

## A tropical drift seed of *Entada gigas* from the French coast.

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**Abstract** : A tropical drift seed of the leguminose *Entada gigas* was found on the beach of Marquenterre (Somme). Only 3 other records exist of this well known tropical drift seed. They are probably more common on the NW French coast, but has been little searched for.

**Résumé** : Une graine flottante de la légumineuse tropicale *Entada gigas* a été recoltée sur une plage de Marquenterre (Département de la Somme). Seules trois autres graines de cette plante sont connues des côtes françaises. Des graines flottantes tropicales doivent être plus communes sur la côte NW de France.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, 1990, one of us (T. P.) collected a seed of *Entada gigas* (L.) Fawcett et Rendle on the beach of Marquenterre / Quend-Plage, 5 km north of the Baie de Somme. It was found in recent drift, dating from westerly storms of this spring, amongst dying bivalves thrown on the beach by the same storms.

*Entada gigas* is one of the best known tropical drift seeds. In older drift literature (e.g. Guppy, 1917) it was usually referred to *E. scandens* Benthham, a pantropical species. According to Gunn & Dennis (1976) now the new world *E. gigas* is separated from the old world species *E. phaseoloides* (L.) Merrill, but seeds of both species cannot always be separated. The specimen found, however, resembles typical *E. gigas* seeds, being as long as wide, with a curved outline (see Fig. 1).

Although *E. gigas* seeds are regularly found along European coasts influenced by the North Atlantic Drift, reports from the French coast are only few. Nelson (1986) in his catalogue mentions 97 records from Ireland, 74 from the U.K., 15 from Norway, 2 from the Azores and the Netherlands each, 1 from Madeira, Canarian islands, Iceland, Spitsbergen, Belgium and Guernsey, and only 3 from France. All French records are from the NW coast according to Nelson's list : around 1900 from Wimereux (Pas-de-Calais) (Guppy, 1917), from Audierne (Finistère) in 1981 and from Paimpol (Côtes-d'Armor) without date. Most of these records will relate to real ("peregrine" sensu Nelson, 1990) drift seeds, which arrived in Europe from the Caribbean or tropical American region with the North Atlantic Drift. They remain buoyant for at least 15 years (Nelson, 1990). The Dutch records, however, most probably were "refuse" sensu Nelson (1990), resulting from man's activities. As some tens of seeds were found together, they were probably lost during transport by man (Benthem Jutting & Leenhouts, 1977).

Recently *Entada* seeds can also be bought on flower-markets in the Netherlands (Cadée, 1989), or in beach shops in Britain where they are sold as souvenirs (Nelson, 1990).

Unfortunately, therefore, some recent records of this species as well as of other tropical drift seeds and fruits from the Dutch coast (and maybe also other European coasts) may not represent "peregrine" examples (Cadée, 1989 ; Nelson, 1990). Nelson (1990) also suggests British North Sea coast records of *Entada gigas* (from Essex, Suffolk and Northumberland) to relate to seeds imported by man.

This French *Entada* record, however, most probably is a real tropical drift seed. It was found in recent drift, after a stormy spring and before the start of the tourist-season. As so many have been found on the English side of the Channel, we might expect them to be present in similar amounts on the French side. The fact that less are found here probably only indicates they are less searched for. Even in the U.K. and Ireland recent increase in interested beach-combers has increased the records of tropical drift disseminules considerably. More than half of the Ireland', and 2/3 of the U.K.' records of *Entada* seeds date from later than 1970 (Nelson, 1986), whereas the first records go back to the 17 th century. The suggestion based on older publications that tropical disseminules stranded on beaches in western Europe are rare, is no longer true (Nelson, 1990).

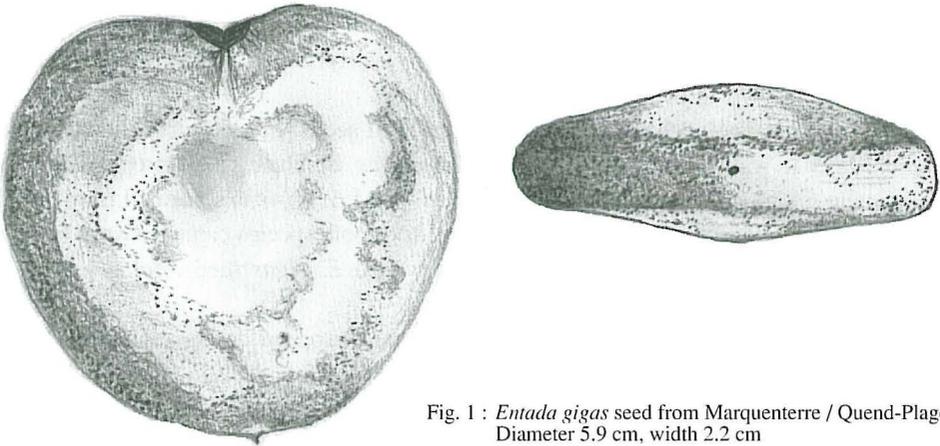


Fig. 1 : *Entada gigas* seed from Marquenterre / Quend-Plage.  
Diameter 5.9 cm, width 2.2 cm

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