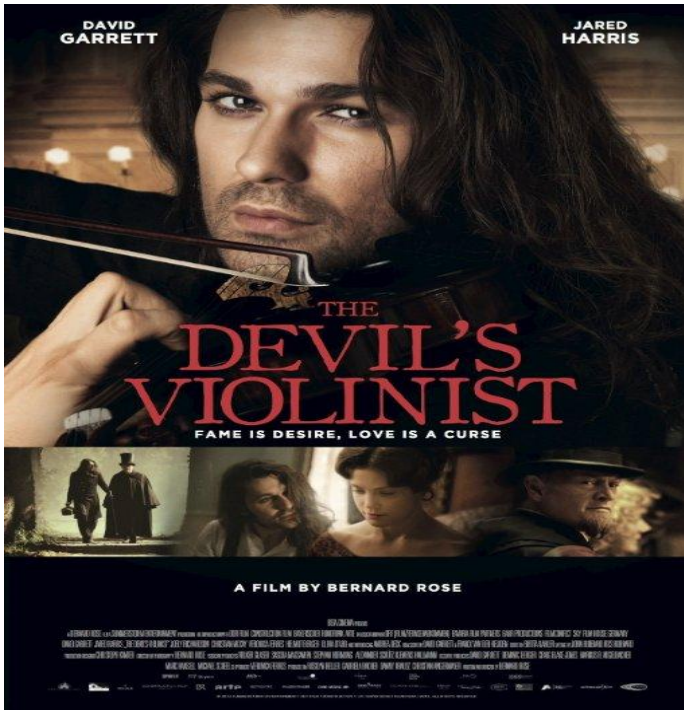
AT THE MOVIES

Suzanne A. Marshall

The Devil's Violinist

Starring: David Garrett, Jared Harris

Director: Bernard Rose



"The film chronicles the life of Italian violinist and composer Niccolò Paganini, who rose to fame as a virtuoso in the early 19th century". Although the production offers the story up as a true depiction, I couldn't help but feel that it stretched the bounds of reality with an interpretation that may or may not be accurate. Certainly his brilliance on the violin, his relationship with Urbani, and his infamous womanizing are well known. The story is presented through a lot of hazy atmosphere and background matters that don't seem realistic.

There is one big reason to see this film and it is to watch and listen to David Garrett perform incredible pieces as and by, Paganini. The music is riveting as is the Paganini soprano solo sung later in the film by Andrea Deck. It is a beautiful piece of classical music.

I viewed this movie on Netflix. **IMDB rated the movie as 6.1/10 based on 1,508 viewers.** I would notch that down a couple of points.



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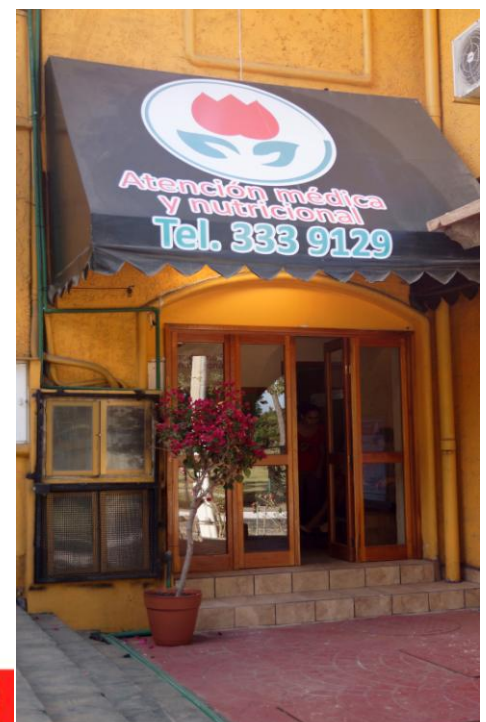
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AT THE MOVIES

Suzanne A. Marshall

The Cobbler

Starring: Adam Sandler, Steve Buscemi, Dan Stevens
Director: Thomas McCarthy



"Max Simkin repairs shoes in the same New York shop that has been in his family for generations. Disenchanted with the grind of daily life, Max stumbles upon a magical heirloom that allows him to step into the lives of his customers and see the world in a new way. Sometimes, walking in another man's shoes is the only way one can discover who they really are."

When I decide to see an Adam Sandler movie I expect to have a good chuckle, enjoy a little sentiment and be entertained by some silly story that breaks away from the current onslaught of science fiction and brutality. My expectations were met and I thoroughly enjoyed groaning and chuckling my way through the movie. Sometimes we all need to lighten up!

I viewed this 2014 movie at the local theatre.

IMDB rated this movie as 5.8/10 based on 7,644 viewers to date.




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Mexican Vanilla, Make an Informed Choice.

Suzanne A. Marshall

Researching this article proved to be a true conundrum. I was not expecting to find so much conflicting information regarding what 'is' and 'is not' real vanilla. In my mind it was a simple task to purchase vanilla, especially here in Manzanillo. It's Mexico! For me, the real product would state that it is natural vanilla on the label. The other product would state 'imitation vanilla' on the label. Simple! But this may not be the case at all. Of course the imitation product is what it claims to be. However, finding a truly natural vanilla extract is much more complicated.



For some long-forgotten reason, I had also acquired a predetermined mind-set that real vanilla would not contain alcohol. I stand corrected. In fact real vanilla extract can only be made with the use of alcohol. If the label on the bottle does not say that alcohol is an ingredient then it cannot be the true extract. One of my sources went as far

as to say that *"more than 99% of all so-called vanilla extract bought in retail venues in Latin America is imitation vanilla."* This statement seemed much exaggerated. Now my quest for the truth became a true challenge.



Until the latter part of the 19th century, Mexican vanilla enjoyed a monopoly. Business prospered in the vanilla growing regions on the Gulf of Mexico. Vanilla pods (beans, sticks) grow from the most beautiful flowering orchids. By the early 20th century, competition from heavily vested French plantations nurtured for decades in other tropical climates began to gain control of the world vanilla market. This was further complicated for the Mexicans by the Mexican Revolution. On the heels of the revolution, development by petroleum companies in the gulf region began stripping the natural forestation. Growing vanilla became even more difficult.



Meanwhile, synthetic products were developing in Germany as cheaper alternatives. It was soon discovered that a synthetic product named vanillin could be made from paper pulp and coal tar. Apparently, Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean began to sell the cheap synthetic vanillas with great success and profit! By adding coumarin to synthetic vanillin, the flavor was a little more like pure vanilla. Coumarin is a toxic substance especially to the liver, and has been banned in the USA since the 1950's. Be wary of purchasing products outside the USA and do some serious investigation when buying in Mexico. Beware of the sidewalk vendors and tourist markets and stick to reputable merchants. Be prepared for 'sticker shock' when buying vanilla since the true vanilla extract is extremely labor intense to produce and therefore expensive. There is no such thing as cheap vanilla extract so I gather.



Here is what I have gleaned from my readings as to choosing a good vanilla:

1. Vanilla flavor and vanilla extract are not the same thing.
2. Make sure the label states pure vanilla extract. If the label does not include alcohol, it cannot be

real vanilla extract. Products without alcohol are vanilla flavor. Alcohol is the prime factor used for extraction. The USA Food and Drug Administration standard requires: 13.5 ounces of vanilla beans in one gallon of liquid consisting of 35% alcohol and 65% water.

3. It will not be 'cheap'. Internet pricing at this time appears to be about \$11.00 to \$12 US for a 16 oz./500ml bottle. If used for baking only tiny amounts are suggested so this bottle would last a long time.

Though I cannot and will not endorse products, I will tell you that I have purchased for my own use a product found locally in Manzanillo called Orlando. The vanilla beans are grown organically, without pesticides; they follow the USA standards and are accurately labelled. You may wish to check out their website for more details at: http://orlandomx.com/index_eng.html

Other information about vanilla extract:

Natural vanilla extract contains numerous antioxidants including vanillin acid, and vanillin. Antioxidants protect our bodies from damaging harmful components such as free radicals and toxins.

In a 2007 research publication from the "Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry" vanilla extracts were found to contain 26% to 90% of the antioxidants of unprocessed vanilla. (Depending on the type of antioxidants and extract concentration). They concluded that vanilla showed great potential as a health supplement and as a food preservative.

As a natural antioxidant vanillin may have anti-inflammatory properties and liver protection capabilities though research has not been done for humans.

Using high doses of vanillin, animal studies, have demonstrated a significant reduction in total blood cholesterol levels in rats.

The future looks bright for the potential of vanilla extract. Over and above it's delicious flavoring in baked goods, ice-cream and such, I like to add a teaspoon to my coffee grinds when I'm brewing a pot. Highly recommended.



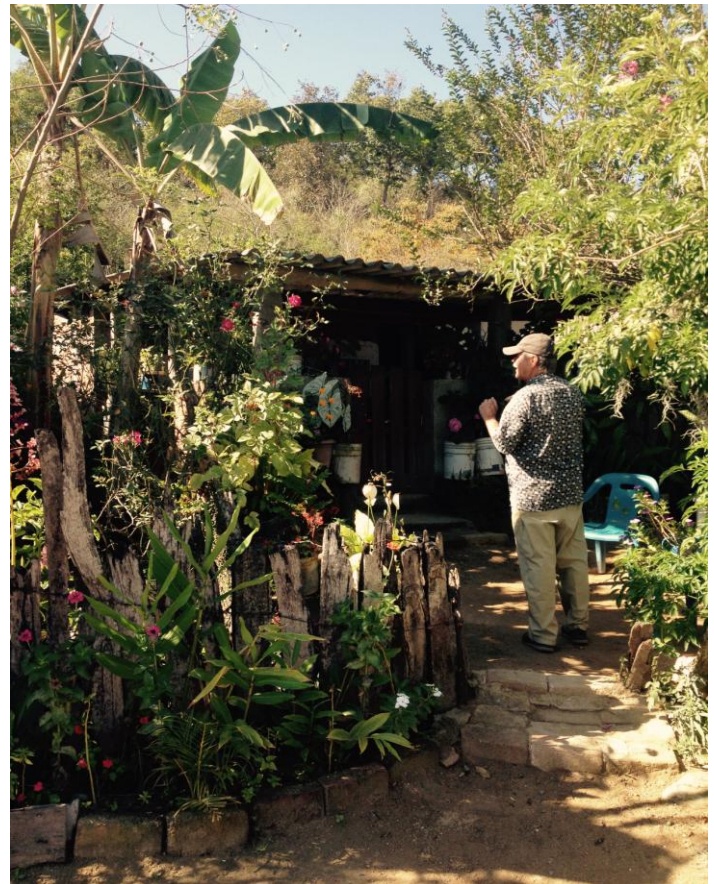
Treks with Tommy

"They call me 'Chicken'"

Alex Banasik is a pal of mine from Clive, Iowa – a suburb of Des Moines – where he owns and operates the Down Under Bar and Grill. He has a condo here in Manzanillo and comes down to relax when he can find the time to do so. But, I believe we are in full agreement that his visits are too few and way too far between!

However, when he is here, he's always ready for the unexpected and seems to enjoy accompanying me in my "trundles to the interior". This trip, taken in mid-April, started out through the hilly, twisted road that divides Chan Diablo and then wound its way through assorted other small villages and *colonias* such as Vela de Camotlan and San Jose' de Lumber ultimately terminating in the general La Rosa area.

While parked on the road edge we paused to savor the absolute absence of all manner of – not only urban noise, but also – any sound emanating from humanity. The pure, peaceful, quiet of nature – with only an occasional bird's song – was, for city dwellers such as we, simple, unadulterated bliss.



We stopped at the home of one of my elderly lady friends with whom I trade plants



Enroute, we found a new species of cliff-side dwelling fern

Driving slowly, enroute, we found a new species of cliff-side dwelling fern that had, heretofore, not been among *Ola Brisa Garden's* collection of this plant family.

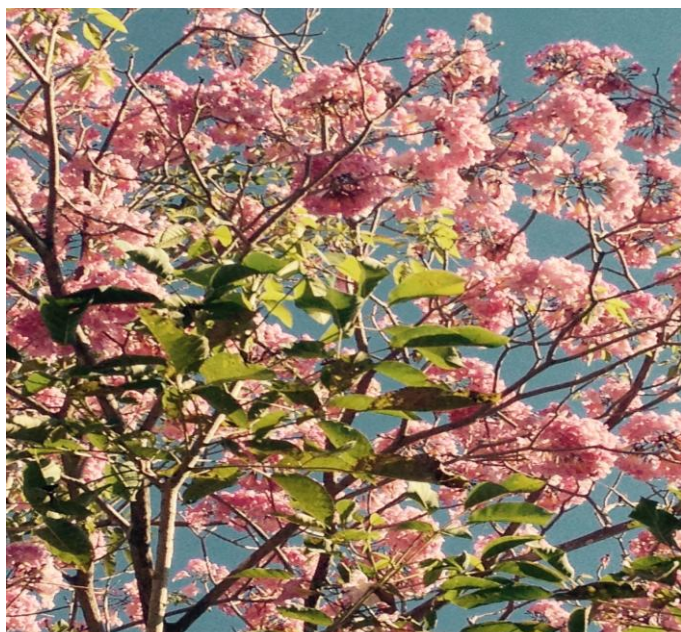
Finally, we forced ourselves to leave this wondrous absence of sound, drove on a ways further on the winding, two-lane and then stopped at one of my "girl-friend's". (That's what Patty calls my numerous "little old ladies" with whom I exchange plants during these excursions.)

Though I called out to her repeatedly, sadly this time, she wasn't home. But soon a young man emerged from the *casa* behind her home. In English a bit better than my Spanish (which doesn't take much) he introduced himself saying, "They call me Chicken."



Alex, like me, wondered how in the world these *Curcuma Phaeocaulis* got from SE Asia to rural Colima Mexico!

After explaining my mission, I left for my elderly “Lady Friend” what I’d brought for her: a small variegated Oyster Plant and two baby “Giants” – a Giant Crinum, from the island states of Seychelles and Mauritius in the Indian Ocean and a Giant Aloe from Barbados. With a shy, sincere smile, he assured me that he’d get them to her. We expressed our thanks, re-mounted “Shane the Jungle Truck” and continued on our leisurely meander.



We stopped to admire this Pink Trumpet Tree (*Tabebuia rosea*).

After stopping for pictures of a flowering, Pink Trumpet Tree (*Tabebuia rosea*) and a multi-podded, Earpod Tree (*Enterolobium cyclocarpum*) we proceeded on to the *casa* of another of my country friends where he, his wife and aged mother met and greeted us.

There, beneath a grove of banana trees, Alex marveled at the *Curcuma phaeocaulis* flowers and I showed him their velvety leaf undersides. (For more on this amazing plant that you’d never expect to find in the middle of Colima, Mexico, see my “ROOTS” article on our site at: www.olabrisagardens.com)

Then, our host who had apparently determined that we required nourishment, proceeded to husk a couple of small ears of fresh corn, impaled one ear at a time onto a rough, bent skewer and roasted them over the charcoal heat emanating from his family’s ancient appearing, clay oven



Our crunchy lunch of roasted corn was prepared on this clay oven.

Once he’d decided that they were ready, he carefully pulled the hot, blackened kernel, ears away from the fire, wrapped them in the green husks and presented them to us for consumption.

As an old Kansas farm kid, I had learned many years ago to enjoy the tough, chewiness of field corn . . . sans butter, salt and/or pepper! In turn, good sport that



And I gotta' admit, I enjoyed it!

Alex is – though living most of the year in Iowa, the very home of the best sweet corn in the world – he indicated appreciation and, too, munched away!

To wash it down we were provided a fruit juice concoction of unknown origin. A bit tart with a flavor and slight unrecognizable odor, it went down equally well! (Such is the nature of wonderful, kind hospitality I encounter with every trip I take into the Mexican countryside!)

Inside this small thatched structure, in which we stood, with its black, smoke-sooted roof, we observed a hanging wire basket of – truly – country-fresh, eggs collected from the hens that cackled and picked at the bare dirt outside, as well as shreds of beef jerky that hung on a line over the clay oven to dry.

Next, following our noses, we threaded our way through the vegetation a hundred feet or so beyond their home, over to a work area from whence a sweet smoky aroma emanated. There we watched several men hack apart huge, Agave “pineapples” that had been

slow cooking” in preparation for making tequila. Grinning, they cut off and gave us large, brown chunks on which to chew. It was of an interesting (not unpleasant) texture and taste and we nibbled on them all the way home.

But, as concerns country munchies, I had to draw the proverbial line of “no” when offered a three inch, still alive, caterpillar! It was, I believe, the same variety – but the Great-Grand-Daddy of them all – that one often finds in the bottom of bottles of Mezcal.

In gracious and unnecessary reciprocation for the plant “babies” brought to them from our gardens, we were then rewarded with kind gifts of a new (to me) species of armed bromeliad and a very large padded cactus of a sort I’d not seen before.

So, appetites sated, two new garden succulents carefully ensconced in the bed of the truck and pockets full of new experiences now tucked into our memories, in haltingly faulty Spanish we strove to indicate our appreciation and climbed back aboard Shane. During the drive homeward to stop lights, gringo fast food chains and the general cacophony of the city, we mulled the morning over, compared our lives to theirs in appreciation for both and heartily agreed that it had been a day well spent



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What do you need to buy a car in Mexico?

Señior Tech

This month I will be writing an article less about tech and more about transportation in Manzanillo. For the past seven years we have taxied, bussed, and walked around Manzanillo. The walking was beneficial to our health but limited where we could explore. Luckily we purchased our condo in a central area of Salagua on the beach. Groceries, movies, doctors, dentists, and restaurants are all within a few minutes walk. But to see the sites, we needed an automobile.

Three years ago we landed in Manzanillo, with the intent of acquiring our permanent residence visas. A week after we landed, the rules changed and we were informed that the process now had to be initiated outside Mexico. We were told by a number of people that we needed to have either a temporary or permanent residence visa to setup a banking account, buy a car, or register for Mexican health insurance.

When we returned in the spring, Calgary city centre was flooded, and so the Mexican Consulate was closed. We were unable to get an appointment before our return to Manzanillo. So we thought we would start the next year. We were given a meeting time in August, but had to cancel due to a scheduling conflict. They setup another meeting in mid October and we thought that we were set. Then in October 2014, Calgary city centre was again closed, due to an electrical fire in the electrical cables that fed electricity for the downtown area.

We were beginning to think this was a sign that we were not destined to get visas for Mexico.

We have survived many years without a vehicle, but we wanted a car to travel. The Manzanillo rental car industry had not served us well. One year, we arrived at ZLO airport with friends expecting to pickup the rental I had booked and reserved a month earlier. At the rental desk, we were told that they had rented our reserved car because someone paid for it first. I asked what a reservation meant and the clerk politely smiled and said they didn't have any more cars. We have had other bad experiences, but the spring of 2014 was the last straw. I reserved a car at Thrifty (don't let the name fool you) for 10 days. The cost was supposed to be \$230.00. Our homeowner's insurance provides

\$1,000,000.00 CDN liability coverage for auto rentals outside Canada or the USA. Manzanillo Thrifty rentals said that their insurance is required for car rental. Total cost of the rental was over \$600.00. We had friends arriving for a visit so I didn't have a choice but to pay. By the way, all Manzanillo car rental agencies operate the same. This policy is not Mexico wide as I have rented cars in Guadalajara without the need to purchase their insurance.

But I digress. On our return to Manzanillo, we decided to go to the Nissan dealership and see if there was any way to purchase, lease or rent a car with a tourist visa. I asked our sales man Juan Carlos, what was required in order to buy a car in Mexico; his reply Money. Another lesson learned, do not listen to rumours, find out for yourself.

I now take perverse pleasure driving by the auto rental shops.

I don't want to use this space as a personal soapbox, but if you can avoid renting a car in Manzanillo, please do so. At least until the rental agencies, discontinue their anti-tourism tactics.

I also wanted to give some kudos to Nissan. Part of the purchase service includes registration of plates, and free covered parking for the first 6 months. The plate registration saves a day standing around the motor vehicle branch. When we dropped our car to be stored while we were home in Canada, Juan Carlos (our salesman) drove us to the airport. I will write a follow-up when we return to Manzanillo in November.





A Backward Glance

By Kirby Vickery

I have been putting this series together for a number of months with the help of friends both of Anglo and of Hispanic heritage. There has arisen a discussion as to the rightfulness of the northern Mexican border, its acquisition, and placement geographically. I have found an excellent article and am forwarding most of it below to help clarify and explain the history and validity of this treaty:

Treaty of Guadalupe Is Still Relevant Today

by Patrisia Gonzales & Roberto Rodriguez

From 1998 [1848] to 1998 marks the 150th anniversary of the Mexican-American War. The most important individual anniversary will be the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which took place on Feb. 2, 1848, and which formally ended the two-year conflict between the United States and Mexico.

While some people (and many U.S. courts) see the treaty as dead, others see it as the basic document that governs relations between both countries. Still others see it as a living human rights document that pertains to people of Mexican origin residing in the United States.

Many of us were raised with the idea that the war against Mexico was simply pretext for stealing its territory, and the treaty, negotiated under military duress and signed by a corrupt dictator, simply formalized the theft of half of Mexico's territory--a violation of international law. (As a result of the war, Mexico lost land that now makes up the Southwestern United States).

While many Mexican Americans view the treaty in this context, it did guarantee Mexicans and their descendants who remained in the ceded territories certain political rights, including land rights. But by the end of the century, most Mexicans had lost their land, either through force or fraud.

During the early Chicano movement in the 1960s, New Mexico land rights crusader Reies Lopez Tijerina and his Alianza movement invoked the Treaty of Guadalupe in their struggle. In 1972, the Brown Berets youth organization also invoked it in their symbolic takeover of Catalina Island, off the Southern California coast.

For more than 15 years, many Chicano indigenous groups have cited the treaty in their struggle for the human rights of Chicanos in international forums, such as the U.N. They maintain, however, that the Mexican and indigenous peoples living in what is today the Southwest U.S. were not signatories. Native American peoples have also referred to it in their legal disputes.

Despite the fact that "It's not our treaty," says Rocky Rodriguez, national director of the Denver-based National Chicano Human Rights Council, Chicanos in the United States today are also covered by it.

When it comes to fighting for human rights cases, especially those of land theft and law enforcement abuse, seeking relief through U.S. courts is basically of no use to Chicanos, says Rodriguez. People of Chicano/Mexican origin rarely win when they use or encounter the judicial system, she says.

Richard Griswold del Castillo, a San Diego State University history professor, considers the treaty a living document, and studies the subject in his recent book, "The Treaty of Guadalupe: A Legacy of Conflict." (Griswold del Castillo, Richard. University of Oklahoma Press. July 31, 1990) Upon examining the document and its 23 articles negotiated by both countries, the most startling thing that stands out is that article 10 is missing. That article, which was deleted by the U.S. Senate upon ratification, explicitly protected the land rights of Mexicans. Additionally, article 9, which deals with citizenship rights, was weakened.

The key to understanding the treaty, however, is not so much what's in it, but rather, what isn't in it. According to precedents set by U.S./Indian treaties, people do not automatically lose their rights when they lose a war. People possess inherent and universal human rights and when treaties are negotiated, the people involved can lose only the rights specifically agreed upon.

In "American Indians, American Justice," by Vine Deloria and Clifford M. Lytle (Vine, Deloria. Jr. and, Lytle.Clifford M. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983.), the author's state that courts, in recognizing the past exploitation and the use of force against American Indians, developed a set of judicial rules in dealing with disputes. In effect, they are

guiding principles when dealing with U.S./Indian treaties. According to the author's one of the rules states: "Treaties reserve to Indians all rights that have not been granted away." This is known as the "Reserved Rights Doctrine."

It thus follows that Mexicans in the U.S. did not lose their rights, unless that was stipulated in the treaty. And of course, no such stipulation was made. Also, these same rules call on judges to interpret treaties in the manner that reasonable people would interpret them. And it can be assumed that reasonable people don't "give away" their lands or rights in treaties.

Reflecting over the United State's history of violated treaties, Rodriguez says, "Indian prophecies predicted trickery in the north [America] and brute force in the south. Here [in the Southwest U.S.], both have been used."ⁱ

ⁱ Gonozales, Patrisia, and Rodriguez, Roberto. "Treaty of Guadalupe Is Still Relevant Today." <Indian.Org>. July 31, 1990.

From my own classes I can tell you that you may or may not agree with the reasoning, the cause, or even the legality of this treaty but, that isn't my point here. The thrust of the above tends to expose the exploitation of the Hispanic and Indian populations living in the area affected by the treaty by the American government. I do know that the Mexican government was invited to make a joint survey of the border and that the Mexican government apparently had problems fielding teams but in the end accepted the boundaries surveyed by the U.S. In reality there were two teams contracted from each country. One ran east to west from El Paso and the other worked the other way from San Diego. My intent is to present the legends of the Aztec who were long gone from this area when this agreement was made between the two countries. This I shall do.

There is an interesting side story which my Grandfather (*the dude in the middle*) tells about the Treaty of Hidalgo. Historically the treaty led to the establishment of the International Boundary and Water Commission in 1889. Its function put the onus on the U.S. to: Maintain the border. Allocate waters between the two nations. Provide for flood control and water sanitation.

What isn't much remembered was the fact that the Rio Grande River flooded every spring. There is a plain which runs down the eastern part of central New Mexico. This plain extends just west of Mount Franklin of which



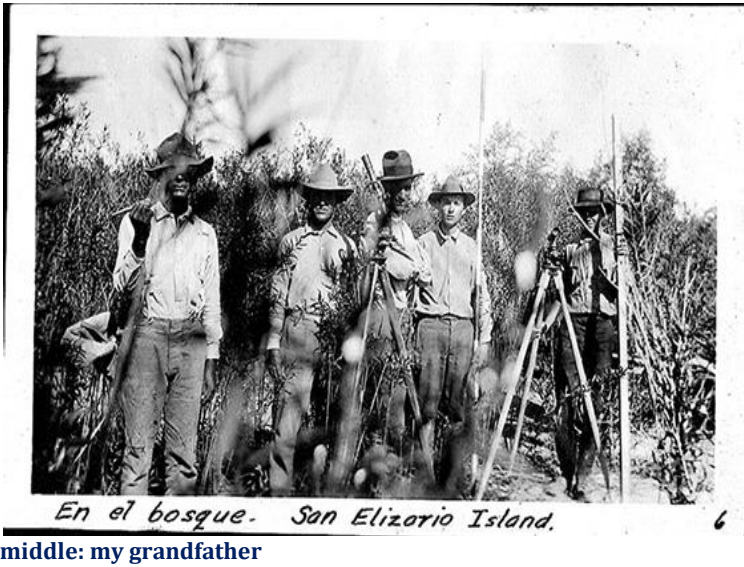

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El Paso is built around. Juarez Mexico shares this pass and these floods were wiping out most of the Mexican city every year. The fix took several years with the building of Elephant Butte and Cabrillo Dams in New Mexico and an extensive irrigation and water control system in El Paso County.

My Grandfather did most of the surveying of the outlay of Cabrillo and was running a survey crew in 1917 trying to establish a solid Rio Grande River course just south of El Paso. James Easter ('JB' to his friends) tells that they actually had gotten a little lost on this island in the river when they were discovered and captured by the Mexican Army. Please understand that the so called "Border War" between Mexico and the U.S. had just ended and nerves along the border were frayed at best. General Blackjack Pershing had returned to Fort Clark Springs in Del Rio (a few hours south of El Paso). One of his lieutenants was later to command the taking of northern Africa, Italy, and the Battle of the Bulge. George Patton got his training under Pershing during this small 'war.'

My grandfather tells of waking up one morning surrounded by the Mexican Army. He and his crew were marched and trucked to a prison outside Juarez. He also stated that when the local commandant got word of this capture, their treatment changed a great deal. The entire team was then wined and dined and put up in the finest accommodations until they could be repatriated. The commandant made my grandfather promise to tell the news papers that everyone was well treated. And, this he did.

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Is It Time to Increase Your International Equity Allocation?

Yann Kotic

Foreign stocks had a losing year in 2014, with the MSCI EAFE Index, a wide benchmark of international stock markets, losing 4.90 percent. That's far worse than the U.S. benchmark S&P 500 Index, which gained 13.69 percent. But that doesn't mean you should avoid foreign stocks.

First, non-U.S. equities make up almost half of the broad MSCI All Country World Index, and foreign countries have become more prominent contributors to the world's gross domestic product (GDP). Thus, foreign stocks give investors the chance to broaden their opportunities and their portfolios.

Second, the recent performance of foreign stocks might drive away some investors, but others see it as an opportunity to get a bargain. Different asset classes tend to perform differently at different times, with what's down going up and vice versa. Indeed, many foreign stocks are cheaper than U.S. stocks based on such common measurements as price-to-earnings ratio and price-to-book value, and they may offer higher dividend yields. While cheaper valuations don't guarantee higher returns, they may be appealing to certain investors.

Finally, over the long term, international stocks have outperformed U.S. stocks, with the MSCI EAFE Index returning an annual average of 7.67 percent over the past ten years ending December 31, 2014, vs. 4.43 percent for the S&P 500 Index.

Do you think international equities might be right for you? If so, please consult your financial advisor, who's familiar with your individual financial circumstances and goals and can help you determine the role such investments may play in your overall portfolio.

Yann Kotic is a Financial Advisor (RIA) and Money Manager with Atlantis Wealth Management, specializing in retirees (or soon to be), self-reliant women and Expats in Mexico. Due to a recent transition to an international custodian, firm clients are now allowed to hold multiple currencies in a single account, including US, Canadian dollars and Mexican pesos for instance. Yann splits his time between Florida and Lake Chapala/Manzanillo. Comments, questions or to request his Newsletter "News You Can Use". Contact him at Yannk@AtlantisWealth.com, in Mexico: (376) 106-1613 or in the US: (321) 574-1529

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