

PLANTS ABOUT US

USES OF THE NIPA

Our national tree is the narra. But the humble nipa plant, friend of poor and rich alike would be a more fitting symbol of our islands. The typical Filipino family lives in a nipa house.

The nipa plant is a modest member of the family of palms. It grows humbly in muddy tidal flats or in narrow strips along inland streams. In the public forests of the Philippines alone there are more than 52,000 hectares of nipa swamps. Nipa gatherers cut maturing petioles and slash the leaflets with a sharp knife. The leaflets are then doubled back about one third of their length, arranged over a slender piece of bamboo so that they overlap, and then sewed on with sliced rattan making a shingle. Bundled in tens, the shingles are then shipped to the towns by cart and boat, peddled on the street by loud-voiced porters. They sell for from ₱3 to ₱7 a thousand, depending on the grade of nipa.

Nipa has other uses. The leaves can be made into raincoats, sun hats, wrappings for rice cake. The midribs can be made into brooms. The petioles serve as food when young, or as firewood when dry. Even the seeds are edible. But its most popular product is tuba. For three months

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SAMPAGUITA

By MOISES S. VIVIEZCA



Sampaguita! Lovely flower! Full of promise!

The sampaguita is the national flower of the Philippines. It is made the national flower of our land by the proclamation issued by Governor-General Frank Murphy on February 1, 1934, through the recommendation of a committee appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture and Commerce.

Nearly every well organized country in the world has adopted a certain flower to represent its traditions. Japan, for example, has her chrysanthemum. France her fleur-de-lis, and America her wild rose. There is much in a flower to have and to hold,—its fragrance, its loveliness, its charm.

The sampaguita is the symbol of our wealthiest sentiments. It depicts the physical and mental character of our people. Its fragrance brings back sweet memories. It gives courage to old age and hope to the youth. It is enchanting when worn as a necklace. The sampaguita plays an important part in the legends and traditions of the Filipino people. It is the most beloved flower throughout the Philippines. Its pure white fragrant blossom symbolizes purity, humility, love, hope, and reverence.

THE ROOM OF A . . .

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not squirm. It does not crawl out of the jug while the wasp is away hunting, for more. She brings another and another and another, until the jug is full of limp caterpillars.

The next time the wasp comes she has something different in her mouth. It is a ball of clay, and with it she plugs the mouth of the jug very smoothly and nicely. The little potter has now finished the jug that she made and filled and sealed without any help. She will not come back to it again.

The mother wasp has no need of her finished jug, but there is something inside that

has use for the canned meat that has been packed away. Before she sealed the jug, the mother insect put in an egg. When the egg hatched, the baby wasp would have plenty of food to eat, and there is nothing that would agree with it so well as tiny caterpillars. As this kind of young wasp is a soft, helpless, footless little thing (much like a baby hornet or a bee) it cannot catch food for itself. It does not need to try. There is enough in the jug.

About twelve days later a little hole will be broken in on one side of the jug and out will come a queer, little slender-waisted creature that with an uneasy lift of her tiny wings

USES OF THE NIPA

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the nipa flower stalk yields a fine flow of juice. This is collected by the thousand of liters, distilled into alcohol, made into vinegar or sugar, or allowed to ferment to become tuba. So you see how useful a plant nipa is. It will keep your house dry, sweep your floors, feed your fires and warm the heart. Like the bamboo, mother nature seems to have especially provided the nipa plant for people like us who live in the tropics.

Can you add to the many uses of the nipa that you have heard about today?

flies to the window, out into the sunshine.

KIKO'S ADVENTURES

