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By: Stefan Anitei, Science Editor



Nature's Largest Fruits and Seeds

With no human help!

There are pumpkins that could make a nice Halloween 'lamp' for an elephant. By selection, patience and a little bit of luck and the passion of the cultivators of the variety of Atlantic Giant pumpkins have obtained squashes weighing up to 760 kg (1,689-pound). But remember: these are man-selected plants, which reach such colossal dimensions only when grown on an organic compost with added fertilizers (like nitrogen, potassium and phosphate). But nature has other champions, too. Centuries ago, Portuguese and Spanish navigators, in their way towards India, encountered in the Indian Ocean some gigantic fruits floating over the waves like green buoys. In the past, people paid a heavy price for these "sea coconuts" as they believed they had miraculous powers. The first sailors seeing the nut floating in the sea resembled it to a woman's buttocks. The 16th century Europe nobles used these giant nut shells as collectibles. The enigma was solved when the Seychelles Archipelago (in the Indian Ocean) was discovered: these were the fruits of a 34 m (113 ft) tall palm tree called sea coconut tree (*Lodoicea maldivica*), growing only on two islets: Praslin and Curieuse. The nut has a diameter of 50 cm (1.6 ft) and weighs up to 30 kg (67 pounds), being the heaviest natural fruit. From this nut, you can make a pot of 5-6 liters. This nut harbors 1-4 seeds. A sea coconut seed represents the largest seed in the world: up to 6 kg (13 pounds). When the nut is ripping, the milk inside turns into a white flesh rich in sugars and fats. The huge seed requires up to 7 years to mature and two to germinate. The tube connecting the germinating sea coconut tree to the seed can be up to 10 m (33 ft) long! Only rotted nuts float on the sea, up to 4,000 km (2,500 mi) away from Seychelles. The coconut trees have separated sexes, thus only the female trees produce the huge nuts. On the coasts of western Europe, the Gulf Stream can drag another tropical seeds. These are the sea beans or sea hearts. They are produced by a vine growing on the Atlantic coast of tropical America (Central America, Antilles, Columbia). The woody vine, called *Entada gigas*, can grow over 30 m long and in Costa Rica is called "the monkeys' staircase", as monkeys use it for passing from tree to tree. [img=2]These seeds can have just 6 cm (2.2 in) in diameter, but they grow inside a pod 2 m (6.6 ft) long! This is the longest fruit in the world. Inside the pod, the seeds are located in round segments separated by grooves. The pod turns woody when ripe, and the segments split, floating separately from each other on the rivers, and if they do not get stuck on the banks, where they germinate, they can be drained by the rivers into the Atlantic (more specifically, the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean) and because they can float (each seed compartment has an air chamber), they can be transported in a journey lasting for months by the Gulf Stream to the US and European shores of the Atlantic, up to Scandinavia and UK. In temperate shores, the seeds cannot germinate, but people collect them, for making reliquaries, and for adorning boxes. In England, mothers give these seeds to their toddlers during the teeth eruption for chewing them. Sailors used them as protective talismans. Scientists believe that once the pods were eaten by extinct elephant-sized giant sloths.