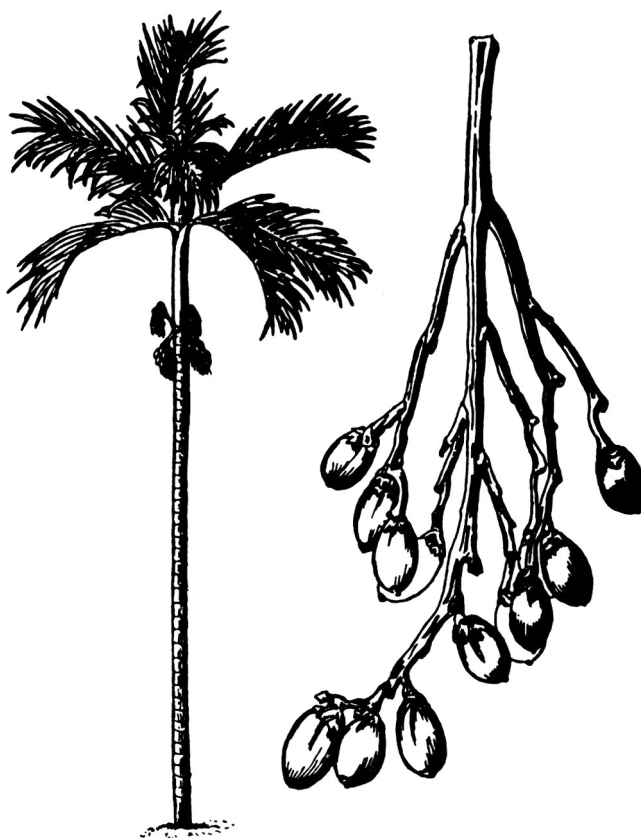


42. *ARECA CATECHU* L. (ARECACEAE) — Betel-Nut Palm, Areca, Areca-Nut

Chief use of betel nut is as a breath sweetening masticatory, enjoyed for centuries by about one-tenth the human population. Slices of the nut, together with a little lime and other ingredients, are folded in a betel pepper leaf (*Piper betel*) and fastened with a clove. Sometimes nuts are ground up with other materials and carried about in a pouch similar to a tobacco pouch. Betel chewing is often an after-dinner or social affair. Chewing colors the saliva red and stains teeth and gums black, eventually destroying the teeth. Some oriental dentists, however, believe the mastication may in fact benefit the teeth. The ground seeds are said to show up in certain European dentrifices. Used in the tanning industry. Extraction of areca nuts makes black and red dyes. Dried nuts are said to sweeten breath, strengthen the gums, and improve the appetite and taste. Husks are an important byproduct, used for insulating wool, boards, and for manufacturing furfural. Inoculated with yeast (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*), leaves used as a fermentation stimulant in industrial alcohol production. Large, tough, sheathing parts of leaf bases are used as a substitute for cardboard or strawboard for protecting packages; also used in Philippines for hats, insoles for slippers, book-covers; makes an excellent paper pulp.

The nut, in the form of ghees, powders, bolmes, or enemas, is said to help abdominal tumors.⁴ Nuts are astringent, stomachic, stimulant and a powerful anthelmintic, especially in veterinary practice. An enema of the nut decoction works well in removing tapeworms. They are also considered digestive, emmenagogue, mitotic, and are recommended as cardiac, nervine, tonic, and as an astringent lotion for eyes, causing dilation of pupil; once used for glaucoma and malaria. Applied to ulcers, bleeding gums, and for urinary discharges. Burned