



# Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

April 2013

## FEATURED THIS MONTH:

*Ptychosperma burretianum* and *Ptychosperma cuneatum*



A 14 year old *Ptychosperma cuneatum* in the Beck garden.



A rare specimen of *Dypsis bejofo* in the Bittel garden.

**FRONT COVER:** A 19 year old *Ptychosperma burretianum* growing in the Beck garden.

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**Featured this Month**  
***Ptychosperma burretianum* and *Ptychosperma cuneatum***  
 by Charlie Beck

Both of these species are native to the Papua New Guinea rain forest. They are small clumping palms with attractive wedge shaped pinnae. In habitat, *P. burretianum* tops out at 25' tall and *P. cuneatum* reportedly grows to 15' tall. Stems measure 1-1/4 to 1-3/4" in diameter. Emergent leaves of *P. burretianum* are pink whereas *P. cuneatum* displays green emergent leaves. Our specimen plants' crownshafts differ in color - *P. burretianum* tends to be silver or cream color and *P. cuneatum* is green.

Although these palms are native to the tropics, both grow well in our sandy soil in Palm Beach County. They are difficult to distinguish from each other. Aside from emergent leaf and crownshaft color they look quite similar. Clumping is sparse - expect only 4-5 stems in mature specimens. *P. burretianum* is more commonly offered for sale.

Our 19 year old *P. burretianum* is pictured on the cover. Its overall height is 12' and there are 4 stems measuring 1-1/4" in diameter. Our *P. cuneatum* is 14 years old and measures 13' in overall height. Its 3 main stems measure 1-3/4" in di-

ameter. Both of these species came through the record cold winters of 2009 and 2010 without any damage. With recommended fertilization, no micro nutritional deficiencies have been noted. Periodic inundation after heavy rainfall does not seem to affect these palms.

The Encyclopedia of Cultivated Palms states "*P. burretianum* is doubtfully distinct from *P. waitianum*." Kew's world checklist of selected plant families still lists *P. burretianum* as a valid species. There is quite a bit of hybridization occurring in the genus *Ptychosperma*. All you need to do is search the internet for photos of *P. burretianum* and *P. cuneatum* to verify that mislabeling and hybridization occurs with these wedge shaped leaflet palms. I suggest that any *Ptychosperma* which looks true to the species description as a young potted plant, will stay true to form as a mature palm and is worth growing.

These palms grow best in a shaded location. Twice-a-week irrigation is sufficient for healthy growth. Their scale suits even small gardens and their wedge shaped leaflets are quite attractive.

**CORRECTION** – *Raphia hookeri* was misidentified as *Arenga hookeriana* in the March issue of the newsletter. Photos on pages 2 & 10 and text on page 7 were in error. Thanks to "eagle eye" Don Bittel for bringing this to our attention.

***Dypsis paludosa***  
by Charlie Beck

*Dypsis paludosa* is native to the east coast of Madagascar. It occurs along the coast in pockets of peat swamp developed on white sand. It ranges from sea level to 900' in elevation. The leaf form is quite variable. The pinnate leaves can be regularly to irregularly divided or can be bifid. *D. paludosa* stems can be solitary but most often clump. In habitat the stems can reach 18' in height and measure 1-2" in diameter. The stem is a grey-green color but the leaf bases are covered with reddish brown scales.

*D. paludosa* is a new palm in our garden. It was only planted last year. It has grown rapidly and is quite attractive. Cold hardiness was not tested by our most recent mild winter but growth was strong throughout the colder months. Our specimen is situated in deep shade and planted in a wet low lying area. I heavily mulch this palm several times a year to conserve moisture and to acidify the soil. It seems to



love our sandy soil. Luckily our specimen is the bifid form and has not given any indications of clumping. Floribunda Palms in Hawaii offers this same palm as *Dypsis paludosa* (entire leaf form). I'm sure to order a few more of this palm for our collection and hopefully our Palm Society will acquire a few of these gems for our monthly palm auction.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS**

April 3, 2013

6:30 p.m. - Board Meeting  
7:30 p.m. General Membership Meeting  
Speaker: Jeff Searle  
Subject: Palms of Madagascar

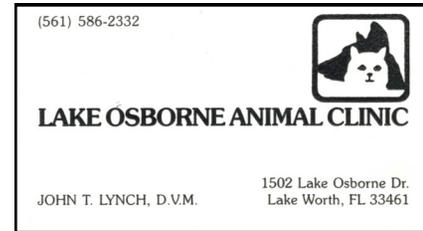
See you at Mounts Botanical Garden!



**Don & Phyllis Bittel's Garden**  
by Charlie Beck

A few months ago the Palm & Cycad Society Board of Directors were treated to a tour of the Bittel Garden. The 22 year old garden is located in Palm City, Martin County. The .344 acre property is approximately 6 miles from the ocean and about a block from the St. Lucie River. Apparently this proximity to the river tends to moderate temperatures during cold snaps, because Don grows a wide variety of tropical plants to perfection. When Don stated at one of our recent meetings that he has tried growing just about every available palm, he was not kidding. The species count probably tops 200 palms and cycads. The garden has two distinct soil types - half in sugar sand and half in river bottom muck. The half with the river bottom muck supercharges palm growth. There was a specimen of *Roystonea regia* with the largest stem diameter that I have ever seen for that species.

Thanks to Don & Phyllis for their hospitality and for sharing their garden with the Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society board.



Don Bittel shows that large palms can grow in small pots.

**MARCH THANK YOU**

Food: Steve Garland, Terri Illa, Pat Morris, Tom Ramiccio, Ron & Kathy Silverio, Ashley & Dave Terrana, Angela Valero  
Plant Donations: Dale Holton  
Door: Lew Burger



Tom Whisler lending scale to *Latania loddigesii* in the Bittel garden.



*Dypsis prestoniana* growing in the Bittel garden.



A well grown *Ravenea rivularis* in the Bittel garden.



Lucky visitors and host in the Bittel garden.



*Satakentia liukuensis* growing in the Bittel garden.

All photographs included in this issue were provided by Charlie Beck.



An old specimen of *Pritchardia pacifica* growing in Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden. This specimen survived the 2009-2010 winters as well as the 1989 freeze.



A one year old *Dypsis paludosa* (bifid form) in the Beck garden.



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*Chamaedorea tepejilote*  
inflorescence.