

GROWING
Zamia purpurea
IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Submitted by Dale Holton

Zamia purpurea is named for the color of the new emerging leaves. The species was discovered by John D. Rees in 1978, and named in 1983, by Andrew P. Vivoides and Mario Vazquez-Torres. The stems grow underground and the leaves can be three to five feet with spines on the leaf stem. There appears to be two varieties. The plants from Veracruz seem to be shorter growing, and are less corrugated than the plants from Oaxaca.

I have not been fortunate enough to encounter these plants in the wild - maybe someday in my next life. These plants are possibly the most attractive of the Mexican *Zamias*. The new leaves have a dark purplish color which can last for up to two months in cooler weather. They usually make new leaves one to two times a year. I have both varieties in my garden, and find them vigorous growers. Unfortunately I have all males of the larger variety, and all females of the smaller variety. I pollinate them every year and raise a number of seedlings, which I seem to sell faster than I can produce them. I do have some trouble with damp-off when they are small and in pots. In the ground I do not have this problem. I think my growing mix stays too wet. I am now experimenting with a new potting medium and have had much better success. This species must be grown in the shade as they are understory plants in habitat.

Every exotic garden should have three or four of these plants. They are not readily available in nurseries or garden centers. When you can find them, expect to pay \$30 to \$40 for seedlings.



Zamia purpurea growing in the
Holton Garden.

(Photo by Dale Holton)