

GROWING *Zamia soconucensis* IN PALM BEACH COUNTY

Submitted by Dale Holton



Zamia soconucensis leaf.
(Photo by Dale Holton)

This *Zamia* is named for the locality in which it grows, the Sierra De Soconusco Mountains of Chiapas, Mexico. It is found in altitudes of 3,400 to 4,600 feet, where it gets rainfall in excess of 79 inches annually. It is an understory plant and grows mostly in organic clay soils. It is quite rare in cultivation and possibly endangered in habitat.

The Mexican government, in an effort to help protect these plants, encouraged the local inhabitants to propagate these plants so that they could sell seedlings and have some income for their efforts. But they never finished the process, so if you did buy some plants from them, you cannot get a permit from the Mexican government to export them. Sounds sort of like the way our government works.

I purchased my first plants as two leaf seedlings back in the mid 1990's. The plants grow quite fast and I believe that they are very ornamental and would make great landscape plants. Of the eight plants that I originally purchased, all were males. I eventually purchased two female plants in hopes of producing more plants. Unfortunately, these two plants did not cone for several years. Two years ago one of them coned and I produced 60 seedlings from two cones. I don't think anyone else has been able to get more than 3-6 plants from their efforts. This winter I have pollinated eight cones on three female

plants.

These *Zamias* can grow to be five feet tall with light green leaves. They don't like freezing temperatures and will drop leaves when exposed to low temperatures, but they grow new leaves when the temperatures warm up. They like to be watered, but seem to do ok when kept on the dry side. I usually fertilize my plants four times a year with palm fertilizer.



Zamia soconucensis
(Photos by Dale Holton)