

Pandanus veitchii

STRIPED SCREWPINE is an evergreen shrub. Possibly native to Polynesia it has spiny sword-shaped, white-striped, dark green leaves.

It is also known as Corn plant, Screw pine, and Veitch screw pine.

Veitchii commemorates two English nurserymen and horticulturists, father and son, James Veitch junior and John Gould Veitch who were responsible for introducing many foreign plants to Britain. James Veitch junior's grandfather, a Scotsman, John Veitch (1752-1839) founded his first English nursery (specialising in trees) in Devon, south-west of Exeter, in about 1800 and it was here his son James (1702-1863) trained before he bought another piece of land in the Exeter area to which his father transferred. Their nursery, Veitch and Sons, established at Exeter in 1832 (where James Veitch junior would be born) spawned a London nursery in Chelsea in 1853. In 1863 the Exeter and London businesses separated. James Veitch junior's younger brother, Robert (1823-1885), who had returned from farming in the Cape of Good Hope and had been expanding the Devon nursery, took full control of Exeter which became Robert Veitch and Sons – while Chelsea acquired the name James Veitch and Sons (and the children of the two brothers would in time inherit the respective businesses). Ahead of other nurseries Veitch and Sons (Exeter and Chelsea) began to employ plant collectors (a total of 22 from 1840-1910) who were sent to specific regions from Exeter, to find rare plant specimens, harvest seed from recently introduced species and provide notes on habitat and environment, exclusively for the combined Veitch business. Authorities note that Veitch recognised the importance of a scientific approach to the cultivation and development of plants and are said to have contributed much information to scientific institutions. Veitch, unlike its rivals, became known internationally and would remain in business for 106 years until the retirement of Sir Harry James Veitch (1840-1924) in 1914.

An English nurseryman, James Veitch junior (1815-1869) whose father was the first James (Veitch), son James became a joint partner in the family business in 1838 after a two-year apprenticeship with London nurserymen. After a subsequent period with his father in Devon he bought Messrs. Knight and Perry's London nursery in 1853 in Chelsea's Kings Road, the Royal Exotic Nursery which with his horticultural knowledge and business acumen he developed and expanded (on three additional sites just outside London). Responsibility for the Veitch plant collectors transferred to Chelsea before the family's nurseries separated in 1863. James retired in 1864 not only from the business but also as a Council Member of the Royal Horticultural Society – a capacity in which he had served actively since 1856. It was he who encouraged the establishment of Fruit and Floral Committees and the Veitch Memorial Medal given today for outstanding contribution to horticultural advancement and improvement.

An English plant collector, horticulturist and nurseryman, John Gould Veitch (1839-1870) who was the eldest son of James Veitch junior, John was sent to Japan in 1860 to find new plant species which would excite Veitch's customers. Out there he discovered he was in competition with the Scottish horticulturist, Robert Fortune (1813-1880) a seasoned plant hunter on his last trip, who was acting for a rival – and authorities note that co-incidentally the plant specimens both men collected returned to England on the

same ship. From Japan Veitch moved on to China and the Philippines, the latter to find orchids. His second trip began in Australia in 1864 and during the following year took in some of the islands of the South Pacific as well, including in Polynesia and Fiji. He returned to England in 1866 and died a few years later from tuberculosis.

The leaves (and their fibre) have been used locally for matting and for thatching, as well as for making rope, paper, nets and baskets.

Striped screwpine's variegated leaves have recommended it as an ornamental plant – so much so that it is a quite common houseplant in Western countries today.