

PRECOCITY IN A FURCRAEA

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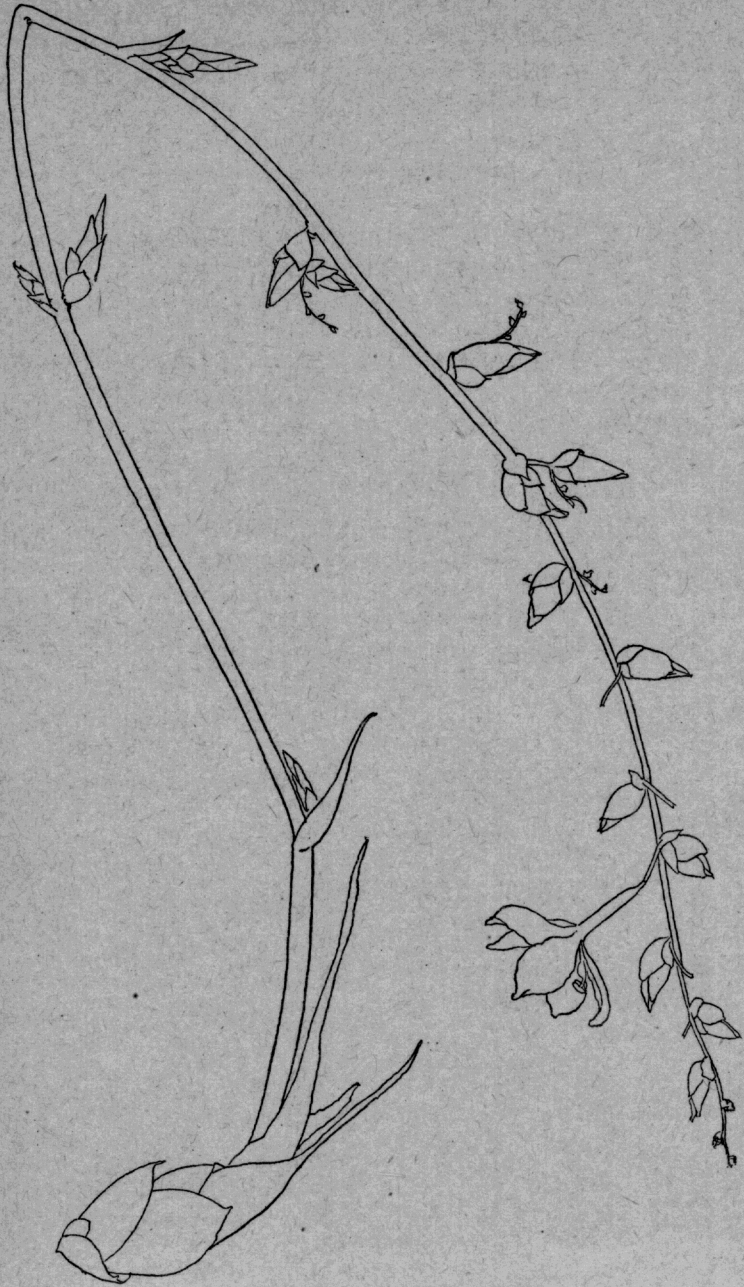
A number of cases are known in which seeds germinate in the fruit, either normally as in the mangrove, or exceptionally as in watermelon and citrus fruits. With these phenomena are connected, though not very logically, the many cases of bulbil production in flower-clusters,—often of unlike morphological character, such as *Poa*, *Polygonum*, *Allium*, etc., offer. In a way comparable with these, are the cases of flowering precocity on suckers, offsets, etc., of such monocarpic plants as *Agave* and *Furcraea*, where these diminutive derivatives of a mature plant flower when it does.*

Unlike *Agave*, the related genus *Furcraea* does not fruit as a general thing, but is propagated by bulbils that accompany or follow the flowers, as in the cases already referred to. Commonly, these bulbils fall from the parent stock when they have reached what may be considered normal development, and it is by their use that many of the *Furcraeas*, like the related *Sisal Agaves*, are propagated commercially.

To my observant correspondent Mr. L. J. K. Brace, of Nassau, I owe knowledge of a very striking and exceptional illustration of sexual maturity of *Furcraea* bulbils concurrently with the mother plant, which may be compared in its physiological meaning with the concurrent flowering of offsets in this and other genera. The case is that of a small plant of *Furcraea tuberosa* obtained from Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's estate on the island of Andros, and supposedly derived originally from Kew.

When already in pole and about to flower, the scape of this plant was broken over by a wind storm, and in this position, still connected with the rest of the plant, it went through the usual process of producing unfruitful flowers and abundant bulbils. The unusual part of its history is that many of these bulbils, remaining attached to the mother plant, and without

*Trelease, Ann. Jard. Bot. Buitenzorg. II. Suppl. 3: 909. (*Furcraea*).



FURCRAEA TUBEROSA

more than the customary leaf production of such bulbils, developed into slender scapes—in one case, at least, two feet long, as freely floriferous and bulbil-bearing as the usual ultimate branches of a normal inflorescence.
