

**Bamboo**, the common name of more than 200 species of about 20 genera of perennial, mostly tree-like, tropical and sub-tropical grasses unevenly distributed throughout the world, but most abundant in southern Asia, where 160 or more species are found from sea-level to altitudes of 10,000 feet or slightly more in the Himalayas; and next most plentiful in America, where there are about 70 species, some of which reach elevations of 15,000 feet in the Andes. Occasional specimens of the larger species attain a height of 120 feet and a girth of 3 feet. From the jointed root-stock the numerous jointed, usually straight and erect, but sometimes crooked or creeping stems grow without branches until the full height is reached, when a more or less dense thicket of horizontal limbs is developed, and the great panicles of flowers appear.

The number of uses to which these plants are put rivals that of the palms. In fact the various species can be utilized for man's every purpose. The light, elastic hard stems, hollow or slightly pithy, except at the joints, which are strong partitions, are used for bridges, masts, poles, joists, fishing-rods, etc.; when the partitions are removed, for waterpipes; when sawed in sections, for pails (the natural partitions serving as bottoms), cooking-utensils, life-preservers, bows, arrows, quivers, walking-canes, flutes, and smoking-pipes; when split, for nets, hats, fishing-rods, wicker-work, and umbrellas. Parts of the leaves of some species are used for paper-making, thatch, and hats; the young shoots of some are used as food, either boiled or pickled; the seeds, for food and for making a kind of beer; some of the spiny species are planted as hedges for defense against foes, animal and human.

Some species yield "Indian honey" (so called by the Greeks), the air-dried saccharine exudations from the nodes. Sometimes this substance is called *tabaris* or *tabasheer* (q.v.), which is properly a phosphorescent substance obtained from other species and from related grasses. Many of the species are of exceedingly rapid growth; even in greenhouses specimens have been known to attain a height of 20 feet in two months or even less time. In arid climates the bamboos are often of great value, since they are among the few plants that will grow in such places. Many species are cultivated for ornament, not only in warm countries, but in greenhouses. Some species are hardy in climates where the thermometer does not fall much below the freezing-point. In general the hardy species do best in deep, rich soil, and warm situations protected from severe winter winds. The roots should be given a protective mulch of litter in autumn, and this should be allowed to remain during the summer as a moisture conserver. For an account of ornamental bamboo culture in greenhouse and out of doors, and of the ornamental species grown in America, consult Bailey & Miller, 'Cyclopedia of American Horticulture.'



BAMBOO GROVE IN JAVA.