

GROWING *Zamia imperialis* IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Submitted by Dale Holton

Zamia imperialis was just recently named in May of 2008. The authors are Alberto S. Taylor of Panama, Jody L. Haynes of Florida, and Greg Holtzman of Hawaii. This *Zamia* was previously lumped into a group of plicate leafed *Zamias* that was named *Zamia skinnerii* in 1851. The *Zamia skinnerii* complex has just recently been divided into four to five different species.

Zamia imperialis is found in Cocle Province of Panama. It occurs as understory plants in the forest, usually along stream banks, and frequently growing in red clay.

This is one of the trunking *Zamias*, with plicate leaves. The new leaves emerge as a reddish color and turn green at maturity. On a recent trip there, with Chip Jones, and Tom Whistler, I was able to see these plants in habitat. There are currently many plants in the forest. A new road was under construction over the mountains to the Atlantic coast. This area was all primary forest. This area is all national forest, but from what we saw of other national forests, the area will be clear cut when the road is finished. Most likely in the next ten years, if you were to drive over this road, you will see mostly grazing land, banana plantations, and coffee farms. We passed many Indian villages along the road. Most of them had large clearings for bananas.

I have been growing these *Zamias* for about ten years. So far I only have male plants and have not been able to propagate more. I still have a couple of plants that have not yet coned, so there is still hope for a female. These are quite spectacular when they have new emerging leaves, which happen about once a year. They do get our native scales, which need to be controlled. They also need to be planted in a shaded spot that is irrigated. These plants are very rare and not found in private gardens. Possibly in the future there will be small plants available locally.



Zamia imperialis
growing in the Holton Garden.



Chip Jones with *Zamia imperialis* growing in habitat in Panama.
(Photos by Dale Holton)



Chip Jones, Tom Whistler, and Dale Holton with *Zamia imperialis* growing in habitat in Panama.
(Photos by Dale Holton)