

Talipot palm (*Corypha umbraculifera*)

Halgolla Plantation Home

Accommodation of a different kind

– May 2015 –

The seemingly never-ending “pottering around” at HPH continues apace!

Thanks to cousin-once-removed, Lawrence, and his backhoe, two of our “*amunas*” (dams) for additional water storage have been deepened and, in one case, the bund made higher and broader. We can now claim that we have water security for anything but the most monumental of droughts. We also seem to have succeeded in plugging the leaks in our largest spring water storage which will now supply all our needs outside the house proper, with our original supply being reserved solely for use within the house. This has entailed new plumbing on the premises, but it is a small price to pay for a very necessary enhancement which has given us a degree of security of supply of good, potable water and made enough water available for what used to be a flower garden and for our nascent butterfly garden.

A small add-on to the expansion of our water supply was a new (motorable?) roadway to Meditation Flat.

Our new crop of vanilla flowers continues to be hand-pollinated; one of our workers, Bisomenika, is Mallika’s new understudy in that endeavour.

There is a tangible sense of relief all round that the pall of repression and violence has lifted from our land; and the distinct possibility that Sri Lanka will return once again to a serenity that is long overdue seems even closer to fruition.

Sinhala and Hindu New Year was successfully celebrated and the next big holiday event is upcoming. May is the month in which the most important Buddhist celebration, Wesak, occurs. Wesak celebrates all the three important events in the life of Prince Siddhartha Gauthama who became the Buddha. It provides all Sri Lankans with the opportunity to share in the joy of those who adhere to its primary religion. The traditional night-time drives around the population centres – Colombo, in particular – to observe the elaborate *pandals* festooned with coloured lights is a Sri Lankan tradition. A piece of trivia here is that **all** the

important festivals of the four religions which claim adherents in the country are observed on an official basis with the declaration of public holidays to celebrate them. Of course, Sri Lanka’s “Fifth Religion” – cricket – is celebrated on a different level on, seemingly, every day of the year!

While we sometimes feel nearly overwhelmed with the plethora of tasks that have landed in our laps recently, the upside of that equation is that these improvements will make things even better for our guests who have become so very much a part of our lives. And (believe it or not!) all this activity provides a great deal of pleasure in the fact that there is still a life to be lived for the two septuagenarians of HPH!

Senevi is due to enter hospital late in May for a hip replacement and, as is to be expected, his family is very worried at the prospect while I keep reassuring them with the news that I am in line for a complete knee replacement, the date of which is approaching faster than I’d like!

In our efforts to cater to the increasing number of our guests who “don’t want to see **everything** in a day” but still want to savour what Sri Lanka is all about, particularly the countryside around HPH, we constantly strive to put together day trips that are exciting and enjoyable and **don’t** leave the sightseers drained at the end of the day. One of these, discovered quite by accident, was through the Murutalawa countryside, to a little tea factory in Kadugannawa, at the top of the Balana Pass through which so many invaders entered the Kandyan Kingdom only to beat ignominious retreats subsequently, their numbers devastated by malaria, near-starvation and the guerrilla fighters of the highlands!

The man in charge of the tea factory will show you exactly how the “two leaves and a bud” ends up in your tea cup, all for whatever you choose to put in the donation box in the lobby. You may also pick up a packet of good fresh tea for subsequent consumption as you leave.



Dodanwela Vihara

But the little gem on this mini-tour appears to be the Dodanwela Viharaya which, apart from its historical and archaeological importance, is simply a place of great beauty and serenity, with the grounds distinguished by a grove of majestic Iron Woods (*Mesua ferrea*), Sri Lanka's national tree. However, rather than wax poetic here, we'd suggest that you take a country road there and spend some time in the arboreal splendor of the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens as well. Give the thought to spending time exploring the **real** rural Sri Lanka if you are going to be visiting us. We'll try to help you plan this and other day trips once you've decided what you want to do.

Warm regards,
Arlene and Emil

For each booking in May -

a vanilla bean from our first crop

**in addition to the "sampler pack"
of HPH-grown and -roasted coffee**

and the "Surprise Basket" of HPH "goodies"

which has become a trademark of HPH hospitality

Halgolla Plantation Home

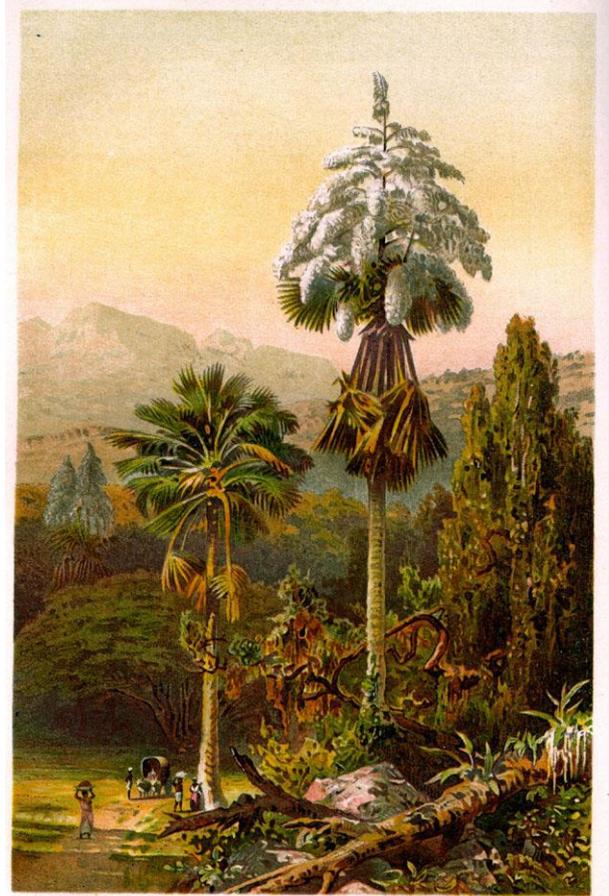
■ rated as [Best Home Stay](#) in Sri Lanka 2013

■ recommended in the [Bradt Travel Guide for Sri Lanka](#) 5th edition, 2014

Plants of interest at HPH – the Talipot palm

The Talipot palm, *Corypha umbraculifera*, is the largest of the palms. It grows for about 70 years and then goes down in a blaze of glory as it produces the largest blossoms of any plant prior to dying. The good news is the huge number of plantlets it produces in its death throes, while the bad news is that the odour of the flower is described as

resembling putrefying flesh! Anyway, the palm at HPH is a baby, so we are not likely to be overcome by a flowering talipot anytime soon! It certainly is a majestic palm and, for those of our generation, brings back memories of Buddhist priests using the fan-like fronds as a shield against the hot tropical sun as they did their rounds collecting alms for their sustenance in their begging bowls from those in the community. Alas, that religious simplicity is a thing of the past though the Talipot Palm remains to remind us of a bygone era.



Die Schattenspalme (*Corypha umbraculifera*) auf Ceylon.
Nach Aquarell von Ernst Haedkel.

The April HPH Newsletter had a reference to the Panama Rubber Tree and we **did** get some feedback, particularly indicating that the victor in that game played by Mexico's ancient inhabitants was **not** put to death. Unfortunately time and space does not permit of engaging in this debate and we'd suggest that anyone with the interest should use the facilities of the WorldWideWeb to continue their research.

HPH is highly recommended on Trip Advisor.

See what our previous [guests](#) have had to say!



TripAdvisor Mobile and Tablet Apps

We are also on [Facebook](#). Bookings can be made on [Trip Advisor](#), [Airbnb](#), [HomeStay](#), [Booking.com](#) and [Agoda](#) as well as by contacting us directly.

Sri Lanka: rated as a top tourist destination by [The Lonely Planet](#); [Condé Nast Traveller](#); [The New York Times](#); [National Geographic](#)

If you have trouble accessing these links, let us know.

For information or to book your accommodation, check our website www.halgollaplantationhome.com or contact Emil van der Poorten: emil@halgollaplantationhome.com or by phone: 94-77-347-0702 or 94-72-284-9770