



# Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

*Affiliate of the International Palm Society*

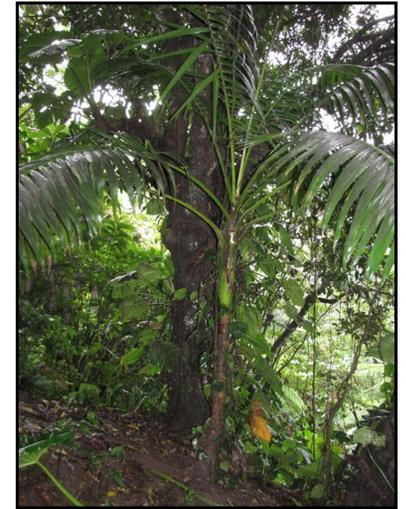
Monthly Update

November 2010

## FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Syagrus amara*



*Prestoea acuminata* in the Beck garden has grown 13' overall height in 16 years. (Photo by Charlie Beck)



*Prestoea acuminata* var. *montana* growing on Montserrat. (Photo by Larry Noblick)



Five year old *Syagrus amara* growing in the Beck garden. (Photo by Charlie Beck)



*Syagrus amara* leaf detail. (Photo by Charlie Beck)

**FRONT COVER:** *Syagrus amara* growing in Homestead. (Photo by Charlie Beck)

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 Brenda Beck, Editor & Historian (561) 963-5511

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Charles Beck, Librarian  
 Marty Dougherty, Web Master  
 Ruth Lynch, Refreshment Chairman (561) 312-5046  
 Kitty Philips & Susan Cioci, Activities & Events Coordinators

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**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

Page	
4	Featured this Month: <i>Syagrus amara</i>
5	Election of Officers to take place on November 3rd
5	2011 Membership Drive Has Begun
6	Larry Noblick – Collecting Palms on Montserrat
7	Upcoming Meetings
8	This Month's "Thank You"
8	October 6th Door Prize Winner
9	Many Cycad Species Threatened With Extinction
10	Red Palm Weevil Infestation Discovered in California

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**FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Syagrus amara***  
 by Charlie Beck

The Palm Society was fortunate to have Larry Noblick speak at our October meeting. Larry is the world authority on the genus *Syagrus*. He is not only extremely knowledgeable but is a very entertaining speaker. This is a rare combination in the world of palm biology. The *Syagrus* Larry spoke about was *Syagrus amara* and I wanted to share some of my experience growing this palm in Palm Beach County.

*Syagrus amara* is native to Trinidad and the Lesser Antilles. It grows below 1,000 feet elevation in both dry and wet coastal habitats. *S. amara* was previously placed in the genus *Rhynchoceros*. *S. amara* is a solitary pinnate palm which typically grows in full sun. In habitat, the stems have an ultimate height of 60 feet and measure a maximum of eight inches in diameter. The stems are swollen at the base. The leaves can grow nine feet long. The leaflets are rigid and irregularly arranged in clusters and are very dark green.

My first sight of *S. amara* was at Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden. There were two 40' tall specimens flanking both sides of the Grand Overlook in the Bailey Palm Glade. This is the area

*(Continued on page 5)*



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Exotic Palms  
 &  
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**GROWING CONDITIONS IN OUR GARDEN  
 FOR *Syagrus amara***

Location	4 miles from ocean in suburban Lantana
Soil	Sand over a layer of hardpan (pineland flatwood habitat)
Irrigation	¾ inch applied twice a week
Fertilization	3 times a year with Palm special analysis
Flooding	Periodic inundation in sandy soil acceptable
Light	Full sun
Micronutrient Deficiencies	None observed
Insect Damage	None observed
Hurricane Resistance	Good

(Continued from page 4)

with the twin staircases. The palms were an impressive sight but in 1992 Hurricane Andrew damaged one of these palms so they were replaced with the common *Phoenix dactylifera* - what a disappointing replacement!

We planted our two *S. amara* five years ago. They now measure 20 and 14 feet in overall height. The taller specimen is forming a stem with the typical flare at ground level. Above the flare the stem measures 12 inches in diameter. The leaves measure 12 feet long. Obviously these palms grow much larger in cultivation than in habitat. Periodic inundation does not harm this palm. With regular fertilization they have never shown any micronutrient deficiencies. Palm books recommend planting *S. amara* only in Zones 11 and 10b, but our specimens showed no cold



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damage during our last record cold winter. I think this palm would grow well anywhere in Palm Beach County.

People tend to discount the entire genus of *Syagrus* because of their familiarity with the common Queen Palm (*S. romanzoffiana*). There are several species of *Syagrus* that are unusual and worth planting - *S. amara* is one of them. Plant *S. amara* for its vigorous growth and its beautiful dark green ascending crown.

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### Election of 2011 Officers to Take Place at the November Meeting

At the October 6th meeting, members were given an opportunity to add their names to the list of candidates for the 2011 Palm Society Board of Directors. The election of 2011 officers will take place on November 3, 2010.

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### 2011 Membership Drive Has Begun

Unfortunately, the Palm Society board of directors has deemed it necessary to increase 2011 individual membership dues to \$25 a year.

Please support your local society and renew your membership today. To see when your membership expires, please see the date at the bottom of the mailing label on this newsletter.

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## Larry Noblick - Collecting Palms on Montserrat

by Brenda Beck

At the October 6<sup>th</sup> general meeting, we were very fortunate to have Larry Noblick, Ph.D. as our guest speaker. Dr. Noblick is a palm biologist at Montgomery Botanical Center and a noted author and co-author of many publications regarding palms. In his presentation, Dr. Noblick shared information and experiences of his recent trip to Montserrat.

Montserrat is an island in the Lesser Antilles that is 10 miles long and six miles wide. From July 1995 through as recent as September 2010, the Soufriere Hills Volcano on the island has had various eruptions, explosions, and pyroclastic flows. The majority of the central and southern portions of the island are now considered an Exclusion Zone - no one is permitted to live there and

special authorization is required to enter these parts of the island.

During his recent trip there, Dr. Noblick worked with the Montserrat National Trust (MNT). The original MNT headquarters was destroyed by volcanic activity. At its new location, MNT maintains a library filled with historical documents and information about the island's natural environment and maintains a botanical garden with a variety of local plants and trees.

Dr. Noblick's presentation included photographs of Dr. Noblick and MNT staff hiking through torrential rains and trekking across terrain where the only remnants of buildings were rooftops or chimney stacks popping up through volcanic ash.

(Continued on page 9)

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**LAKE OSBORNE ANIMAL CLINIC**

JOHN T. LYNCH, D.V.M.

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Lake Worth, FL 33461

*Please share your garden experiences.  
Submit your stories and photos to [beck4212@aol.com](mailto:beck4212@aol.com)*

# UPCOMING MEETINGS

## GENERAL MEETING

**Date:** Wednesday, November 3, 2010  
**Time:** 7:30 p.m.  
**Location:** Mounts Botanical Garden  
**Speaker:** Tim Broschat  
**Subject:** Palm Nutrition



## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

**Date:** Wednesday, November 24, 2010  
**Time:** 7:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Ruth Sallenbach's Home  
6285 S. Military Trail, Lake Worth  
(561) 965-5430

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c/o Brenda Beck  
P.O. Box 21-2228  
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# THIS MONTH'S "THANK YOU"

## General Member Meeting Refreshments

Charlie & Brenda Beck  
Susan Cioci  
Merle Guliano  
Lauren & Patrick Morris  
Sue Pepler  
Tom Ramiccio

## Plant Donations

Charlie Beck  
Marshall Dewey



## Special Thanks

to

**Roland Grondin and Tom Ramiccio**

for arriving at 5:00 p.m. to keep the Mounts building open for us.

Winner of the October 6th Door Prize was  
**Cathy Burger**  
who won a Palm Society Tee-shirt.



**Many Cycad Species  
Threatened With Extinction**

*by Brenda Beck*

A global analysis of the plants at risk of extinction worldwide was conducted by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the London Natural History Museum, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The study is entitled *IUCN Sampled Red List Index for Plants*. This is the first global analysis of the status of plant biodiversity.

This study indicates that more than 20 percent of the world's plants are threatened with extinction. However, Gymnosperms (the plant group including conifers and cycads) are the most endangered plant group. Among the Gymnosperms, over 75

percent of cycad species are threatened with extinction.

The study also indicates that habitat loss is identified as the biggest threat to plants' survival. The most threatened habitat is tropical rainforest and one of the greatest threats facing plants today is the conversion of natural habitats for agricultural or livestock use.

In 2015, researchers plan to reassess the threat status to plants. With data collected in this study, researchers can determine if risk to plants grows with time.

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*(Continued from page 6)*

Dr. Noblick reported that three palm species are found on Montserrat: *Syagrus amara*, *Prestoea acuminata* var. *montana*, and *Coccothrinax barbadensis*. *Syagrus amara* is the northernmost *Syagrus* and can be found growing on Montserrat, Guadeloupe, Dominica, Martinique, St. Lucia, and Trinidad.

Montgomery Botanical Center now has germinated *Syagrus amara* seeds that were collected from Montserrat. The seeds were collected in an effort to preserve the gene pool of this palm that grows on that island. (See photos on pages 2 and 11)

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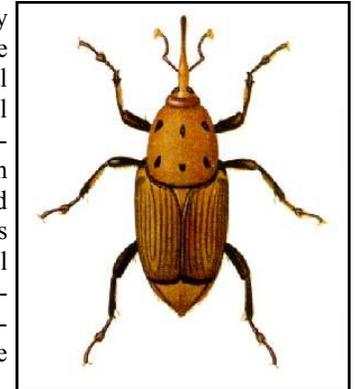
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**Red Palm Weevil Infestation Discovered in California**

*by Brenda Beck*

On October 4, 2010, The Orange County Register reported that a tree-trimming service contacted Nick Nisson, the county agricultural commissioner, to report finding an unusual beetle while removing a palm tree from a private residence in Laguna Beach. Mr. Nisson confirmed that adult red palm weevils and weevil larvae were found on the palm. This is the first reported incident of red palm weevil infestation in the United States. State inspectors are now trying to determine if this destructive weevil has infested other palms in the area.



As you may recall, we reported in June 2010 that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) ordered that, effective February 10, 2010, *Acrocomia*, *Astrocaryum*, *Attalea*, *Bactris*, *Brahea*, *Butia*, *Calamus*, *Chamerops*, *Desmoncus*, *Euterpe*, *Manicaria*, *Mauritia*, *Metroxylon*, *Oncoseperma Roystonea*, *Sabal*, and *Washingtonia* could no longer be imported into the United States in an effort to prevent *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus* Olivier (Red Palm Weevil), *R. palmarum* Linnaeus (Giant Palm Weevil), and *Bursaphelenchus cocophilus* Cobb (Red Ring Nematode) infestations in this country.

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Palms growing on Montserrat

(Photos by Larry Noblick)



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*Syagrus amara* 12" diameter trunk  
5 years after planting in the Beck  
garden.

(Photo by Charlie Beck)

