ARAUCARIA ARAUCANA (MOLINA) K. KOCH I NORGE OG DANMARK.

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Araucaria araucana (Molina) K. Koch in Norway and Denmark.

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SUMMARY

Araucaria araucana, the Monkey Puzzle Tree is now considered vulnerable in its native area in Chile and Argentina and old trees are becoming so scarce that they must be regarded as threatened. The species was first introduced to Europe in the late 18th century and to Scandinavia around 1850. Only in the southern parts of West Norway does one find Monkey Puzzle trees dating back to the 19th century. In other parts of Scandinavia winters were too severe for the survival of the species, particularly during the period of World War Two. Registration of Monkey Puzzle trees in Norway was initiated in 1972 and is still going on. At present approximately 100 trees older than fifty years (including more than 25 trees older than 90 years) have been mapped in West Norway from Stavanger to Ålesund or between 59° - 63° N. About ten trees more than fifty years old have been located in Denmark, all of them planted after 1945 with one exception from the mid 1930es. The Monkey Puzzle is normally dioecious but exceptions were found in several trees in West Norway and one tree in Denmark. Most often one finds a few male cones on female trees. Seed collected from isolated trees with both male and female cones have produced plants with normal vigour. 26 year old trials in West Norway with 14 provenances collected in the natural range of the species in Argentina and Chile have shown no clear differences in survival and vigour between provenances. Even plants from the Chilean coastal Nahuelbuta Range were just as resistant to cold as inland provenances from the Argentinian area of the species. The tallest trees in the trials are now about 8 m in height, corresponding to an annual growth rate of approximatily 30 cm. Some of the early introduced trees of Monkey Puzzle to West Norway might contain genes which are now lost in the natural range of the species. This means that Norwegian trees could be regarded as an interesting supplement to what remains of the natural gene pool of *Araucaria araucana* in South America.