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Cover illustration: Date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*) was one of the first domesticated plants, and continues to be a vital component of agriculture in the Middle East, North Africa, Pakistan, and many other hot and dry regions of the world. This photograph shows a commercial grove of 17 meter tall Deglet Noor date palms soon after harvest at Hadley Date Gardens in Thermal, California, USA. The ladders are used for hand pollination, pruning and harvesting of fruit. The manuscript by Chaluvadi and colleagues on page 30–41 describes the diversity and relatedness of date palm germplasm in the United Arab Emirates, and places it in context relative to worldwide date palm germplasms. This photograph was provided by David Karp (© 11/10/2000) and is used with his permission.

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