

Dypsis trapezoidea

J. Dransf.

Status: **Critically endangered (CR)**

Common name

None recorded.

Natural range

Dypsis trapezoidea is restricted to hill forest on the isolated hill, Vatovavy, in the coastal plain of eastern Madagascar near to Mananjary. It occurs on gentle slopes at an elevation of approximately 400 m above sea level. The population of the palm is thought to consist of less than 50 individuals.

Recognition characteristics

It is a diminutive palm of the forest undergrowth, with solitary stems to 1.2 m tall and ca. 0.8–1.2 cm in diameter. There is a short crownshaft composed of pale-green leaf sheaths to 6.5 cm long. There are about seven leaves in the crown, and they are up to 50 cm long, including a petiole to 19 cm long. The leaflets are few in number, not more than 10 on each side of the rachis, and they are irregularly grouped, most distinctively trapezoid in shape with jagged tips. The inflorescence is erect and held between the leaves; it is generally much shorter than the leaves and bears very few (fewer than 5) short branches to 5.5 cm long. Fruit is fusiform and cherry red, with homogeneous endosperm.

Natural history

Little is known about the natural history of the species.

Threats to survival

The forests of Vatovavy have been eroded by shifting cultivation at lower elevations. Because of the rich and diverse palm flora and its easy accessibility to a main road, Vatovavy has become a target for palm enthusiasts and seed collectors. Although there is no direct evidence of seed collecting, it seems very probable that seeds are removed from the site.

Current Conservation Measures

There are no formal current conservation measures. However, Vatovavy receives some protection from local people through customary beliefs. If the hill can be formally designated as a protected area, then the prospects for this little palm will be much improved.

Additional Necessary Conservation Actions

A demographic study of the palm should be performed and it should also be searched for elsewhere on hills nearby.

References

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