



Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society

Affiliate of the International Palm Society

Monthly Update

November 2013

UPCOMING MEETINGS

November 6, 2013

6:30 p.m. Board Meeting

7:30 p.m. General Meeting

Speaker: Elvis Cruz

Subject: Cuba: A Mystery Island
of Beautiful Palms

NOVEMBER FEATURED AUCTION PLANTS

Marojejya darianii (last one)

Neoveitchia storckii (last one)

Pinanga coronata (blunt leaf form)

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society 2013 Officers & Executive Committee

Tom Ramiccio, President (561) 386-7812

Don Bittel, Vice President (772) 521-4601

Ruth Lynch, Secretary (561) 312-5046

Ingrid Dewey, Treasurer (561) 3300

Charlie Beck, Director & Editor (561) 963-5511

Steve Garland, Director (561) 478-0120

Terry Lynch, Director (561) 582-7378

Tom Whisler, Director (561) 627-8328

Betty Ahlborn, Immediate Past President

(561) 798-4562

Appointees

Charlie Beck, Librarian

Ruth Lynch, Refreshment Chairman

Brenda Beck, Web Master and Historian

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden and Searle Brother's Nursery Trip

by Charlie Beck

I recently attended Member's Day at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG). As usual I'll share some of my palm sightings with you. I took an array of *Copernicia* photos. Some are uncommon palms in Palm Beach County. I took note of each palm's accession date (the date which the seeds or plants were obtained by the garden).

On page 4:

- *C. glabrescens* is 14 years old. I've never seen this palm planted in Palm Beach County (PBC).
- *C. hospita* is quite well grown but it was surprising that it wasn't taller after 44 years of growth.
- *C. ekmanii* is shown with its bright silver color after 20 years of growth.

(Continued on page 2)

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society Garden Tour

Bob Eigelberger, who has a phenomenal garden on Palm Beach, has extended an offer for Palm Society members to tour his garden. In addition to many palms and cycads, Bob has a wide variety of interesting plants. This is a tour you will not want to miss. The tour is scheduled for Friday, November 15, 2013, at 10:00 a.m. You can sign up to participate in the tour at the November 6 meeting or call Charlie at (561) 963-5511 for details.

OCTOBER THANK YOU

Food: Linda Crawford, Janica DiPaola, Ruth Lynch, Tom Ramiccio, Kathy & Rod Silverio, Linda Walker

Plant Donations: Charlie Beck, Steve Garland, Mike Harris, Dale Holton

Door: Tom Ramiccio

VISIT US AT www.palmbeachpalmcycadsociety.com

FEATURED THIS MONTH: *Copernicia gigas*

by Charlie Beck

Copernicia gigas is not widely planted in South Florida. For years I knew it was one of the three large *Copernicia* species from Cuba but I was not aware of what distinguished it from *C. baileyana* and *C. fallaensis*. Actually I wasn't familiar with *C. fallaensis* either until Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG) started planting them near the Rare Plant House about 15-20 years ago. Between 1990 and 1996, some of our Society members traveled to Cuba and brought back photos of these fabulous palms. Seed sources were established and Holton Nursery and Caribbean Palms Nursery began offering these palms for sale.

I planted my first *C. gigas* in 2000. I thought it was worth a try even though I never actually saw a mature specimen in person. Well, in 13 years my first *C. gigas* has grown into a beautiful specimen which is 15' tall in overall height and measures a 20' diameter footprint. Even though a stem has not yet formed I can tell it will rival *C. baileyana* in girth. It is a fabulous palm and I think every garden should have at least one each of *C. gigas*, *C. baileyana* and *C. fallaensis*.

As we know, *C. gigas* is endemic to Cuba. It grows at low elevations in woodlands and pastures and is especially abundant adjacent to mangrove swamps. Dale Holton has reported that these palms grow in rice fields which are seasonally flooded. Like all *Copernicia* species, the leaves are truly palmate, not costapalmate like *Sabal sp.* The petiole is edged with sharp spines which may be in irregular patterns. Reference books state that *C. gigas* is distinct from other Cuban species and that it is more closely related to the South American *C. tectorum* and *C. brittonorum* and the

palms from Hispaniola, *C. ekmanii* and *C. berteroana*. *C. gigas* is easily distinguished from other Cuban species by the wedge shaped leaves. Once you recognize this different leaf shape it is easy to pick out *C. gigas*. Other *Copernicia* species have rounded leaves except *C. rigida* which has wedge shaped leaves but also has very short petioles. See page 5 for comparison of leaf shapes. Of course we know *Copernicia* species readily hybridize. One of the named hybrids is a cross between *C. gigas* and *C. rigida*. It's named *C. vespertilionum* and it also has wedge shaped leaves. The leaves of *C. gigas* may be coated with a light to moderate layer of wax. This waxy coat might give a silvery sheen to the leaves but not as silver as some *C. fallaensis*. When young, the leaves may be very upright and might look similar to a very large *C. rigida* with very long petioles. As the palm matures it changes to a full, rounded crown of leaves. Inflorescences can measure up to 10' long. Stems can measure 1.7' in diameter and grow 65' tall. In Cuba the leaves are used for roof thatching and stems have been hollowed out for canoes. It has been reported that bats readily roost in the skirt of old fronds.

At a recent visit to FTBG, I discovered a huge *C. gigas*. Even though the accession tag indicated a 2000 date of acquisition, I had never noticed it before. This palm was inspiration for its selection as "Palm of the Month." I have to admit Fairchild's plant was larger than our specimen. I'm sure as people discover this palm at FTBG, it will be highly sought after. If you visit FTBG, the *C. gigas* is located in the lowlands not far from the pineland restoration. Don't miss it.

(Continued from page 1)

- *C. berteroana* is only 12 years old. I have found this palm a challenge to grow in PBC. These palms appreciate regular applications of dolomite when grown in our sandy soil.

On page 6:

- *C. curtissii* are of the solitary form and they are 44 years old.
- *Bismarckia nobilis* and *Pritchardia pacifica* are completely inundated with lake overflow.

On page 7:

- *C. x textilis* is a cross between *C. hospita* and *C. baileyana*. This hybrid has grown quite large in 18 years.
- *C. yarey* is 54 years old and is showing classic symptom of boron deficiency (crown is growing sideways).
- *C. tectorum* is native to Columbia and Venezuela. This seldom planted specimen is 30 years old.
- *C. prunifera* is 44 years old and has an impressive collection of ornate leaf bases. Zoom in photo for closer look.

FTBG received several inches of rainfall on the Wednesday prior to the Saturday sale. The lowland parking area was completely inundated with lake overflow. The Fairchild staff considered cancelling Membership Day but luckily the parking area drained sufficiently to allow parking. In 29 years of visiting FTBG I have never seen such flooding. Many palms were completely submerged.

Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society vice president Don Bittel clued me in to a magnificent specimen of *Pseudophoenix vinifera* growing in a front yard located near FTBG. I made a detour to find this palm. Wow, it was worth the effort. It's a mature specimen with a large vase shaped stem. I think it was more impressive than the ones we saw in the Dominican Republic! (See photo on pg. 8.)

The last stop was at Searle Brother Nursery in S.W. Ranches. I wanted to see how well their *Mauritia flexuosa* was growing. I'm happy to report that this palm is forming a huge stem - the largest I've seen in South Florida. (See photos on pg. 8.)

Members who receive an electronic copy of this newsletter get to see these photos in full color. Enjoy!



14 year old *Copernicia gigas* at FTBG



14 year old *Copernicia gigas* in the Beck garden



Copernicia glabrescens
at FTBG



Copernicia hospita
at FTBG



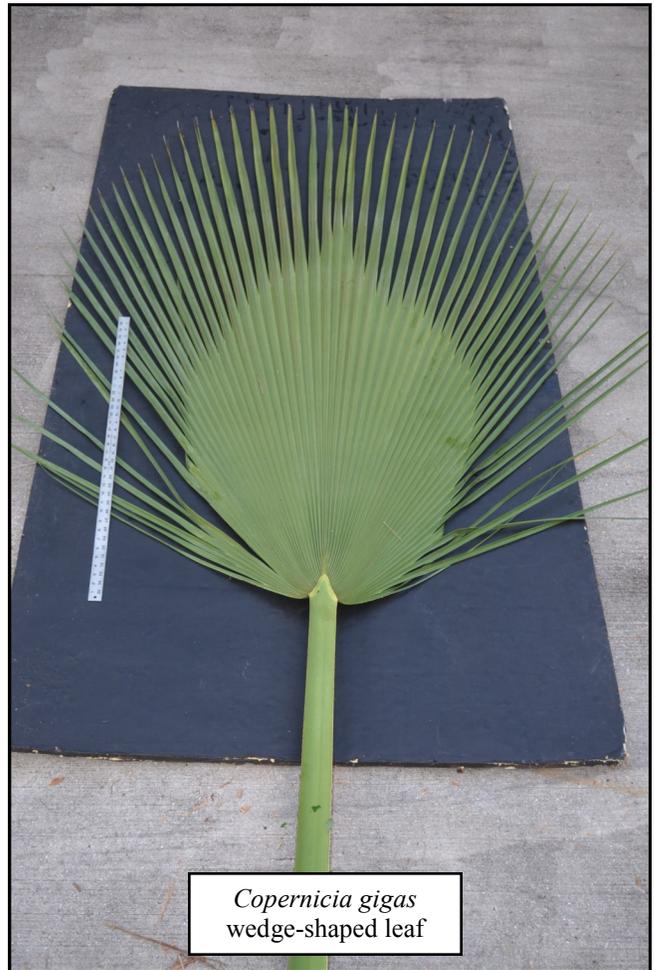
Copernicia berteroaana
at FTBG



Copernicia ekmanii
at FTBG



Copernicia baileyana
rounded leaf



Copernicia gigas
wedge-shaped leaf

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All photographs in this issue were provided by Charlie Beck.



Copernicia curtissii at FTBG



Bismarckia nobilis and
Pritchardia pacifica inundated with lake overflow at FTBG

Opinions expressed and products or recommendations published in this newsletter may not be the opinions or recommendations of the Palm Beach Palm & Cycad Society or its board of directors.



Copernicia x textilis
at FTBG



Copernicia yarey
at FTBG



Copernicia prunifera
at FTBG



Copernicia tectorum
at FTBG



Mauritia flexuosa at Serle Brothers Nursery



Pseudophoenix vinifera in private garden near FTBG



Ryan Gallivan lending scale to
M. flexuosa stem at
Serle Brothers Nursery

Be Sure Not To Miss The November 6th Meeting

by Charlie Beck

As noted on page 1, our guest speaker on November 6 is Elvis Cruz. I heard Elvis give this presentation in Miami and thought it was an extremely interesting talk. All photos in the presentation were taken from the side of the road as Elvis drove throughout Cuba or were taken in botanical gardens. Elvis has researched and verified the names of all of the palms included in his presentation.

Elvis also gives an interesting account of life in Cuba and shares many facts about Cuba's history.

On the Road: Fairchild Tropical Garden Tour

On the Road: Fairchild Tropical Garden Tour

Thursday, November 14, 2013 • 7:15 a.m. ◆ 4:30 p.m.

Members: \$45; Non-Members: \$60 (of Mounts)

Meet at the Garden entrance on Military Trail

Mounts is pleased to announce the return of educational tours to noteworthy gardens. In our first outing, we'll venture to Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden located in Coral Gables. Fairchild is one of the world's pre-eminent botanical gardens, with extensive collections of rare tropical plants including palms, cycads, flowering trees and vines. This 83-acre garden has become one of the region's most popular visitor attractions. We'll take a narrated tram tour of the garden. Then, we'll visit the Conservatory and indoor exhibits, including the Wings of the Tropics, which features over 3,000 butterflies and a host of playful hummingbirds. If you prefer, you may explore the garden on your own. Please bring a brown bag lunch or plan to have a light lunch on your own at Fairchild's Glass House Café. This is a great opportunity as Fairchild has opted out of the reciprocal agreement program and no longer offers free entry to Mounts members. The bus will leave Mounts parking lot at 7:15 a.m. and return to the lot at approximately 4:30 p.m. Pre-paid registration is required by Wednesday, November 6. Tour has a minimum and maximum number of participants