



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

August 2011

FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Coccothrinax argentata*



Bottom side of leaf



Top side of leaf



FRONT COVER AND ABOVE:
Ten foot tall 85 year-old *Coccothrinax argentata* growing in the Beck Garden
(Photos by Charlie Beck)

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VISIT US AT palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com

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Featured this Month: *Coccothrinax argentata*
 by Charlie Beck

A few months ago, Dale Holton gave a masterful presentation on the best palms to grow in Palm Beach County. Dale described many Caribbean Basin palms which are well adapted to our locale. It was truly impressive that Dale actually located these palms growing in habitat in so many foreign countries.

Upon reflecting on Dale's presentation of the best palms to grow (mostly *Coccothrinax*), I realized that our native *Coccothrinax argentata* was left out. I thought I should add this palm to the list of the best palms to grow.

Coccothrinax argentata is a small, solitary palmate palm. It is native to the Florida Keys ranging north along the eastern coast to southern Palm Beach County. This palm also is native to the Bahamas. Henderson lumped several species into *C. argentata* which gave this species a much wider distribution. I

do not believe Henderson's grouping is officially recognized. Typical habitats are coastal hammocks, pine rocklands, and well drained sandy or limestone soil. It is classified as "threatened" in Florida. *C. argentata* is highly tolerant to salt wind but not tolerant to long-term flooding by salt water. *C. argentata* is very slow growing but can reach 20 feet in height. The crown of leaves typically measures six feet in diameter in mature specimens. The stem can grow to six inches in diameter. The leaves are a distinctive blue green on the top and a showy silver color on the bottom. The leaves are deeply divided and have droopy tips which sway in the wind. This palm is best grown in full sun or light shade. The fruit is 1/2 inch in diameter, purple, and is highly sought after by native fauna. It is documented that Key deer readily eat the fruit. By observ-

(Continued on page 5)

**GROWING CONDITIONS IN OUR GARDEN
 FOR *Coccothrinax argentata***

Location	4 miles from ocean in suburban Lantana
Soil	Packed shell rock
Irrigation	3/4 inch applied twice a week
Fertilization	4 times a year with Palm special analysis
Light	Full sun
Micronutrient Deficiencies	None
Insect Damage	None observed
Cold Hardiness	No damage observed
Hurricane Resistance	Excellent

(*Coccothrinax argentata*
continued from page 4)

ing its widespread distribution in natural areas of the Florida Keys, the fruit must be eaten and distributed by a wide range of birds and mammals. The leaves provide food for the larval form of the native Monk Skipper butterfly.

We purchased our first *C. argentata* in 1986. I found this palm in a nursery that was going out of business. It was in a 15 gallon container with 4.2 feet of stem. I was told that this palm graced the pool area of a Palm Beach mansion in season and out of season resided at the nursery. I was told that the palm was 60 years old.* That makes our palm 85 years old this year. I don't remember what we paid for this palm but now I consider it priceless. We planted it in the ground by our house in Jupiter where it remained until 1999. In those 13 years, the stem grew 3.3 feet of wood and expanded from four inches to five inches in diameter. In 1999, we transplanted this palm to our current garden in suburban Lantana. It was very difficult digging this palm out of the ground. The roots were very dense and hard to cut. It was quite a job to remove this palm. We planted this palm by the front door of our new house. The transplant shocked the palm but it did eventually recover. Due to the transplant stress, the stem shrunk from a diameter of five inches to



three inches. It took several years for the stem to regrow to a five inch diameter. The overall growth rate with regular fertilization and irrigation is two to three inches per year once the stem has formed.

We do have a second *C. argentata* which was planted in the ground in 2004. It grows in an area on the fringe of our irrigation system so it receives little supplemental water. The overall height of this plant is 3 ½ feet. It has started blooming and producing fruit at this small size. It will probably take decades for this palm to produce any measureable stem. This makes this palm an excellent candidate as a ground cover. I've seen many palms planted as groundcover, mostly *Livistona* species which quickly outgrow their situation. Even Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden planted *Livistona* sp. as a ground cover on either side of their overlook. Fifteen years later these palms are competing for light planted way too close and are over 20 feet tall. *C. argentata* would

(Continued on page 7)

UPCOMING MEETINGS

GENERAL MEETING

Date: Wednesday, August 3, 2011
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Location: Mounts Botanical Garden
Speaker: Dale Holton
Subject: Lotusland

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2011
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Location: Ruth Sallenbach's Home
6285 S. Military Trail, Lake Worth
(561) 965-5430

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society Membership

Be sure to keep your membership up to date. It will insure that you receive all Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society communications. Annual membership is \$25 per person per year and membership runs from January 1 to December 31. Membership can be renewed by sending payments to the Society at P.O. Box 21-2228, Royal Palm Beach, FL 33421.

Thank you for your support of the Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society. We hope to see you at all of our general meetings which take place on the first Wednesday of every month at Mounts Botanical Garden in West Palm Beach. Be sure to watch for information regarding our field trips, special activities, and palm and cycad shows and sales.

If you have questions about membership, you can contact Tom Whisler, our Membership Chairman, at whisler.tom@synthes.com

* 60 years-old estimate of this palm seems reasonable assuming 20 years to form a stem and 1.3 inches growth per year in habitat and/or pot culture.

Tom and Dale's Great Adventure in Belize

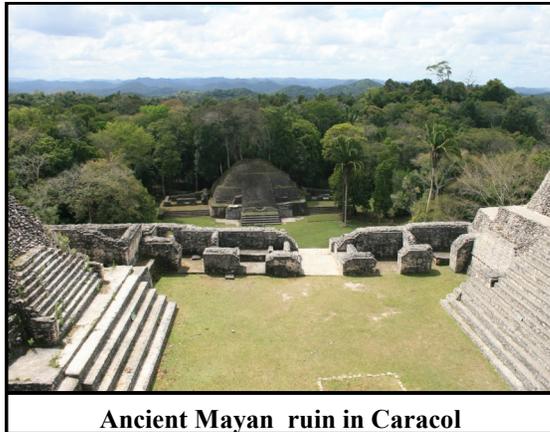
by Brenda Beck

On July 6, we were treated to a presentation of Tom Whisler and Dale Holton's recent trip to Belize. Tom and Dale made stops in Punta Gorda, Placencia, Blue Creek, Caracol, Crique Sarco Village, and took a boat ride on the Temash River. Tom's slide presentation included photographs of many plants spotted growing in the wild along their journey. Some of the palms they spotted included *Manicaria saccifera*, *Cyrtostachys renda*, *Desmoncus schippii*, and *Acoelorrhaphe wrightii*. Cycads included *Zamia prasina* and *Zamia variegata*. They also spotted many other plants growing in habitat, including wild orchids, ferns, and a Ceiba cotton tree.

Tom had some magnificent photographs of the Mayan ancient ruins in Caracol, exceptional views captured during their Temash River boat ride and stop at the Blue Creek Cave, and an outstanding photograph of a spectacular sunset in Punta Gorda. (See additional photos on pages 10 & 11.)



Tom Whisler



Ancient Mayan ruin in Caracol

(*Coccothrinax argentata*
continued from page 5)

make an excellent groundcover with a predictable scale and growth rate.

I believe every palm enthusiast should grow all 11 Florida native palms. They all grow well in Palm Beach County if given the right growing conditions. I would rate *C. argentata* close to the top of the list.

It is very wind and drought tolerant. It does require full sun or partial shade and it needs excellent drainage. The graceful fronds shimmer in the sunlight as the slightest breeze reveals the silver underside of the leaves. Its small scale makes it a prime palm for narrow foundation plantings.

THIS MONTH'S "THANK YOU"

PLANT DONATIONS

Dale Holton

MEETING REFRESHMENTS

Steve Aberbach

Ingrid Dewey

Kan Karas

Ed Napoli

JULY DOOR PRIZE WINNERS

Rob Hoffman - won a Palm Society Tee-shirt

Duane Heiser - won a M. Spinosa numbered print of a *Pseudophoenix ekmanii*.

SPECIAL THANKS

to

Betty Ahlborn

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



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Rob Hofmann

Please share your garden experiences.
Submit your stories and photos to beck4212@aol.com

MEMBERSHIP SALE FOR NEW MEMBERS

As Membership Chair, it is my pleasure to announce a **MEMBERSHIP SALE** for the Palm Beach Palm and Cycad Society. New members can join now and receive a membership for 18 months – all for the price of one year’s membership of \$25.00. That’s right, \$25 for the remainder of 2011 and all of 2012! The sale includes 2 summer picnics, 2 end-of-year holiday parties where we have fantastic palm give-always, the monthly newsletter, monthly palm and cycad auctions and all the great information you receive at our monthly meetings. Don’t delay ... tell all your friends to join now or give them the membership form included in this newsletter.

Tom Whisler



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND RENEWAL (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Name: _____
 Address: _____

 Home Telephone: _____
 Cell Phone: _____
 E-mail address: _____

New Member Renewal

Please send the annual individual membership fee of \$25 payable to the Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society, to:

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society
 P.O. Box 21-2228
 Royal Palm Beach, FL 33421
 Attn: Membership Chairman

Membership runs from January 1 through December 31. Membership includes the monthly newsletter and receipt of free palms and cycads at the annual plant give-away in December.

FOR PALM SOCIETY USE ONLY				
\$	Check No.	Year		

Adventure in Belize



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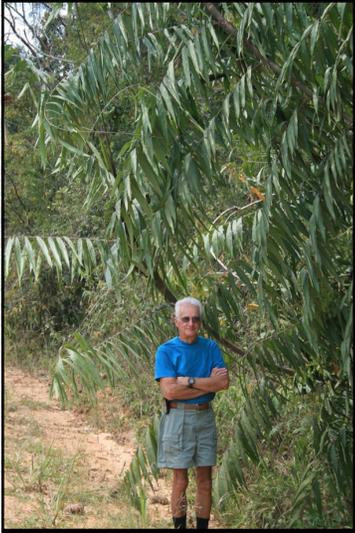
Zamia prasina
 growing on a beach
 in Belize

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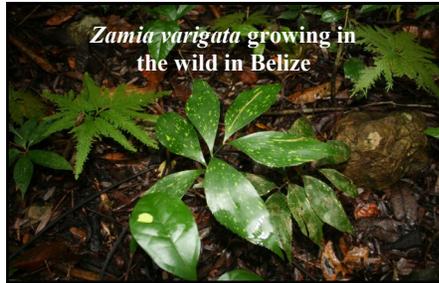


Seven year-old
Coccothrinax argentata
growing in the
Beck Garden.
(Photo by Charlie Beck)

Adventure in Belize



Dale Holton standing next to a
Desmoncus schippii growing
along a roadside in Belize.



Zamia variegata growing in
the wild in Belize



Acoelorrhaphe wrightii growing
along the Temash River



Satakenia liukuensis
peduncle with distinctive
sheath scars



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