



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

October 2013

UPCOMING MEETINGS

October 2, 2013

6:30 p.m. Board Meeting

7:30 p.m. General Meeting

Speaker: Bill Schall

Subject: Latest Information on
Rugose Spiraling Whitefly

OCTOBER FEATURED AUCTION PLANTS

Heterospathe barfodii (Photo on page 5)

Licuala peltata var. *sumawongii*

Verschafeltia splendida

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society 2013 Officers & Executive Committee

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(561) 798-4562

Appointees

Charlie Beck, Librarian

Ruth Lynch, Refreshment Chairman

Brenda Beck, Web Master and Historian

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SEPTEMBER THANK YOU

Food: Don Bittel, Ingrid Dewey, Steve Garland,
Duane Heiser, Ruth Lynch, Tom Ramiccio

Plant Donations: Charlie Beck, Benjamin Crosby, Mike Harris,
Dale Holton, Tom Whisler

Door: Tom Ramiccio

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FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Chamaedorea arenbergiana*

by Charlie Beck

Chamaedorea arenbergiana is a solitary, pinnate palm native to Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and possibly south through Central America and Columbia. It grows in moist or wet forests on both the Atlantic and Pacific slopes at elevations of 300 – 4,500'. This palm was introduced to European gardens prior to its official naming in 1850.

Chamaedorea arenbergiana stems grow to an ultimate height of 12' and range between 3/4 - 1-1/4" in diameter. The thin stems are green with tan leaf scars. The main attraction of this palm are the 6-8' long leaves. The leaflets can measure up to 6" wide which makes it among the widest pinnae in the genus. The leaflets also display long, drip tips which enhance its tropical appearance. Another distinctive feature is the closely packed infructescence. This unique infructescence always draws attention.

C. arenbergiana is close in appearance to *C. nationsiana* and *C. tepejilote*. I prefer *C. arenbergiana* over

C. nationsiana and *C. tepejilote* because of the much wider leaflets. *C. tepejilote* also grows to twice the height which means the crown of leaves is out of close viewing range.

Reference books note that *C. arenbergiana* is not frost tolerant but I haven't noticed any cold damage over the past 11 years. *C. arenbergiana* seems well adapted to our sandy soil in Palm Beach County. With recommended fertilization our palms have never shown any nutritional deficiencies. Do plant this palm in the shade.

C. arenbergiana is not always available at South Florida nurseries. I will try to obtain some of these for our palm auctions. I do recommend growing this palm for its unique wide leaflets and its interesting infructescence. Its small stature allows close viewing and it's an easy fit in any garden. (See photos on page 3)

RECESSED BEDS for *Mauritia flexuosa* and other water loving plants

by Charlie Beck

Over the years I've tried growing *Mauritia flexuosa*, unsuccessfully. Back in 2009 we featured *Mauritia flexuosa* in our newsletter. If you need a refresher on *Mauritia flexuosa*, see a reprint of this article on our website, www.palmbeachpalmycadssociety.com/palms/documents/MauritiaFlexuosa.pdf. The article describes how Richard Moyroud grows this palm at his nursery, Mesozoic Landscapes. Richard has a large swamp with marl/muck soil within his property. There, he successfully grows 60-70 *Mauritia* palms. He has some beautiful mature palms with over 10' of exposed stem. Jeff Searle also has a magnificent specimen plant growing beside one of his greenhouses at his nursery, Rainforest Collection in Davie. Mike Harris has specimen plants growing in a cypress swamp at his Loxahatchee nursery, Caribbean Palms.

With all of this success by other growers, I knew I could successfully grow this palm. *Mauritia* is a swamp palm and our garden has a tendency to flood after heavy repeated rainfall. Our garden also has drainage ditches around the southern and western borders. These drainage ditches can hold water up to 3' deep and can be partially filled for weeks in the rainy season. First I planted *M. flexu-*

osa in a low area in the garden which receives regular irrigation. I planted in both sun and shade. None of these plants survived. I then planted *M. flexuosa* at varying heights within the drainage ditch. I planted at the bottom of the ditch and halfway up the side of the ditch. Even though there was no irrigation in this area the soil remains moist of the year in the rainy season. The plants at the lowest point became submerged up to 3' deep when the drainage ditch filled with rain runoff. These plants also died.

The soil in our garden is sugar sand, not the marl or muck which is typical in swampy areas. This might be a factor in the decline of my *Mauritia* plantings. Plants located in non irrigated drainage ditches might have failed because of lack of water in the dry season. I assume that cold winter temperatures were not the cause of my failure because both Mike Harris and Richard Moyroud had success with *M. flexuosa* in areas farther inland. I do know from discussions with Jeff Marcus from Floribunda Palms in Hawaii that *Mauritia* seedlings are sensitive to transplant shock. Every time you transplant this palm a percentage of them will die due to shock.

(Continued on page 5)

All photographs in this issue were provided by Charlie Beck.

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"By Appointment Only"

Chamaedorea arenbergiana infructescence in the Beck garden



LEAF COMPARISON:
C. tepejote (left) and *C. arenbergiana* (right) with
five inch wide leaflets and
drip tips



Chamaedorea arenbergiana in the Beck garden

Mauritia flexuosa planted in recessed bed in the Beck garden



Mauritia flexuosa next to Mike Harris' cypress swamp in Loxahatchee.



Mike Harris lending scale to his collection of *Licuala peltata* var. *sumawongii*



Mike Harris' Fabulous Garden

by Charlie Beck

Mike is the owner of Caribbean Palms Nursery and past president of the Palm Beach Palm and Cycad Society. He not only has a wide selection of palms and cycads for sale but he has a great collection of plants in the ground.

I was lucky to tour his garden recently and will share some of the photos that I took. Even though his garden is only eleven years old, he has some of the largest palms of particular species that I have seen growing in Palm Beach County. Some of the large palms are *Licuala peltata* var. *sumawongii*, *Coccothrinax borhidiana*, and *Pseudophoenix ekmanii*. The garden is located in Loxahatchee in an area where it can flood after heavy rainfall. I deal with the same flooding issue in our garden so I was interested in comparing notes with Mike.

(See the photos on pages 4, 6-8.)

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(Continued from page 2)

I tried a new approach in growing *M. flexuosa* which seems to finally be successful. Our *M. flexuosa* is now very happily growing in our garden. From a 3 gallon pot planted 1-1/2 years ago, our plant has grown to an overall height of 8'. Instead of planting this palm at ground level, I excavated an area 10' square x 16" deep. I then lined the recessed bed with concrete blocks dry stacked two blocks high. I then capped the blocks with 4" high cap blocks. Both of these blocks are readily available at big box hardware stores. I then installed three irrigation lines with bubbler heads within the recessed bed. I planted the *M. flexuosa* in the middle and added a thick layer of mulch around the palm. After noting robust growth of the *Mauritia* in this bed, I later added two *Cyrtostachys renda* at the corners. They also seem to thrive in these conditions. Surpris-

ingly, the dry stacked blocks hold back the soil and I have not noticed sand bleeding through the joints. Reducing the soil level and irrigating with three bubbler heads produces a consistently moist growing medium. Reducing the soil level also makes the hardpan soil which is 4' down more available to the plant roots. After heavy rain this recessed bed fills with water. I have noticed that *Mauritia* roots at the surface turn upward and extend about an inch above the mulch. This is a common feature of plants that grow in very wet areas.

You may think that the work required to create a recessed bed isn't worth the reward of growing a healthy *M. flexuosa* specimen. But, if you have ever seen this magnificent palm growing in habitat, you might agree that it is worth the effort to grow it locally. (See photos on page 4)

Featured Auction Plant



Heterospate barfodii grown in Hawaii
(notice distinctive crownshaft)

Photo Courtesy of Palmpedia

Village Marina
396 Torpey Road
Fort Pierce, Florida. 34946
Wes Taylor
Office 772-464-4391 Cell 772-519-1297

Caribbean Palms Nursery
Mike Harris
1584 F Road
Loxahatchee, FL 33470
Phone: (561) 792-0333
E-mail: palmz@gate.net

2013 Annual Fall Palm & Cycad Sale

Saturday, October 12th - 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 13th - 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

at Mounts Botanical Garden
531 N. Military Trail
West Palm Beach

A limited supply of a top-rated fertilizer, palm and cycad reference books,
and Palm Society T-shirts will also be available for purchase.

DON'T MISS IT!



Copernicia alba in
Mike Harris' garden.



Coccothrinax borhidiana
in Mike Harris' garden

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Arenga hookeriana in the Harris garden



Calyptronoma rivalis in the Harris garden



Licuala ramsayi in the Harris garden



Pseudophoenix ekmanii in the Harris garden



Pinanga coronata (formerly *P. kuhlii*)
in the Harris garden



Copernicia ekmanii in the Harris garden.



Livistona saribus in the Harris garden



Copernicia fallaensis in the Harris garden