

## Cork Palm

Category: Flora and fauna

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The cork palm is a species exclusive to Pinar del Río province and is the only species of our flora declared a National Monument. It is a living fossil 150 million years old, which has the botanical particularity of fixing nitrogen in the atmosphere due to a bacterium called *Beijerinckia*, which lives inside this plant.

It is said to have "made many scientists think". Why: This plant belongs to the Carboniferous period and Pinar del Río emerged 200 million years later" It has been demonstrated that Pinar del Río province is prodigal in exclusivities granted by the mother nature and an example of this is represented in the *Microcycas Calocoma* or *Palma Corcho*, as it is commonly known.

This plant, endemic to the Western most region of Cuba, is considered a living fossil because of its prehistoric origin and was declared a Natural National Monument, a condition that distinguishes it as a botanical relic.

It is a unique tree with an upright and cylindrical trunk, which can reach up to ten meters in height and measure about 60 centimeters in diameter.

For these reasons, in the province of Pinar del Río, a region that has the privilege of counting it among its flora, educational actions are applied in all sectors of the population in order to promote its protection and be able to bequeath it to future generations.

At present its population is quite scarce and on the decline. Also the multiplication of the species is favored there by the shade and the humidity, fundamental elements for it to survive.

Specialists have placed *Microcycas Calocoma* on the list of critically

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endangered species, due to its age, reproductive problems and the fragility of the ecosystems where it is found.