
What Seed Would You Take To An Uninhabited Tropical Island?

Dr. Frank is known to many of you as author of several books and articles on tropical subsistence farming. He works at the Mayaguez Institute of Tropical Agriculture (USDA) in Puerto Rico. Currently his research centers around sweet potato improvement for the tropics. We recently received from him the following interesting note:

"If I were to go to an uninhabited island in the hot, humid tropics, taking with me the seeds with which I think I could best provide myself food, I think I would take the following. Roots and Tubers (1) sweet potatoes -- the variety Gem (orange fleshed) and some white-fleshed types, (2) yams -- *Dioscorea alata* and *D. esculenta*, selected varieties, (3) cassava -- some true seed to start my own, (4) Queensland arrowroot (*Canna edulis*), very easy to grow and productive. Grains (1) corn, (2) okra, for edible seed and well as green fruit, (3) wax gourd* (*Benincasa hispida*) for edible seed as well as squash-like fruit. Legumes (1) Catjang cowpeas (climbing, disease resistant forms), (2) winged bean* (3) *Dolichos lablab* beans*, (4) asparagus beans. Leavy Vegetables (1) chaya, (2) sunset hibiscus, (3) Tahitian taro (*Xanthosoma brasiliensis*), (4) Indian lettuce* (*Lactuca indica*). Fruit Vegetables. (1) tropical pumpkin, (2) okra, (3) small-fruited, indeterminate tomatoes, (4) hot pepper, (5) ensalada pepper*,-- variety selected for its edible leaves. Trees (1) bananas, (2) breadfruit, (3) limes (West Indian, from seed), (4) tamarind, (5) papaya, (6) mangoes (from seed, turpentine type but selected)."

ECHO can provide small quantities of seed for those items with an asterisk. If you visit us, I can give you cuttings of chaya and sunset hibiscus, but these are not propagated by seed as far as I am aware.